

LOCAL

State cash for historic adobe

Historic buildings - South Co.

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✓ **SACRAMENTO** — Watsonville's only state historic landmark and the South County's only Spanish-heritage building will be kept from crumbling, thanks to a hefty appropriation in the state budget.

The budget, as approved by the state Senate Tuesday, contains \$950,000 to purchase and repair San Andres Castro Adobe, a state and national landmark on Old Adobe Road northwest of Watsonville.

The adobe is one of the state's few remaining two-story, ranch-style adobes. The 154-year-old building was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and damaged further in winter storms in 1995. It now is fenced off and in danger of collapsing.

If approved by the Assembly and Gov. Gray Davis, the state allocation will purchase the old adobe and pay for some repairs, said Edna Kimbro, a nationally known adobe preservation expert who owns the adobe. "It won't completely restore it to how it was in 1846, but it will be useable and will put it back the way it was before the earthquake," she said.

"The important thing is that the adobe won't survive if the state doesn't buy it," she said.

The Kimbro family lived in the adobe be-



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel file photo

fore the earthquake crumbled one wall. The family was unable to secure federal or state money to rebuild, and used the adobe as collateral to build a new home nearby.

Instead of selling to just anyone, Kimbro wanted to sell it to the state to have it preserved.

She was initially rebuffed, so she and other adobe supporters turned to the county

Board of Supervisors.

When that effort failed, she once again turned to state officials, this time with very different results. "It's taken us 10 years to get here," she said Tuesday.

Don't plan on a tour soon, however. Even if the money remains in the budget, there isn't enough to staff the adobe to open it to the public. Kimbro and an ad hoc commit-

tee are hoping to identify a nonprofit organization to run it for the state.

Edna Kimbro in front of the Castro adobe in 1990 with her son Joey. Kimbro has been fighting to restore the historic building since 1989, when it was damaged in the Loma Prieta earthquake.

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Historians believe Jose Joaquin Castro built the adobe, originally a one-story structure, in the 1830s after being chased away from his rancho near the current KOA Campground on San Andreas Road by American Indians.

Castro, a member of the historic Juan Baptiste de Anza expedition from Sinaloa, Mexico to Monterey, was rewarded for his service to the crown in 1822 with a huge land grant.

Jose Joaquin Castro died in 1838, leaving the adobe to his son, Juan Jose Castro, who enlarged the family home to a two-story showpiece that rivaled anything in Monterey. Juan Jose Castro was also the first Latino in the county history to be elected to the county Board of Supervisors.

The Castro adobe was the only two-story adobe built in this area, Kimbro said. It's also the only adobe remaining that "speaks directly to the Hispanic heritage of this area," she said.

Kimbro said she hopes that ultimately the adobe will be restored to its 1946 splendor.

The state funding to get the building "useable, safe and in public ownership is a first step, and a major first step," she said. "I'm just thrilled about this."