

# CASTRO ADOBE STATE HISTORIC PARK



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**Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks** is working hard in partnership with California State Parks to open the Castro Adobe as a State Historic Park. Friends undertook the restoration of the Castro Adobe in order to preserve and interpret for the public the only remaining building of the Rancho era in the Pajaro Valley. The Castro Adobe is one of the finest examples of a rancho hacienda in the Monterey Bay area.

Castro Adobe State Historic Park will serve visitors interested in adobe architecture and preservation, as well as 4th graders studying the Mexican Rancho Period and 3rd graders studying local history. In the *cocina* (historic kitchen), the link between Latino traditions of today and our Californio heritage will be tangible as students experience tortillas, beans and *nopales* (cactus), which were produced in the Rancho period and are still enjoyed today. The Edna Kimbro Library and Archives – Center for Early California Studies will be opened to serve scholars and other visitors interested in the study of the cultural heritage of early California.

# HISTORY & RESTORATION PLAN



Credit: Pajaro Valley Historical Association

The Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe is one of the grandest of all adobe buildings representing the Mexican Rancho Period of California history (1821-1848). The Rancho period begins as Mexico first gained its independence from Spain and ends as California became part of the United States. During this period, as mission lands were secularized, families such as the Castros were granted large swaths of land to build on and use for ranching. Located near Watsonville, this two-story adobe hacienda features a spacious fandango room on the second floor and an original *cocina*, one of the very few remaining original rancho *cocina* in California. The original *carreta* (cart or wagon) road to the adobe is still in use, providing a tangible link to the history of the site. The Castro adobe is an excellent representation of a Monterey-Colonial adobe and is an important example of Northern California's Rancho period.

The Castro Adobe was built between 1848-1850 by Juan Jose Castro, son of Jose Joaquin Castro, who was an original Juan Bautista de Anza expedition member. Juan Jose built the Castro Adobe on the family's land grant, Rancho San Andrés. The rancho spread over two square leagues (a league is approximately 4,400 acres) ranging from the Monterey Bay to Corralitos and from the Pajaro River to Aptos. Eventually the extended Castro family owned over 250,000 acres, stretching from Pajaro to Aptos to Soquel almost to Davenport.

It was at the two-story adobe and surrounding land that the Castro family raised cattle for trading hides and producing tallow. They enjoyed fandangos on the second floor, as food was prepared on the long *brasero* (masonry range) in the *cocina*. The fandangos featured dancing, music and food to entertain the Castro family and friends. There were nearby beaches for fishing, sloughs for frogs, and meat from cattle, sheep and goats. Prickly pear hedges provided *nopales* to eat and formed fences to keep the livestock out of the fields. To lighten their work, they had oxen and mules to plow the fields, barns for storage and livestock shelter, and fields of wheat, corn, beans and potatoes.

The family utilized former mission Indians to construct the adobe and do most of the work inside and outside, including grinding the corn and wheat for tortillas and helping with the livestock at the rancho. The house offered plenty of room for fiestas and overnight guests. It enjoyed a beautiful view looking eastward. The adobe overlooked the road from Jose Amesti's redwoods to the Castro *embarcadero* (wharf or landing), so they could charge those shipping lumber out. The adobe was built one room deep, so the sunshine could penetrate the rooms from two sides brightening the otherwise somewhat dark, cool rooms.

# HISTORY & RESTORATION PLAN



Credit: Pajaro Valley Historical Association

The Castro family eventually lost title to the land and it was purchased by Danish-born Hans Hansen. Hansen completed many alterations to the building. Subsequent owners made changes as well, each acting as stewards of the historic adobe, including noted adobe conservationist Edna Kimbro and her husband Joe, who purchased the adobe in 1988. In 1989, the Loma Prieta Earthquake severely damaged the building, rendering it uninhabitable. The cocina north wall and the south wall of the main house were damaged and in need of reconstruction. The Kimbro's advocacy for restoration of the building resulted in the sale of the property to California State Parks in 2002. In 2007, in partnership with State Parks, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks managed and funded the construction of 2,500 adobe bricks used for reconstruction and subsequent seismic stabilization.

Current projects at the Castro Adobe include restoration of the *cocina*, Potter-Church garden restoration, second floor stabilization and integration of a lift to the second floor for full access. The unprecedented partnership between Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks and California State Parks will result in the newest State Park in Santa Cruz County!

Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe State Historic Park's unique cultural resources include the historic adobe building itself and the overall

historic rural setting. The Monterey-Colonial adobe provides the opportunity to interpret the Mexican Rancho period in Santa Cruz through the lens of the Castro family and their experience in 1840s California, as well as the Californio experience during the cultural transition after Statehood.

## PHASE 1 RESTORATION

Phase 1 of the restoration effort is complete, lasted 10 years and included numerous milestones such as:

- Creating a grassroots organizing effort to lobby the State of California to purchase the property.
- Crafting more than 2,500 adobe bricks, weighing 85 pounds each, to repair sections of the building that were damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.
- Building a steel "rib-cage" inside the walls to support the building during a future earthquake; repairing the roof to be historically accurate.
- Repairing hundreds of feet of cracks in the adobe walls.
- Painting numerous coats of protective lime wash finish to the exterior of the building.

More than 245 individuals, foundations and businesses have supported Phase 1 of the project, as well as more than 130 volunteers who donated thousands of hours of labor.

## PHASE 2 RESTORATION

Now in Phase 2, the restoration effort is focused on continued preservation, preparing for public access and beginning a multi-stage opening of the park. Active projects include:

- Preservation of the *cocina*.
- Design and construction work to stabilize the second floor and make it accessible.
- Restoration of the garden, originally designed by famed landscape architect Thomas Church.
- Acquisition of the neighboring Kimbro property, which will become the visitor center for the park and home of the Edna Kimbro Library and Archives.

**Truly a labor of love, your support is needed in order to open this important historic property to the public as the Castro Adobe State Historic Park!**

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# PROJECTS: COCINA



Credit: Escenas Mexicanas del Siglo XIX, by Octavio Colmenares

The Castro Adobe *cocina* (historic kitchen) is significant as one of the few remaining original Rancho *cocinas* in California. Restoration of the *cocina* will allow visitors to experience daily life at a Mexican rancho, including food preparation in the *cocina* and women's roles in Californio culture, as well as overall life at the Castro Adobe including how the family used the building and site. In the *cocina*, the link between Latino traditions of today and Californio heritage will be tangible through the similarities of food production on the *braseo* (masonry range). Visitors, including students, will have the unique opportunity to prepare and taste tortillas, beans and nopales, which were part of life in the Rancho period as well as today.

#### To date, restoration work on the cocina has included:

- Project team additions including renowned adobe conservation architect Anthony Crosby, to guide the restoration project, and noted structural engineer, Fred Webster, an authority on seismic performance of historic adobe structures.
- Archeological investigation of the interior of the cocina, including position and placement of original braseo, as well as investigation of the floor to determine original earthen floor composition and location.
- Installation of a new roof and historically accurate earthen floor.
- Painstaking removal of all non-historic latex paint on adobe walls.
- Fabrication of historically accurate cocina doors.
- Construction of a reproduction braseo.

#### Upcoming work on the cocina will include:

- Restoration of wall finishes, using mud plaster.
- Installation of the historically accurate cocina doors.
- Concealment of steel material utilized in seismic upgrade.
- Final structural stabilization of the north cocina wall and roof system.
- Installation of electrical service to provide ambient lighting and interpretive exhibits.
- Development of an Interpretive Plan.
- Installation of interpretive panels.
- Development of a historically accurate Furnishing Plan.
- Furnishing of the cocina with historically accurate cooking implements, reproduction food items and furniture.
- Development and implementation of an accessibility plan.
- Implementation of life safety standards including fire egress.

Once the *cocina* is restored and the accessible pathway is created, Friends will work with State Parks to begin opening the cocina to school groups, Pajaro Valley organizations and individuals, including members of local founding families. Friends will also conduct outreach throughout Santa Cruz County and beyond.

# PROJECTS: GARDEN



Located to the west of the adobe, the Potter-Church Garden was constructed from 1968-1972, when the property was owned by David and Elizabeth Potter. The Potters were close friends with landscape architect Thomas Church, who consulted on the design of the garden and provided on-site sketches. Church is significant as the founder of the modern movement in landscape architecture known as the "California Style." He completed master planning for UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz and Parkmerced in San Francisco, as well as countless residential designs. The garden provides a central gathering place for group tours and special events. Friends is working to restore the garden, following Thomas Church's original design.

The garden was thoroughly researched and analyzed in the report, "Garden Restoration Report for the Potter Garden," prepared in 2011 by Pam-Anela Messenger, landscape architect and Thomas Church expert. In the report, Messenger details the evolution of the garden and identifies significant plant and tree species. She also developed a template and landscape plan to enable restoration of the garden.

