

Edna Kimbro reaches for mission grapes from the balcony of the adobe.  
Dan Coyro/Sentinel

## WATSONVILLE

# Officials to honor historic adobe

Historic Houses -  
Santa Cruz County

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10/17/00

One of the county's last surviving historical adobes, which was in danger of being torn down after sustaining extensive damage in the Loma Prieta earthquake 11 years ago, appears ready for a new life.

State and local officials at 10 a.m. today, will mark the anniversary of the 1989 quake by unveiling a state historical-landmark plaque at the San Andres Castro Adobe.

That signals that a deal with the state to repair and restore the historic building may soon be signed.

The 3,800-square-foot adobe, made out of sun-dried mud bricks, is the largest and only two-story historical hacienda in the county. The hacienda is one of the first examples of Monterey-style architecture, which is a national style that developed out of Monterey.

"The building has basically risen from its embers," said Edna Kimbro, a historical-preservation expert who owns the adobe. Construction on the building began in 1846.

A year ago, Gov. Gray Davis approved a budget request by Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Boulder Creek, for \$950,000 in state money to buy and repair the adobe.

Since then, Kimbro and the state have been negotiating on a purchase price and exactly what repairs will be done.

The Spanish-style hacienda is the only state- and nationally recognized historical building in Watsonville. It is one of 350 adobes and missions that have survived in the state, Kimbro said.

"In its time, this was a happening social place and political matters were made here," said David Vincent, superintendent of the state Parks Department's Santa Cruz district, which will supervise public access to the building once the deal is finalized.

"The adobe is important to California's cultural heritage," he said.

When the deal is finalized, the adobe, on Old Adobe Road in Watsonville, will be the third state-operated adobe in the county, after the Santa Cruz Mission, on Mission Hill, and the Bolcoff Adobe at Wilder Ranch State Park.

The adobe was badly damaged in the quake with collapsed and cracked walls. Since then, only minor repairs have been done, said Kimbro, who was living in the building at the time of the earthquake.



Vincent said negotiations could take up to six months, but added that once the parks department takes over the building, repair plans will be drawn up. Road improvements also are planned.

Retrofitting will involve removing part of the roof and resealing it with steel anchors. That way, if there were another earthquake, the walls would not collapse, Kimbro said.

The renovation process should take about three years.

Throughout the life of the old adobe, it

has primarily been used as a residence except when it was abandoned in 1906 and used as a barn and apricot shed.

The building was built by some of the first Spanish settlers to California, who arrived in 1776.

Local historians believe one of the members, Jose Joaquin Castro, of the historic Juan Baptiste de Anza expedition from Mexico built the home.

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