

# Restoring the Rispin mansion's splendor

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Vacated by the convent of Poor Clares in 1960, the old Rispin home withstood nearly two decades as the empty and mysterious mansion hidden behind a green gate and long cement wall on Wharf Road in Capitola.

Legends of ghosts, evil deeds and illegal activity have veiled the one-time splendor of the sturdy 22-room house and its surrounding gardens alongside Soquel Creek.

Visitors have been very few and rarely welcome, until earlier this year — when John Bakalian of Bakalian and Associates announced plans for the mansion's purchase and restoration.

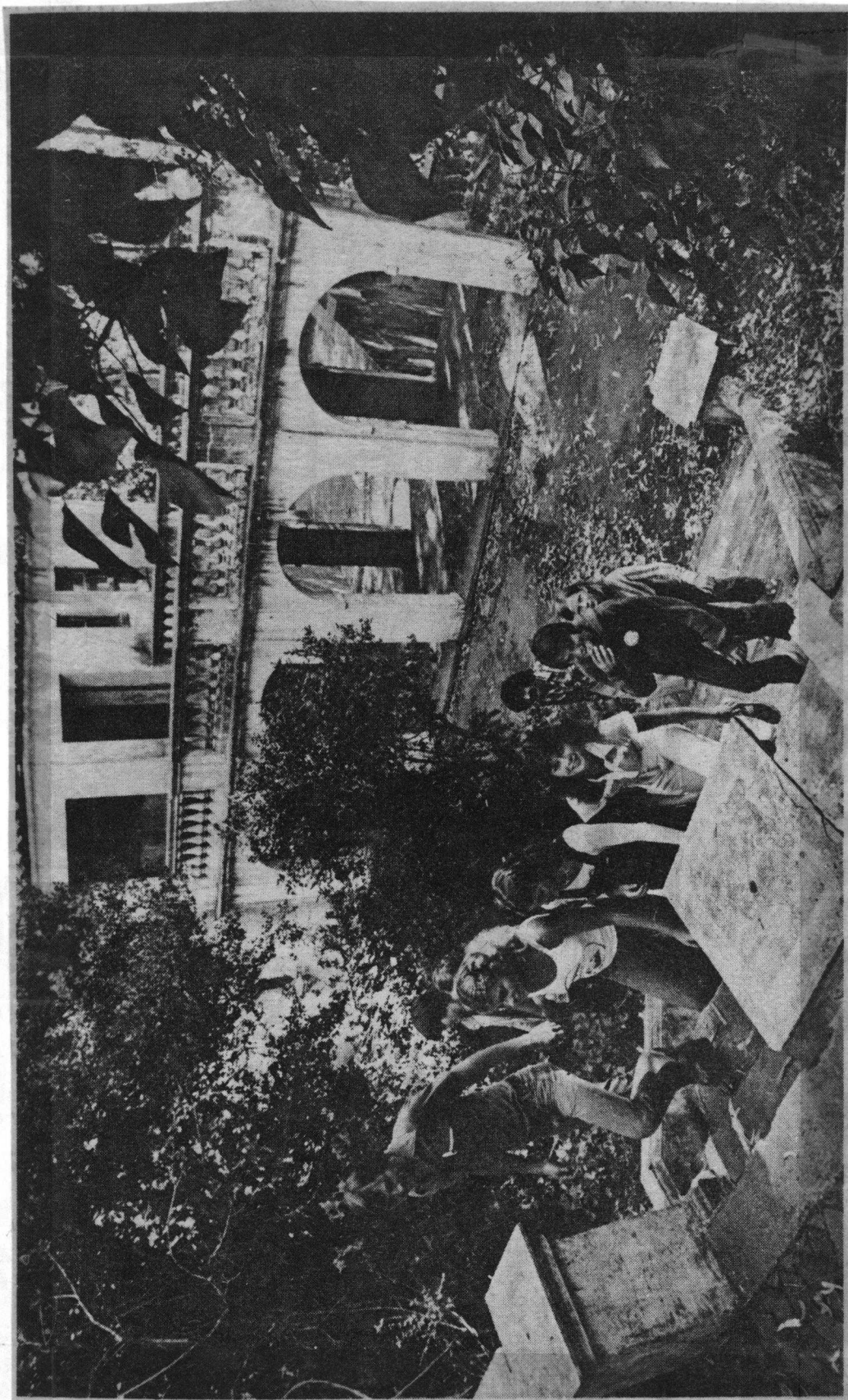
The restoration has begun, and the property was opened for the first time this week to a segment of the public. And it is most appropriate that among the first to enter its dark hallways were those whose imaginations have been most inspired by the immense cement structure — the children of Capitola — who have a perpetual curiosity about the place and its history.

The visitors were members of a class in community studies at Capitola Junior High School. These students are part of the sixth, seventh and eighth grade social studies class taught by Tim

Goss, who have chosen to participate in a community-oriented English, reading and social studies program led by Lee Davis.

Davis and the students — Kim Albin, Valerie Marcus, Kim House, Christa Nielson, Chris Long, Gregg Farron and Susie Beason — met with Bakalian Wednesday morning for a brief talk about the mansion's past and a quick look inside. They saw stairways uncovered in the garden that no one knew existed; pathways that once led to Henry Allen Rispin's private bridge across the creek; walls still bearing the warnings and messages from the last 20 years. They heard about hidden rooms and sliding cement walls. They climbed steep stairways and walked to the balcony of Rispin's master bedroom. All asked plenty of questions.

As the group gathered in the courtyard for the start of the tour, Bakalian told about H.A. Rispin, the fortune he made in oil investments, and the disaster that befell his estate just before the start of the Depression in 1929.



Rispin was an eager buyer when the mansion was for sale in 1919.

REFERENCE

GREEN SHEET September 22,  
1979

APRIL 1979

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