



Poe Cottage in NYC park to undergo renovation

By DEEPTI HAJELA | Associated Press Writer

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NEW YORK - It was many and many a year ago in a cottage in the Bronx when [Edgar Allan Poe](#) lived his last years and wrote some of his classic pieces.

The site, long a tourist attraction for those curious about the life of the author, will soon give visitors an even better sense of that time, thanks to an upcoming renovation of the cottage and the construction of a new visitor center.

Poe Cottage, located in Poe Park, is scheduled for a complete renovation that will include a complete exterior repainting, restoration of the shutters and shingles, and improvements to interior painting and plasterwork, said Abigail Lootens, director of communications for the Historic House Trust.

The trust works with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation to promote the 22 historic homes that are located in city parks. The cottage is managed by the Bronx Historical Society.

The small building, consisting of only five rooms, was moved to its current site in 1913, from its location across the street. Years in the busy spot, near a subway station and with the vibrations from passing traffic, have left the cottage in need of repair.

"This is going to be the first complete restoration," Lootens said. Work is expected to start next spring, and be completed by spring 2010. The cottage will be closed to the public for that time. The restoration will cost about \$250,000.

Poe and his wife moved to the cottage, which at that time was removed from the hustle and bustle of the city, in hopes that living there would help with her tuberculosis. It didn't — she died there in 1847.

Poe, who had already become known for "The Raven," wrote some of his other classic works there, like "Annabel Lee" — "It was many and many a year ago, in a kingdom by the sea" — and "The Bells" — "Hear the sledges with the bells."

He continued living there after her death, dying on a trip to Baltimore in 1849. People have been visiting for decades, even before it became a historic house museum, Lootens said. The site gets several thousand visitors a year.

"People were drawn to the house because Poe was such a draw for people," she said.

It's not just the cottage restoration, though. Construction has started and is expected to be completed in about a year on a visitor center for the park, a \$4.2 million effort.

The new center has been designed to evoke Poe's poem "The Raven," said Parks Department Commissioner Adrian Benepe.

The roof is in an upraised V shape and the material on the outside walls will be dark gray shingles, the entire effect meant to make the viewer think of the bird.

Having a center will create more opportunities to make the experience of visiting Poe Cottage better for

visitors. There will be space to host groups, have talks and hold events, Benepe said.

It's all part of an effort to get people to explore the historic homes in the city's parks, he said.

"They're touchstones to the past," he said. "They're living passports to the past that allow visitors, particularly schoolchildren, to step back."