

# Restoring Watsonville history

Historic Houses - South County

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## Historic home under renovation

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✓ WATSONVILLE — The long-abandoned and run down Palmtag/Muzzio House, once a towering milestone of Watsonville's Front Street area, is gradually coming back to life at it's Manresa Beach location. Perched on the ridge of a hill, the colossal, two-story home is slowly being pumped back to life in a grand way.

"Considering the house rolled in here in sections, we've come a long way," said Jim Rector, owner of Cypress Construction. Rector, who is overseeing the renovation job, said most of the major rebuilding of the 1872 house has already been completed. "We're trying to get the porch, ballisters and exterior columns in place and secure right now," Rector said.

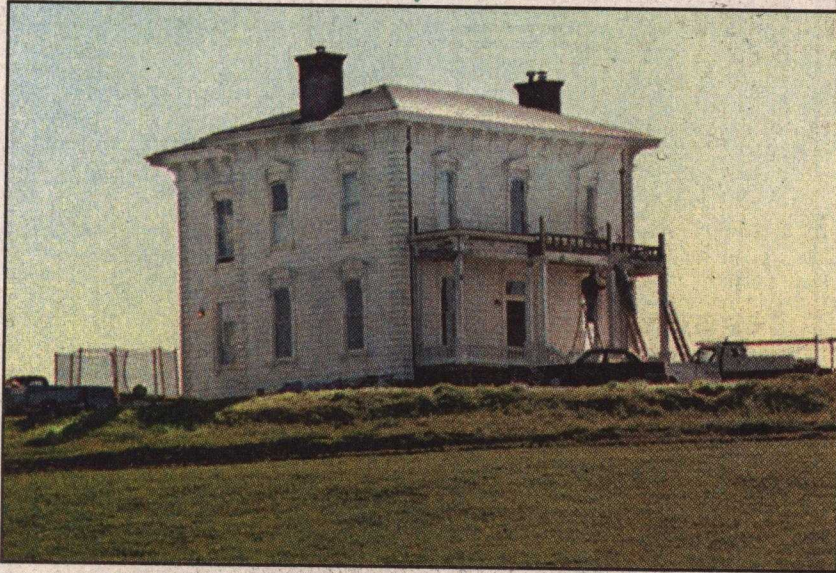
A painting crew in working it's way, room by room, through the first floor of the predominantly redwood home. Owners Julie and Dayle Bowen, who have moved their family into the house, spend part of the days dodging painting and construction crews.

"The day after Christmas we had eight people coming and going through here with their tools," Julie Bowen said. "They're doing a great job and we just work around each other."

Christian Murtha of Murtha Mantles and Molding of San Jose is currently fabricating and installing various molding, trim and custom panels throughout the house to match the existing lines and design.

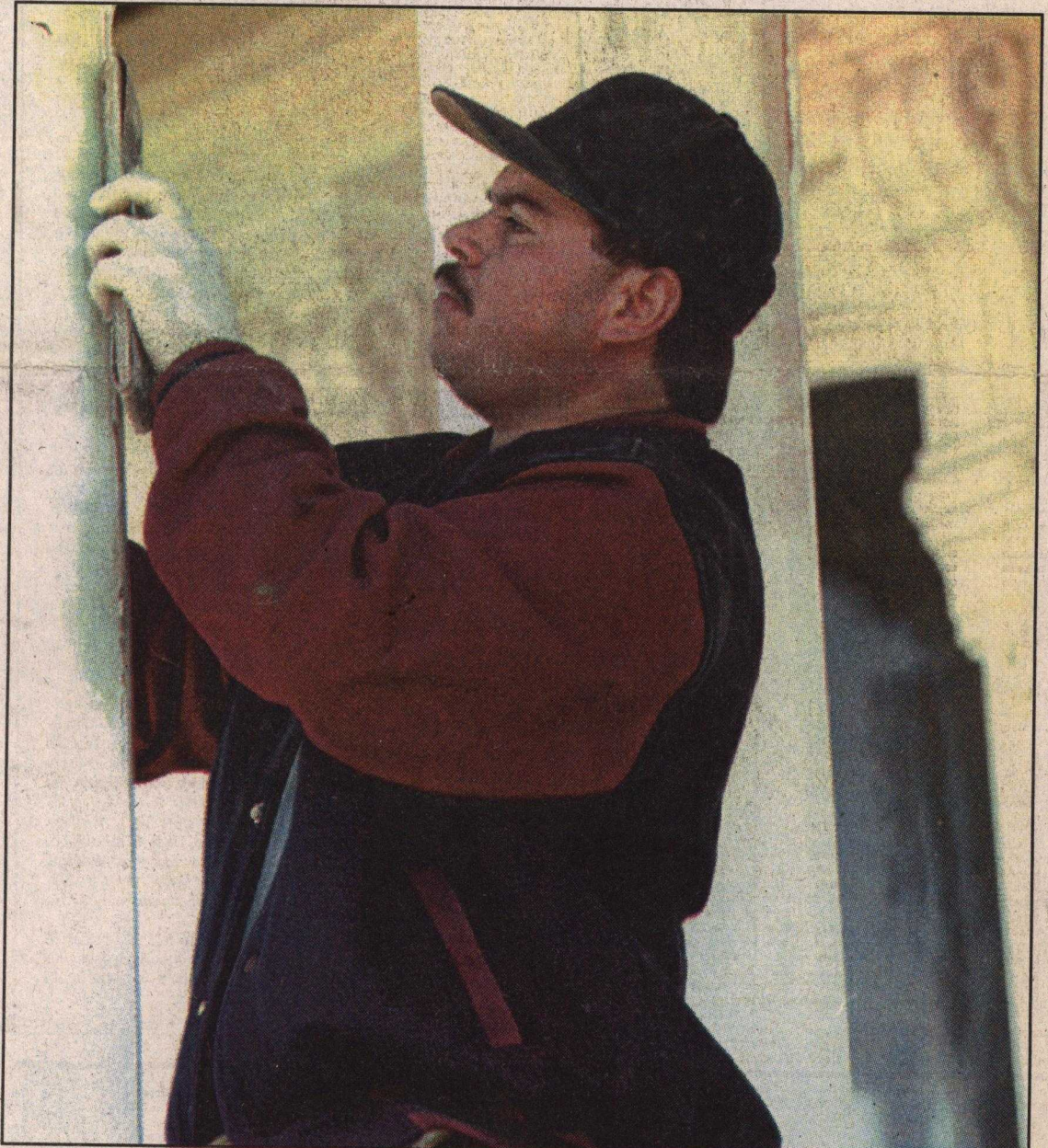
"Christian is an artist and he incredible at what he does," said Bowen.

