

Castro Adobe to be restored



Todd Guild/Register-Pajaronian

Charlie Kieffer, great-great-grandson of one of Castro Adobe's residents, stands in front of the house's crumbling walls.

Volunteers needed to get hands dirty, restore two-story hacienda

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER PAJARONIAN

It's time to hit the bricks — about 2,000 adobe bricks, actually.

The Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is asking for help to come help restore the Castro Adobe, a two-story hacienda nestled in a rural neighborhood near Larkin Valley Road. The home was built in 1848.

Volunteers will be fully immersed in the adobe-making process, shoveling soil, adding water and straw and using wooden molds to form the 3-foot-long bricks. When dry, each will weigh up to 75 pounds.

After the structure was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, owner Edna Kimbro tried for years to get it restored before selling it to the state in 2002. It's now a National Historic Site and a California State Landmark. State plans call for its complete restoration.

"To do it right takes so much knowledge and skill," said Randy Widera, executive director of Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks. "Our goal is for visitors to be transported back to the mid-1800s."

The house had the only fandango room — a large dance hall — for hundreds of miles. Here, people would come for dances, weddings and quinceañeras, according to Charlie Kieffer, whose great-great-grandmother, Maria de los Angeles, once lived there.

"The parties could last for days," he said. "Everyone was invited — the hired



Courtesy of Charlie Kieffer

The rear of the Castro Adobe building is shown.

help, the Native Americans — and everyone would sit together at long tables on the back lawn."

The two-story house was the only of its kind built in Santa Cruz County, and boasts one of only five Mexican-style kitchens left in the state. From the second-story deck, señoritas framed by wisteria would look down as vaqueros serenaded them from below.

Now, a chain link fence surrounds the property, and in some spots black

plastic tarps protect the crumbling walls. Tall grass and bushes cover the entryway where horses once were tied.

"We're interested in much more than the restoration of a house," Dianne Porter Cooley, a volunteer with the project said Thursday. "We want to restore the interest and the pride in a culture California once had."

See CASTRO, page 2

CASTRO

From page 1

Even though the earthquake rendered the structure unsafe for visitors, organizers hope to eventually restore it to its original glory, with interpretive signs and displays.

"You're going to get your hands muddy, and you're going to have fun," said Kieffer. "One hundred and sixty years from now, people will come to this site and see that we helped save a piece of history. We can say, 'This was ours, and we were here.'"

...

Volunteers are needed on Aug. 4 and 11, both Saturdays. For information, contact Laura Sullivan at 429-1840, e-mail laura@thatsmypark.org or visit the Web site at www.CastroAdobe.org.



Todd Guild/Register-Pajaronian

Adobe brick is seen beneath a cracked wall.