The Potter-Church garden is a unique outdoor space created by a landscape architect of national significance. The garden helps tell the story of later owners of the adobe and their stewardship of the site through 1988.

Landscape contractor Laura Livingston and landscape designer Kathleen Schaeffer have been hired by Friends to restore the Potter-Church Garden. Construction work is planned to begin in early 2014. Restoration work includes landscaping, paths, drainage and irrigation, lighting, and fence and gate repairs.

Credit: Potter Family Collection



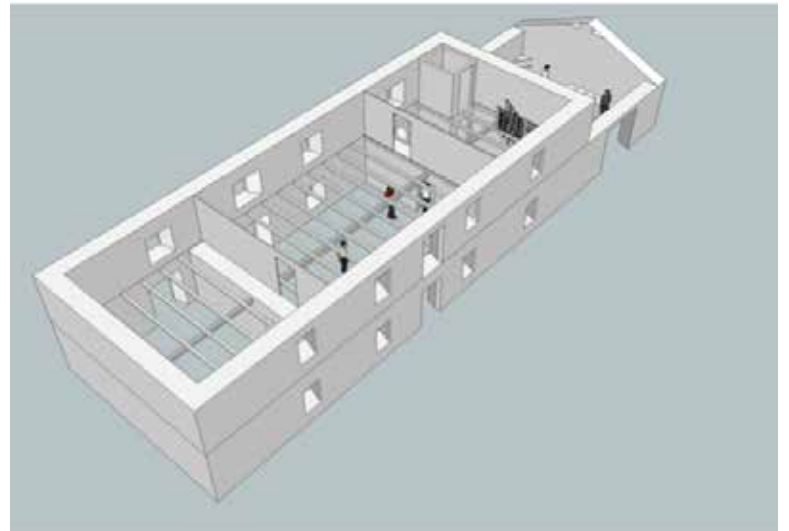
# PROJECTS: SECOND FLOOR STABILIZATION



The second floor is significant for its use during fandangos. For Californios, the fandango was a major social event, at which family and friends danced, played music and enjoyed lavish feasts during the Rancho era.

In order to accommodate visitors, the second floor requires stabilization and access improvements. Restoration architect Tony Crosby and structural engineer Fred Webster have been working to increase the load capacity through installation of a single steel beam in the first floor rooms that will extend the length of each room to support second story floor joists. The purchase and installation is estimated to be complete in 2014.

To increase access to the second floor, a lift will be installed. The lift is expected to be installed in 2014. The Castro Adobe lift project is considered to be a model for other two-story adobe buildings because the design allows access for all while maintaining interpretive qualities of the site.



Top image credit: Tradiciones Nuevo Mexicanas:  
Hispano Arts and Culture of New Mexico, by Mary Montano



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## PROJECTS: BRICK MAKING



In 1989, the Castro Adobe was seriously damaged by the Loma Prieta Earthquake, ending its use as a private residence. The north cocina wall was severely damaged in the earthquake and careful evaluation concluded that the wall must be reconstructed. Many adobe bricks would be needed to complete the reconstruction of the wall. In the summer of 2007, under the leadership of Friends board members and Project Manager Jessica Kusz, Friends partnered with adobe brick-making expert Tim Aquilar and began the process of making 2,500 bricks, each measuring 14 inches x 28 inches and weighing approximately 85 lbs.

Because it was critical to ensure that the new adobe bricks were compatible with the existing adobe bricks, testing of existing adobe bricks was done to reveal the sand, silt and clay content. After significant research by the project team to identify the right local dirt choice to match the existing adobe bricks, Rick Santee, owner of Santa Cruz County-based Central Home Supply, was selected as the supplier. The first 40 yards of dirt was delivered July 27, 2007. The brick-making project relied on a force of more than 150 volunteers, aided by California Conservation Corps workers. After being formed, the bricks had to be lightly watered daily to ensure a slow drying process. Neighbors assisted with this task. After about 20 days, when the bricks were stable, the curing process required the bricks to be turned on their sides, an arduous task due to the weight and fragility of each brick. Despite this, among the 2,500 bricks that were produced only 14% suffered breakage. The finished bricks were then loaded onto pallets, ready for use in the restoration of the adobe.



# CASTRO ADOBE SUPPORTERS

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks Board of Directors and staff would like to thank all the individuals, organizations, and businesses who donated to the Castro Adobe Brick Campaign and have made saving the Castro Adobe a reality.

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