The house was moved by trailers in two main sections



The Palmtag/Muzzio house, which once stood on Front Street in Watsonville, now overlooks San Andreas Road in Manresa Beach.

Tarmo Hannula/  
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Jose Leyva sands a porch column to prepare the surface for painting Monday.



# HOUSE

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about two years ago. Due to the size of the house, it had to be cut in half. The second story was cut off and moved with a crane to a transport truck. Rector said reassembling the two stories which incorporated two cranes, was a major feat.

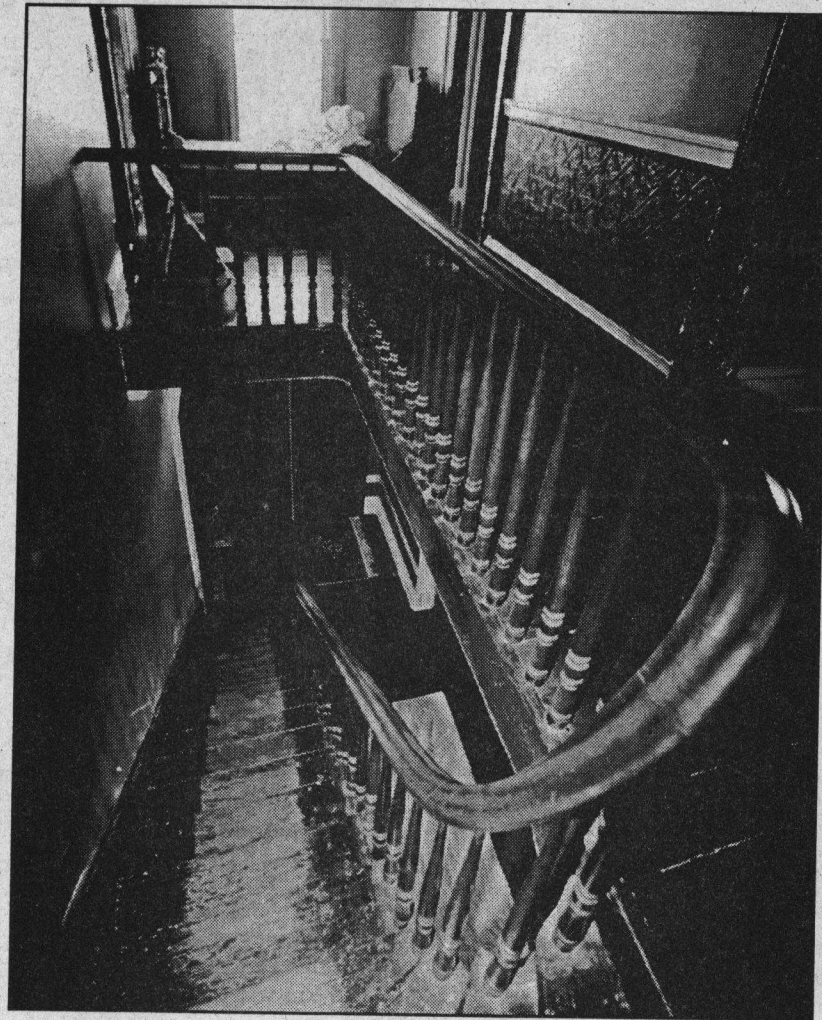
Rector said the Bowen family is trying as best as possible to maintain the original lines of the house which was built in the Italianate style. "They want to be as faithful as possible to the original design and to use as much of the original materials as possible," Rector said. "At times that can be time consuming." Many of the redwood planks are 12 to 15 inches in width and knot-free. "There is a great deal of virgin clear, first-growth redwood in the structure," Rector said. "This material today — if you could find it — would be extremely expensive."

One marble fireplace, which was preserved before the house was moved from Front Street, has now been installed as well as the original curving wood banister that leads up the steps to the second floor. Most of the door and window frames, inside and out, have been restored but are still made of the original materials.

Rector said the landscaping, which hasn't begun yet, will be epic in itself. A fountain will grace the front entrance.

Views from the tall windows, many of which still have 1800s glass, offer tremendous views of the surrounding heather fields, rolling farmlands along San Andreas Road and the Monterey Bay as it leads up the coast toward Santa Cruz.

Bowen said completion of the



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**Ornate, curving lines of the banister inside the Palmtag/Muzzio house on Sanderling Hill in Manresa Beach lead down from the second floor of the 1872 home that is being renovated.**

overall project is still about a year away. Rector, who also renovated the 1870s Rodger's House at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, said working on older homes brings new and unique problems that are constantly calling for innovative approaches. "We are add-

ing a great deal of seismic strength as we go," Rector said. "Our main focus is to make this house stand strong against the weather. I think the house will look great upon completion. Julie has maintained very high standards from the very beginning of this project."