

Historical status for adobe

By KEITH MURAOKA

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WATSONVILLE — South County is now the proud owner of its first-ever state historical landmark.

The 145-year-old Castro Adobe, technically known as the Rancho San Andres Castro Adobe, was one of seven sites named a historical landmark Friday by the State Historical Resources Commission in Sacramento.

The two-story, 3,800-square-foot Castro Adobe is located in the Calabasas area. It is privately owned by Edna Kimbro, an architectural conservator, who is well known in local historical circles.

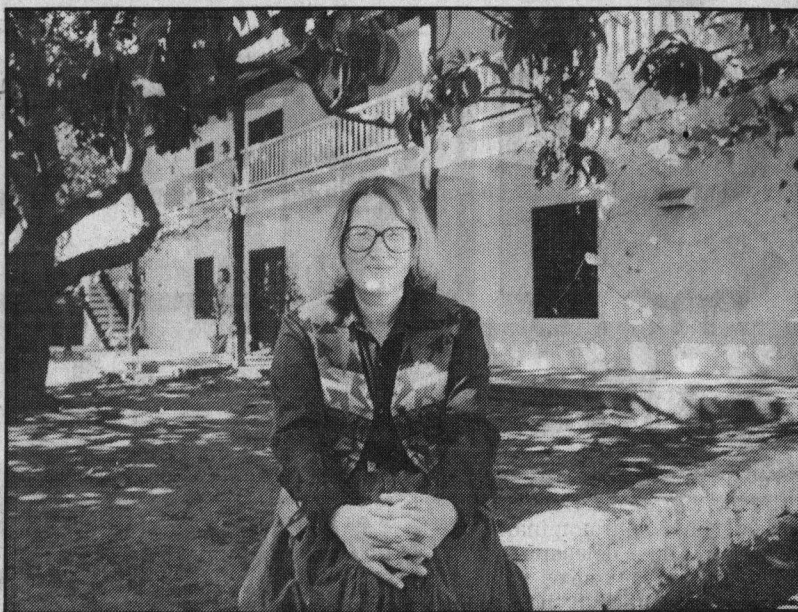
Kimbro hopes that the state historical landmark designation may result in state monies to repair the adobe, which was heavily damaged in the October 1989 earthquake. Santa Cruz County Parks Director Ben Angove agreed that the state designation "strengthens our position" as to the possibilities of getting grants to repair the adobe.

Much of the south wall of the adobe collapsed in the earthquake. There are deep cracks in the north wall and part of the original kitchen tottered over. The adobe has since been fenced off.

Kimbro, who had been living in the adobe, but now is living in a trailer on the site, said repair estimates vary widely — from \$300,000 to \$500,000. Neither the Federal Emergency Management Agency or federal Small Business Administration will repair the historical building, Kimbro said.

"Funds that are available to private homeowners will not cover this type of restoration, even though it was sustained in the earthquake," she said.

Besides hoping the state may



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

Owner Edna Kimbro hopes the building can be repaired.

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— Ben Angove,
county parks director

come to the rescue of the historical landmark, Kimbro has offered the adobe to the county for the price of the land alone. She has also been in contact with the state Parks Department.

"I don't care who repairs it, as long as it gets repaired," Kimbro said.

Her dream is to see the adobe restored and opened as a historic park, similar to Santa Cruz Mission. "It would be very important for the Pajaro Valley, considering 60 percent of the population is Hispanic," she said. "There's a crying need for a historic park in the Pajaro Valley."

Angove agreed that the adobe would make an ideal museum. "They're just not making them like that anymore," he said. "It truly is a historic treasure."

The county has already done a preliminary study on the adobe, Angove said. Purchase, renovation and repair of the adobe, as well as construction of a road and parking lot is estimated to cost \$1 million.

Of course, the county — like other public agencies — simply doesn't have the money.

"We've got it on hold unless we can identify a funding source," Angove said.

The state historical landmark designation makes the Castro Adobe one of eight in Santa Cruz County. The others range from the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk and Santa Cruz Mission to the Felton Covered Bridge.

The adobe is one of only four California Rancho-era adobes in the county and, by far, the largest one. It was built in 1846 by the Castro family, who along with the Rodriguez family, were the two principal founders of the Pajaro Valley. At one point, the Castro family owned more than 11,000 acres from Aptos to Watsonville.