

Castro Adobe taking shape



ABOVE: Charlie Kieffer, a descendant of the Castro family, walks out the front door of the 1840s Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe home on Old Adobe Road in Watsonville Wednesday. BELOW: A new booklet was recently published documenting the restoration of the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe home.

Historic Building
Private tours available; donations still needed for reconstruction

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

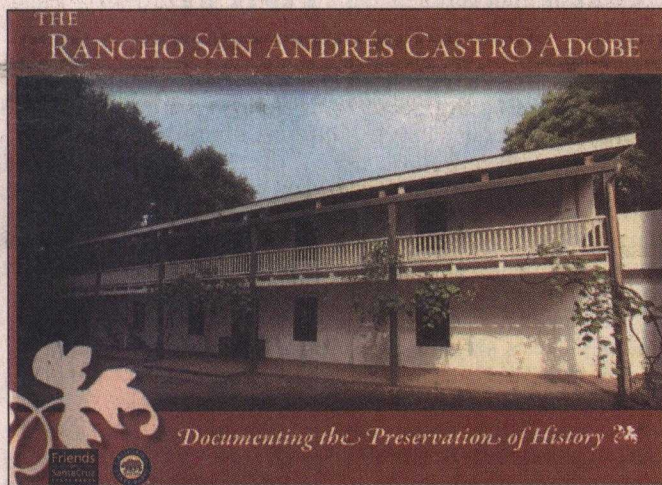
Brick by brick, the 170-year-old Castro Adobe house on Larkin Valley Road has slowly taken shape since reconstruction efforts began in 2007.

Damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake and ravaged by years of harsh weather and neglect, the house that once boasted the largest — and only — dance floor in Santa Cruz County and one of a handful of indoor kitchens in the state was in serious need of repair when state parks officials finally recognized its historical value.

One wall had collapsed, and the kitchen was almost beyond repair. The home was deemed unsafe for the public.

But efforts from Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks and community volunteers have brought the home to a point where small, private tours have been approved.

"We want people to see it," said Charlie Kieffer, who has been an advocate for the house since rebuilding efforts began,



and who has traced his family roots to the Castro family that originally owned the home.

Restoration efforts began in August 2007, when a team of 150 volunteers led by Friends of California State Parks, along with workers from the California Conservation Corps, made 2,500 adobe bricks over a three-week period. These would replace the aging bricks placed there more than a cen-

tury ago.

A wall that sat in ruins for years has been rebuilt, as has the room that once held the kitchen. The roof has also been completely replaced, protecting the inside of the building from rain damage.

While the building has been rebuilt to suit the standards of historians, state law required that the house be retrofitted for earthquakes. And so a series of

thick steel rods were run through the walls, held together by a steel band along the top, forming a sort of cage designed to hold the old building together in the event of a tremor.

In addition to restoration efforts, organizers have also published a booklet that outlines the history of the house, the Castro family and subsequent owners and restoration efforts.

Now, the scent of freshly hewn wood has replaced the musty smell in places, and a kitchen wall that once bore the marks of years of cooking smoke has been replaced and painted. Additionally, cracks that formed in the walls over the years have been painstakingly fixed by craftsmen skilled in rebuilding adobe buildings.

The project has been hampered and at times threatened by the state's financial crisis and threats from Sacramento of budget reductions for state parks.

See ADOBE, page A8



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Charlie Kieffer talks about work that still needs to be done to the Castro Adobe home.

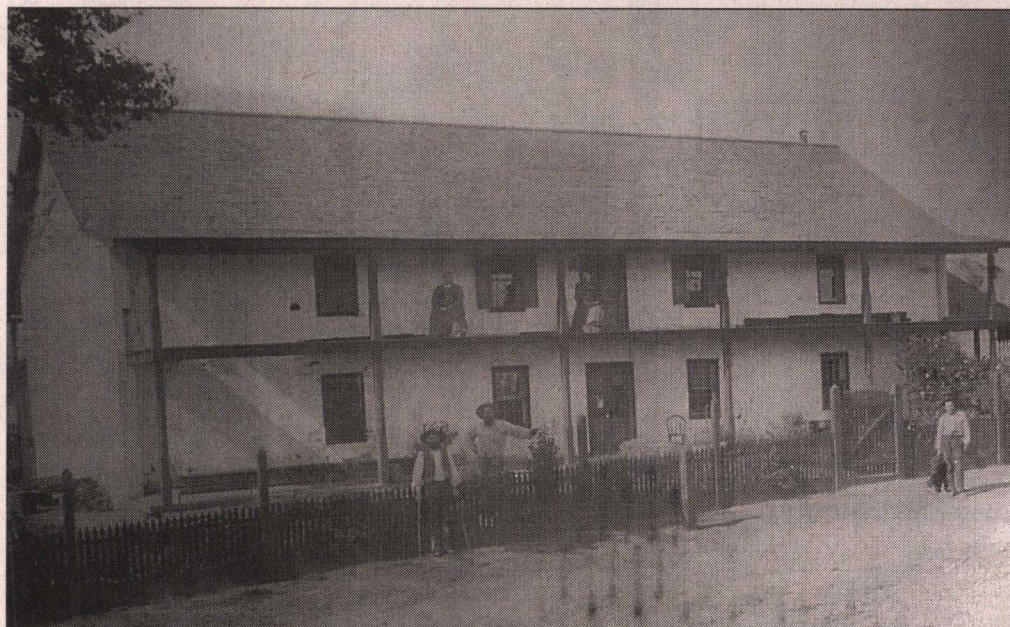


Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association

A photo from 1895 shows several people outside the front of the Castro adobe home. The photo is on the back page of the new booklet.

ADOBE

From page A1

"I have to admit, I never thought this would get done," Kieffer said. "If it wasn't for the support from the public, it couldn't have happened."

Kieffer was referring to the \$100 private donations for each of the adobe bricks, which has largely funded the project.

Next, organizers are looking to create a historical interpretive center.

...

For information about the Castro Adobe, visit www.CastroAdobe.org.