

Historic Buildings

The Historic Adobe: There Is A Plan

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It is possible that Santa Cruz Mission's step-child, the School Street Adobe, could be rescued by descendants of the very people who built it more than 200 years ago — the Ohlone Indians.

The historic adobe, which is now in critical condition, is the only surviving structure of Mission Santa Cruz.

Purchased by the State of California in 1957, it has been waiting patiently on Mission Hill for more than 20 years, for something to happen.

Something good. Like a suggestion for its future use, a plan, and money.

There are two native American groups who have a plan, although they haven't had much encouragement: the Indian Council of Santa Cruz and the Ohlone Cultural Association of Watsonville.

In June, 1979, the Indian Council submitted their plan to Russell A. Cahill, director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, at Sacramento.

The Indian Council had applied to the state's Historical Restoration Building Grants-in-Aid program for a grant to restore the School Street Adobe.

The letter to Cahill states: "We are a non-profit organization... Our purpose is to provide resources for and by Indians... a traditional, cultural, educational and historical resource center to serve the Tri-County area... The Council would like to assume the responsibility for the building's restoration and its future operation..." (These are excerpts from the Council's letter.)

Three months later, in September, 1979, the state department answered, explaining that their delay was due to the state's analysis of the Council's proposal.

"It will not be possible for us to enter into an agreement with you on the terms and for the purposes which you described in your letter; the reasons for this decision are set forth below. On the other hand I believe that there is common ground upon which some mutually beneficial program can be established..."

The state's answering letter further pointed out that the School Street Adobe stands within Santa Cruz Mission State Historical Park (part of the State Park system). There exists a clear framework of restraints and guidelines which must be followed in developing the property for public use.

Another quote from the state's letter: "In the event that we are able to find common ground for a cooperative effort at Santa Cruz Mission State Historical Park, then it will be necessary to prepare a General Plan for the unit before any action is undertaken beyond the simple restoration of the structure..."

The letter went on to declare: "The State Department shall prepare a General Plan" and "We will be unable to authorize any pattern of use which does not include continuing enjoyment of the unit by the public..."

"At the present time (September 7, 1979) there is money available to accomplish a stabilization of the Adobe, to arrest deterioration and to assure its long-term survival..."

Nothing has happened since the Indian Council

Nearly half of it is, where the wall on the garden side is beginning to lean outward, away from the rest of the structure.

But the fact remains: the county Indian groups DO have a plan which makes sense. It also would seem logical that native Americans, who built it in the first place, should be allowed to restore and staff the building for their purposes which are educational and cultural.

"Our plan for the Adobe would open it to the general public," notes Daniel Lopez of the local groups.

The plan, as submitted to the state by Justine Vengua of the Santa Cruz American Indian Resource Center, includes the following: an Indian cultural center, an historical museum for California Mission history, a meeting place for local American Indian groups, an arts, crafts and cultural center, a branch office of the California Indian legal services, an office for the California Indian Heritage Commission, a center for elders of the tribes, an optical, dental and medical referral office and tutorial services for all children, Indian and non-Indian.

Aiding in drawing up the plan was Ed Castillo, Ph.D., of UCSC, who is a lecturer and authority on California Mission and Indian history and a member of the Heritage commission himself.

Lopez notes: "The estimate in October, 1979, for restoration of the adobe, was approximately \$225,000."

The estimate was proposed by Dale Gatlin, civil engineer with the Santa Cruz Indian Council of which he was then also director. Working with Gatlin on the proposed restoration was Gayle Daniel, an architect.

The Indian Council felt that since the Adobe was originally built by the local Mission Indians, its eventual use as an Indian cultural and educational center and museum, would be most appropriate.

At present the Neary half of the Adobe is in critical condition. The Rodriguez-Hopcroft half is in somewhat better shape but needs attention. (See accompanying article on this page.)

The Adobe was built prior to 1800, most authorities agree. It was either a garrison for Mission soldiers or the dormitory where Indian women and girls lived. As there were only four soldiers stationed at Santa Cruz Mission most of the time, it is highly logical and probable that judging from its size alone, the Adobe was the dormitory.

The local Indian groups have a plan — and a point. No one else has.

PROD Tried To Help

The School Street Adobe is really a duplex — no doubt the first in Santa Cruz.

