

Historic Buildings The Mission Adobe: What Next?

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Once again under consideration is the building which is no doubt the most important structure in Santa Cruz County, historically speaking, the School Street Adobe.

Repairs...preservation...restoration...future use... all these questions are dredged up every few years, then buried again. This has been going on since the Santa Cruz Historical Society spearheaded the acquisition of the building by the State of California in 1957.

The old adobe has led a peripatetic career. No one knows for sure, when it was constructed or for what purpose. Speculations and educated guesses range from 1793-4 when the Santa Cruz Mission was built, to 1810 or later. But the fact remains that no one really knows.

The late Phyllis Patten, writer and authority on Holy Cross Church history, wrote in a 1957 article that the adobe was probably the Mission guardhouse. Every California Mission had its quota of soldiers to protect the Franciscan padres and Mission personnel from the Indians.

Others have speculated that the old adobe was where the Indian girls and women lived. Some have believed it was the school — the names of School Street and its adjoining School Lane, go back to Mission days.

Even the name of the adobe itself has been bandied about until it creates confusion today.

Originally known as the Mission Adobe, it became the Neary Hopcroft Adobe, then the Neary Rodriguez Adobe, and more recently, the Long Adobe.

The name which makes the best sense is "School Street Adobe" which the building got in 1957 and which pinpoints its location on one of the oldest thoroughfares in the city.

The adobe, last remaining remnant of original Santa Cruz Mission days, was probably the settlement's first duplex. Originally a one-story building, it was divided into two separate living quarters by an adobe common wall (about five feet thick.) When the Mission was secularized in 1833-34, the adobe (and other church properties) were turned over to Mission Indians. The two who got the adobe, sold it to Felipe Armas.

Half of the adobe duplex was purchased by Roman Rodriguez in 1838, and in 1864 Patrick Neary purchased the other half for use as a home.

In 1853 the historic structure had been the scene of the founding of Santa Cruz Masonic Lodge.

When the second story was added is also a mystery. It hadn't been realized that the building was built originally as a one-story structure until roof repairs bared the evidence in 1965.

For years, the Neary and Rodriguez families lived in their halves of the adobe, separated by the common wall. Mrs. Cornelia Hopcroft, an adopted daughter of the Rodriguez family, still retains a life interest in the Rodriguez portion, although the State purchased the entire adobe in 1959.

The original campaign to save Santa Cruz' only Mission adobe was begun in spite of a negative atmosphere.

"Where's the money coming from?" was the



Mrs. Hopcroft's half of the building is in the best shape, because she has lived there and kept it up since she was a girl. For some years the Neary half was rented out as an antiques shop.

What lies ahead for Santa Cruz' most historic building?

The Historical society had hoped that it could be a small museum with a meeting room in one end.

So far, the School Street Adobe has been a stepchild, always shunted to the back burner because money for other projects came first.

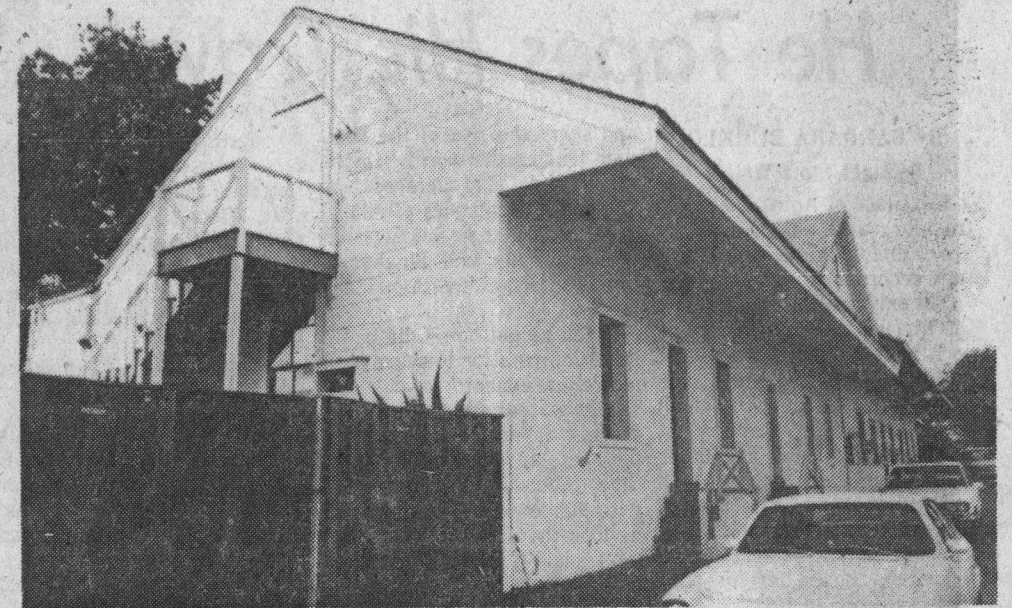
But it has possibilities.

