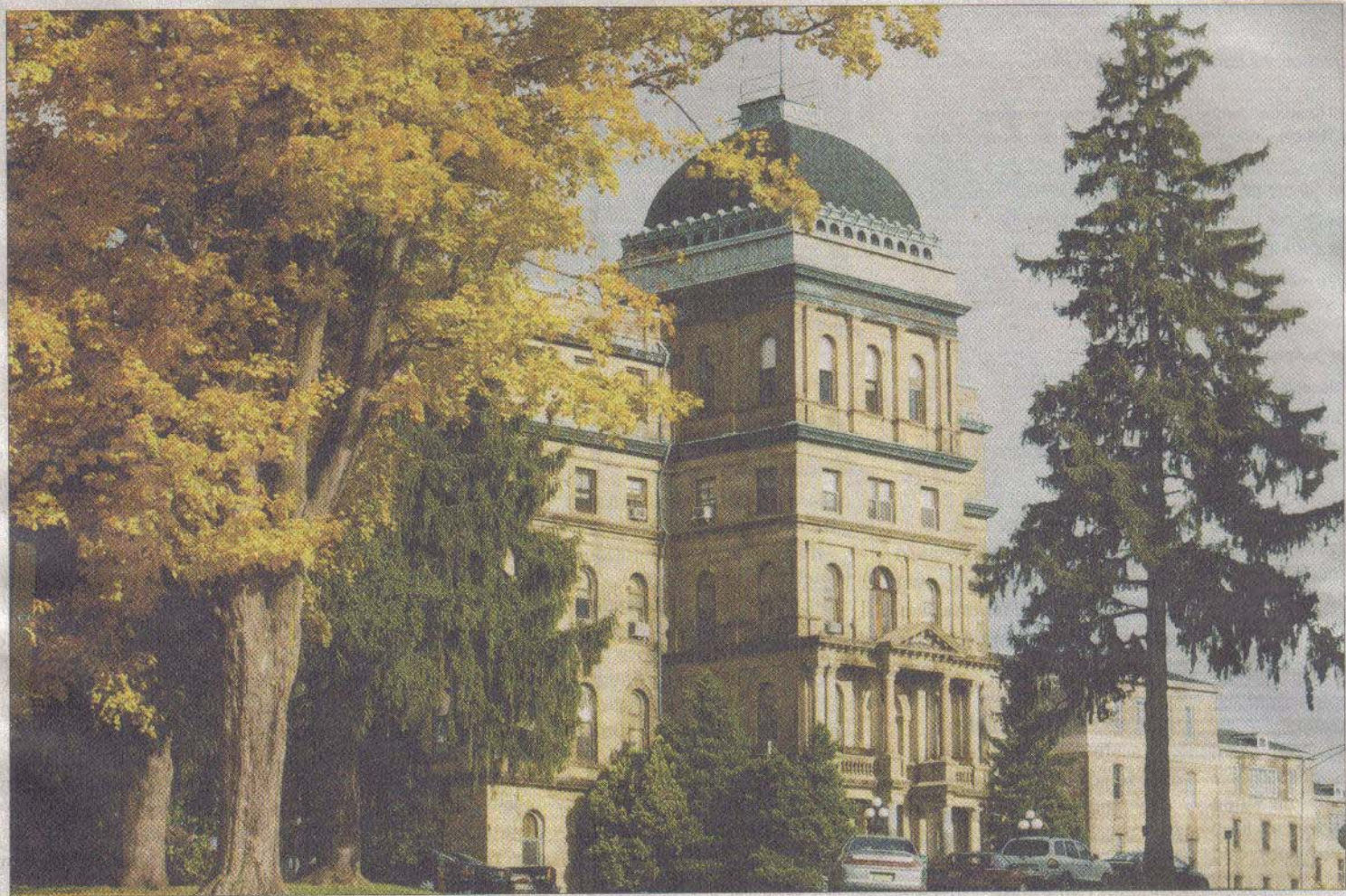


The Sunday, December 20th edition of the Newark Star-Ledger featured a very comprehensive well-balanced article on Preserve Greystone's efforts to save the Kirkbride Building, the former Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT SCIARRINO/THE STAR-LEDGER

The now abandoned Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital building in Parsippany is not on any state or national historic register, but a new group is trying to get it registered and preserved.



