

By Beverly Smalls StarNews Correspondent

Francisco Castillo, a native of Spain, said as a young boy he liked helping to repair buildings and walls.

WILMINGTON -- Francisco Castillo, a native of Cordoba, Spain, brings Old World craftsmanship skills to the work he's doing on the garden wall at the Burgwin-Wright House.

The 1771 Colonial era property received a \$27,000 grant to repair the aged, deteriorating wall from the Isabelle James Lehto Foundation, named for a former member of the Colonial Dames.

"She was a very dedicated member," said Joy Allen, executive director of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of N.C.

Castillo said as a young boy in Spain he liked helping to repair buildings and walls. As a young adult, he became more skilled as a carver, mastering the use of old tools to make historic structure repairs.

"I learned to work on churches in the old sections of Barcelona," Castillo said.

He immigrated to the United States and lived in Long Island, N.Y., for nine years.

He has been a Wilmington resident for 20 years.

The move South has led to much restoration work on historic buildings, churches and cemeteries.

"I use stone carving tools. I repair cemetery art," Castillo said, adding proudly that he restored 250 grave markers in Charleston, South Carolina's second oldest cemetery.

For the Burgwin-Wright house museum's garden wall, Castillo must repair and replace missing bricks and mortar, Allen said.

Her organization was invited to apply for the historic restoration grant. It's the third restoration funding received from the Isabelle James Lehto Fund. Earlier projects included restoration work on the stairwell, hallway, and flooring. Allen said the Lehto fund has provided a total of \$80,000 for Burgwin-Wright House projects.

Castillo also restores stained glass windows. He is restoring stained glass windows at the Church of the Good Shepherd, an Episcopal church at Sixth and Queen streets.

"They are so beautiful," he said.

Craftsman restores wall at Burgwin-Wright house

Written by Beverly Smalls

Wednesday, August 23, 2017 03:04 PM

Castillo also restored columns at the Burgwin-Wright House.

“Sometimes when people see me with a big piece of old wood they ask, ‘What you going to do with that?’”

He laughed and said, with an accent that reveals his European roots, “Then they see.”

Built in 1770, the Burgwin-Wright House and Gardens is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and offers guided tours on the hour from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Visit www.burgwinwrighthouse.com for more information

Note: The Wilmington Star News published this story online on Tuesday, August 8, 2017 and in the print edition on August 9, 2017.

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