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Groups concerned with University of Alabama's plan to move historic home

Dining hall planned for Kilgore House's location

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TUSCALOOSA | One of the oldest buildings on the University of Alabama campus could be moved to make way for a new dining hall.

The university has been in talks with a potential buyer of the Kilgore House, a Queen Anne-style home built for Bryce Hospital's first engineer and his family in 1890.



Staff photo | Michelle Lepianka Carter

The Kilgore House, one of the oldest buildings on the University of Alabama campus, is seen on Friday. The house, a Queen Anne-style home built for Bryce Hospital's first engineer and his family in 1890, could be moved to make way for a new dining hall.

News that the house could be demolished or moved has caused concern among some historic preservation groups and others, who have formed a Facebook group and have written letters urging the university to leave the house where it is.

"The best-case scenario would be to find a way to keep the building where it is, find a new use for it and accommodate the university's plans in a different way," said David Schneider, director of preservation services for Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation. "Worst-case scenario would be that they can't find any way to move it, or preserve it on site, and it's demolished. That would be a horrible loss."

Cathy Andreen, UA's director of media relations, couldn't discuss details about the potential buyer, but said that they would plan to move the building.

Moving buildings can become expensive, depending on distance, Schneider said. It can cost a lot to lower power lines to clear a path and it can be difficult to move a building from a congested area, such as the UA campus.

Bryce patients helped construct the home for Charles Kilgore in 1890, according to the information posted by retired UA professor and art historian Robert Mellown and Suzanne Wolfe, founding editor of Alabama Heritage Magazine. The family rented rooms in what became known as the Kilgore Ranch to some of the university's first female students between 1905 and 1908 and it was the home of the school's first female faculty member.

"While the racial integration of the university has been widely memorialized on campus, women's early struggles for civil rights, as well as the travails and triumphs of pioneering coeds and female faculty have never been the subject of adequate attention," Mellown and Wolfe wrote on the Facebook site. "The Kilgore House would seem to be the ideal location for such a memorial to university women."

The Kilgore House was listed on the Alabama Register of Historic Places in 1988. The building was the Alabama Heritage magazine office for 25 years, until this summer when the university offered it for sale.



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