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SUN PHOTO

Patricia Hughes, pictured in 1981, shows off the then-newly decorated Empire Parlour.

State mansion may get new look

By John Dorsey
Sun Art Critic

During the past eight years, seven rooms in Government House, the governor's mansion in Annapolis, have been furnished with Maryland decorative arts and paintings under the direction the Maryland Historical Society and Patricia Hughes, wife of former Gov. Harry R. Hughes.

These rooms could be changed, possibly in a major way, in coming years under the direction

of a reorganized governing body. Among those who have discussed possible changes with members of the MHS are Hilda Mae Snoops, companion of Gov. William Donald Schaefer and official hostess of the state of Maryland and of Government House, and Edward C. Papenfuse, state archivist and secretary of the state's artistic properties commission.

Among the changes discussed, according to J. Jefferson Miller II, director of the MHS, would be to make the rooms "emphasize the history of

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Government House may see changes

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the house rather than Maryland fine and decorative arts," and to change by legislation the membership of the Government House Trust, which oversees the period rooms. A separate body, the Friends of Government House, which has raised money and bought items for the period rooms in the past, is now in the process of being legally dissolved, Mr. Miller said.

As they have been developed over the past eight years, the period rooms at Government House represent a survey of many periods of the state's fine and decorative arts, including the 18th century, the Federal and Empire periods of the early 19th century, the Victorian period and the 20th century style of Baltimore-born interior designer Billy Baldwin. The rooms were the subject of a major recent article in the magazine *Architectural Digest*.

A number of the pieces of furniture, paintings and other objects in the rooms have been lent to the house by the MHS, the Baltimore Museum of Art and private collectors, as well as the Friends of Government House.

Sources at the MHS have indicated that there is considerable consternation over possible changes among those who have worked most closely on the rooms in the past. They include Stiles T. Colwill, museum director of the society, and Gregory Weidman, curator of furniture. Barbara Wells Sarudy, administrative director of the society, said yesterday, "People who have put their very best professional effort into this are very sad."

Mr. Miller said "Obviously there is

disappointment that the period room ambience is going to be lost." Mr. Colwill declined to comment. Ms. Weidman could not be reached for comment.

Sue Pimental, deputy press secretary to Mr. Schaefer, said yesterday that "Mrs. Snoops is unaware that there is any concern" on the part of historical society staff, "and she hopes that anyone who is concerned will call her."

Mrs. Snoops declined to be interviewed.

Mr. Papenfuss said yesterday, "It is premature to discuss the possibility of legislation at this point," and that "there are no changes proposed at the present time." He also said, "It is my understanding that the historical society has been uncomfortable with the role they have played."

Under legislation currently in effect, the membership of Government House Trust is identical with the membership of the MHS's gallery committee, which also oversees the historical society's gallery activities. The legislation specifies that "no improvement, alteration, addition, removal, or other change in the internal design or furnishing of any state room of Government House is authorized unless approved by the Trust."

According to Mr. Miller, the proposal discussed at last week's meeting would change the membership of the trust to seven heads of state agencies. The Maryland State Historic Preservation Officer, currently J. Rodney Little, would be one of the members. Although he could not remember who the other members would be, Mr. Miller said "he [Mr. Little] was the only one who had a position related normally to what you would consider the history of

art."

Under the proposed changes, the MHS would remain an adviser to Government House.

Mr. Miller also said "the legislation now in effect is inflexible and presents a possible conflict of interest. If the thing continues as it has, with the gallery committee serving as the Government House Trust, you could have the committee coming in conflict with itself, so I welcome the change."

Of the possible changes to the rooms at Government House, he said, "I've seen this kind of thing happen before. New people change things."

According to Mr. Papenfuss, in any future development of the rooms, "some might not change at all, some might change some and some might change a lot." He emphasized that "it is premature to talk about changes at this point."

Ms. Pimental said "it is the intention of the governor to create a feeling of real warmth and welcome for the citizens of Maryland. The plan is to admit children, to have the rooms reflect the history of the house and to be a real learning process. I don't know whether you could say the changes will be major, but six months [after changes begin] hopefully people will notice a difference."

She confirmed that "a few" items in the rooms had already been moved, but said "it was with the knowledge of the historical society."

Asked what the society would do about the objects it has lent to the house if the rooms were to be used in such a way that the objects might be damaged, Mr. Miller said, "If that concern were there, we wouldn't let them stay there."