# Looking to preserve its place in history

New group works to save the former Greystone hospital

By Lawrence Ragonese  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

The great building stands atop a hill, overlooking a magnificent tree-lined avenue in Parsippany. With marble pillars, a rotunda, beautiful interior staircases and high ceilings, the massive 133-year-old structure is like nothing else in Morris County.

Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital was the centerpiece of an "enlightened" psychiatric facility dating to 1876, home to thousands of patients and many more thousands of workers. It has been prominent in the history of Morris County and New Jersey for parts of three centuries.

Yet the nearly half-million-square-foot structure, with the biggest footprint of a building in the U.S. prior to construction of the Pentagon, is not officially historic.

The now-abandoned and mothballed Greystone, which is on Morris County's and Preservation New Jersey's endangered historic sites lists, has never been enrolled on the state or national



This was once a patients ward in the old hospital building. Preservationists fear the cash-strapped state could sell Greystone to a developer.

historic register — an omission a current group of preservationists hopes to correct.

"Is it above the line of importance to make it eligible for the register? You bet," said Marion

Harris, head of the Morris County Trust for Historic Preservation and founding trustee of a new group, Preserve Greystone, that aims to save the old structure.

"It has great architectural and

social significance. No question of its value," she said.

Getting Greystone on historic registers could help prevent demolition or changes to its histori-

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# Greystone

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cal integrity. It also would make it eligible for state and county preservation dollars, federal tax credits and other benefits, said preservationists, who fear the cash-strapped state only sees potential profits of selling it to a developer.

Designed a few years after the Civil War by Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan, Greystone is a French Renaissance/Second Empire-style building. It is an example of the Kirkbride plan, espoused by Thomas Kirkbride, one of the most influential physicians in the care of the mentally ill in the United States in the 1800s.

Kirkbride sought benevolent settings for patients. Every window in the hospital had a view of the surrounding countryside. Fresh air and circulation were ensured through architecture. There were striking reception and visiting areas, and a beautiful chapel for worship. His design included a pastoral setting, providing a means of treatment through privacy and allowing activities such as farming, gardening and exercise at the hospital.

## 'COMMUNITY LANDMARK'

"It is historically and architecturally significant. And it is an amazing community landmark," said Ron Emrich, executive director of the nonprofit group Preservation New Jersey. "It has a significant story to tell about generations of people who lived and worked there."

Getting it listed on the historic registers could help save it and be a boon to any future redevelopment or rehabilitation effort, whether done by a public or nonprofit entity, private business or a public-private partnership.

"The benefits can be substantial," said historical architect Margaret Westfield, whose Drew University historical properties class a decade ago sought to enroll Greystone on the historic registers.

Included could be grants of up to 75 percent of costs of planning and design for a proposed re-use project, and up to 50 percent of costs of rehabilitation from the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust, said Westfield. Also, private developers could get a federal investment tax credit of up to 20 percent of the cost of re-

novations, she said.

## DIFFERING STORIES

Harris said Preserve Greystone sought a grant from New Jersey Historic Trust to hire a consultant to start the process of getting the building on the register. But, he said, the old Grey-

stone's current owner, the state Treasury Department, declined to sign off on the application.

Treasury spokesman Thomas Vincz strongly denied that contention, and said the agency has "worked diligently" with many stakeholders on the future of Greystone and the sur-

rounding land.

Dorothy Guzzo, executive director of the New Jersey Historic Trust, confirmed Preserve Greystone applied for a grant but said it was not approved because the group did not yet have nonprofit designation nor a required sign-off by

the property owner, namely Treasury.

It will be up to Gov.-elect Chris Christie's administration to reconsider the issue next year, said preservationists, who want the state to be a leader in saving this piece of its history.

"Kirkbride had a remarkable idea and he brought it to life," said Randy Tortorello, township historian for Parsippany. "We have an obligation to try and save it."

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