When the State of California purchased the historic structure in 1957, half of it was owned by the Neary family, the other half by Cornelia Hopcroft. Cornelia is the adopted daughter of the Rodriguez family which acquired its half of the building sometime shortly after 1834.

A five-foot thick adobe wall separates the two household portions of the building. Cornelia's half is in better shape than the Neary half, but there are certain "bandaids" which should be applied to it, just to keep it from deteriorating, if nothing else.

Jeff Wells, PROD program manager, attempted in 1978 to gain permission from the state to do certain minor repairs that were needed regarding the wiring, plumbing and minor carpentry.

"Nothing that would in any way harm or change the historical aspects of the adobe," he emphasizes. "Just basically to make the place safer and more comfortable for Cornelia. No structural alterations were

considered. Her water heater wasn't working and there was a leak in the roof. Things like those."

Jeff notes that all he needed was the state's approval. There was a city grant of \$3500 available to do the minor jobs that he intended to do.

"I contacted Milton Frincke of the Monterey area of State Parks and Recreation," Jeff says.

Frincke told him that at that time the state had no plans to rehabilitate the property.

Jeff told him that the city of Santa Cruz was willing to provide money for the minor repairs. Frincke repeated the above statement, according to Jeff.

"PROD has helped 120 senior citizens with minor problems and repairs to their households," Jeff says. "But we weren't allowed to help Cornelia because she had deeded her half of the Adobe to the state in 1957."

Cornelia, who has lived in the adobe since she was a very young girl, and who has a lifetime tenancy in it, is now 101 years old.

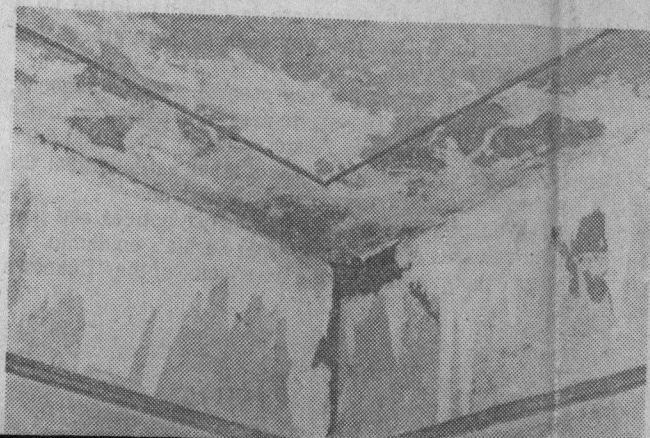


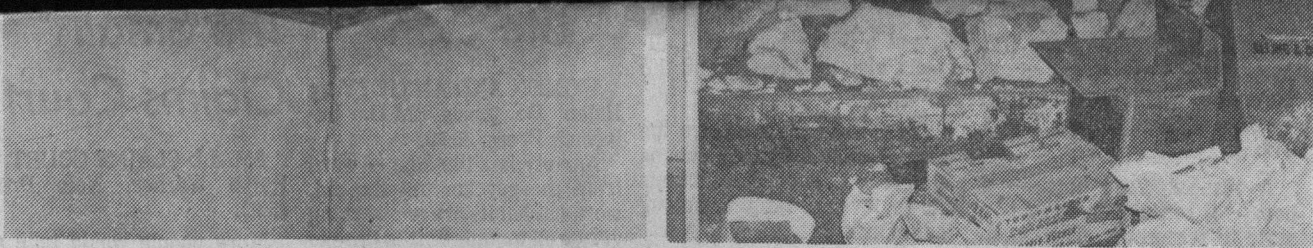
Daniel Lopez of the Santa Cruz Indian Council and Ohlone Cultural Association of Watsonville, groups which submitted a plan for the historic adobe to the state in June of 1979.

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The crack in the corner shows clearly where the back wall is beginning to pull away from the other walls of the School Street Adobe. This wall was damaged by water from a leaking roof in 1966 before the state replaced the roof. This is the Neary portion of the historic adobe duplex, sole surviving structure of Mission Santa Cruz and oldest building in the county. Assemblyman Henry Mello visited the adobe to view the damage with city and county representatives of historical and preservation groups last week.

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