There was once a beautiful garden in the rear. Garden enthusiasts used to talk of outdoor concerts and wine tastings and such social events, because the garden could be beautiful again.

The adobe has waited patiently for 21 years and it's still waiting.

One thing is sure: the local citizens who fought so valiantly to save the building, will not see it lost.

It is all that remains of many adobes that once, in the prosperous days of Santa Cruz Mission La Exaltacion de la Santa Cruz, 12th in the Alta California Mission chain, surrounded Holy Cross Plaza.



Adobe Tour Friday, Update On Developments

On Friday a tour of the adobe was conducted by the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Santa Cruz, with Assemblyman Henry Mello among those making the inspection.

Since 1957 the School Street Adobe has been the property of the Department of Parks and Recreation, State of California. Minimal repairs have included a new roof and bond beam.

In 1974 Santa Cruz City Council authorized \$1,100 to make technical studies under a grant, National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In 1975 a National Park Service Historic Preser-

vation grant was awarded for restoration purposes. Administrative hurdles were raised concerning the city implementing work on property owned by the state.

In 1978 a presentation was made to the local Historic Preservation commission with recommendations. In 1979 the city agreed to transfer funds to the state for stabilization work which included installation of concrete ribs and steel tie rods. (The walls are beginning to weaken.)

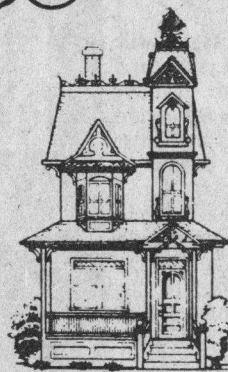
January, 1980: revision of working drawings started, to meet federal criteria. Plan ap-

proved at state levels. If there are delays forthcoming, they will be because of insufficient funds, it was announced.

The local commission is relieved that stabilization work will proceed; however it also is concerned that without a gener-

al plan for the adobe it will be impossible to obtain further funding for the restoration.

Structures in Monterey more recently acquired and less in need of attention are scheduled for improvements, according to the commission.



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question most often heard.

"Who wants that old thing?" was another often heard remark.

However, there were those who had the faith and foresight to see its importance, and to believe that it could be done; among them: the late Robert Burton; Moreland Johnson who did much of the legal paper work; and Fred D. McPherson Jr., who got the late Assemblyman Glenn Coolidge interested in the project.

The whole thing took several years to completion. It was started during my own term as president of the Historical society, and the final successful completion and purchase followed during the presidency of McPherson who is publisher of The Sentinel.

It's an interesting fact that most of the people who pushed and worked for the preservation of the adobe, are not Catholics, although there were members of that faith, such as Phyllis Patten, who also worked on the project.

In 1965 heavy rains threatened the adobe walls in the Neary portion of the building. Adobe "melts" when it gets waterlogged. A crew of workmen came from the Monterey office of the State Division of Beaches and Parks to replace the old shingle roof and found the building's situation so precarious that it was necessary to pour a concrete bond beam around the top of the walls.

It was then, with the old roof off, that the discovery was made that the building was originally one-story.

The shingle roof was not the original roof by any means; that probably had been tiles, made by the Indians under the direction of the padres.

The first floor walls of the adobe are about three feet thick. Second floor walls are about 22 inches thick. Today a good roof protects the old adobe bricks.