

Adobe restoration uncovers historic wallpaper

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SANTA CRUZ — When the doors open on the Mission Adobe Saturday, Room 7 may give visitors pause.

The wallpaper, after all, is ... well, gaudy.

But therein lies the story.

"At that time when people (in California) ordered wallpaper from England or the East Coast, you just said, 'I want wallpaper,' and you got what you got," said local historian Edna Kimbro about the wall covering in the Armas room.

"So it's just wild. The colors are all different. It's very surprising to the contemporary eye."

According to Kimbro, the pieces of wallpaper uncovered during the restoration of the early 19th-century adobe revealed Armas was one of the first people in the state to use wallpaper.

In fact, it may be the oldest wallpaper uncovered. The Larkin House in Monterey was wallpapered earlier (in the 1830s), but nothing of that covering remains.

"It's the earliest existing wallpaper in California," said Kimbro. "We found scraps of it in enough places so we know where all of

them went."

Bradbury and Bradbury, a leading historic wallpaper reproducer in the nation, reconstituted the scraps using computer graphics, and then reproduced the patterns.

Felipe Armas bought five rooms in the adobe in 1848, and lived there with his large family until 1865.

In addition to the wallpaper, the remodeling of the Indian adobe in-

cluded putting glass in the windows, elaborate woodworking and new wooden floors.

Archaeologists found remnants of the family's pottery and ceramics, and they have been re-created for display.

Kimbro said furniture in the re-created living room are examples of pieces from the period, and not necessarily what the Armas family had.

"We knew they had home altars in Santa Cruz and elsewhere in California," said Kimbro, and one was built for the Armas room.

On it is an authentic reproduction of an altar cloth stitched by Santa Cruzan Martina Castro Lodge Depeaux, a wealthy landowner in the middle of the 19th century.

A painting of the cloth was on file in the National Archives in

Washington, D.C.

Freedom area resident Molly Porter, a member of the Stitchers by the Sea, volunteered to re-create the pattern on a piece of linen.

Her work covers the altar in the Armas room.

Castro Lodge Depeaux, by the way, died penniless in Capitola in 1890 after being "cheated out of her land" (which included all of what now is Soquel) by her sons-in-law,

said Kimbro.

When Armas moved to Pescadero in 1865, he was a sad man, said Kimbro.

Once an associate member of the county Court of Sessions (similar to the Board of Supervisors) and a general store merchant, Armas's influence faded with the Americanization of Santa Cruz, said Kimbro.

"With the American takeover, he was eclipsed," she said.