



CASTRO ADOBE STATE HISTORIC PARK RESTORATION REACHES MILESTONE WITH UNVEILING OF 'IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK' EXHIBITS, MULTIMEDIA EXPERIENCES

Weekend Open House events provide new public access

May 29, 2024—WATSONVILLE, CA — Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) today announced that Castro Adobe State Historic Park has been enriched with museum-quality exhibits to share the cultural and social history of the historic site through a theme of “If these walls could talk.”

Following the completion of previous structural and safety upgrades to the building following severe damage from the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the Castro Adobe now features highly accessible interpretative information, touchable exhibits and multimedia offerings to enhance visitors’ experiences and tell the story of the Castro family and their lives on the rancho. View artifacts unearthed on the property, learn a traditional dance in the *Fandango* room, enjoy a tortilla in the *cocina*, and more.

The public can [tour the Castro Adobe](#) and explore the new exhibits during monthly open house events from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM on June 15, Aug. 11, Sept. 21, Oct. 13, Nov. 16 and Dec. 8. Learn more and sign up for a tour at www.SantaCruzStateParks.as.me/CastroAdobeOpenHouse.

The two-story Castro Adobe, constructed in 1849-50 and damaged in the 1989 earthquake, was restored through a special collaboration between California State Parks, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks and hundreds of community members. Following restoration of the building in 2022, fabrication and installation of the exhibits is now complete.

“The Castro Adobe has an amazing story waiting to be told and the day has finally arrived for visitors to experience it,” said Chris Spohrer, Santa Cruz District Superintendent for State Parks. “We are so excited to celebrate this decades-long collaborative process to preserve and interpret the Castro.”

The goal of the Castro Adobe State Historic Park exhibits is to imagine “If These Walls Could Talk” and what would they say to a visitor who comes to learn about the historic adobe and life in a Mexican rancho. The exhibits not only tell the varied history of the site but the walls tell you the story with painted text and projected multimedia displays, including a video of traditional *Fandango* dancing, featuring musicians and dancers in historically accurate costumes.

“The community-led restoration efforts have come from a place of great appreciation for the cultural history of the property and the region,” Friends Executive Director Bonny Hawley said. “Our goal has always been to create a space that can tell these stories for generations to come. We’re so proud of the work our community did to make this happen.”

The Sibbett Group has provided planning and design for the park, focusing on the adobe, to provide innovative exhibits for the building. Gizmo Art Production fabricated and installed the exhibit elements including audio visual components, lighted glass walls, artifact shadowboxes, historic images and painted text on the adobe walls. Historic illustrator David Rickman created historically accurate views of life in the *sala* as well as an

iconic image of a woman on horseback. Miller Maxfield, Inc., and Lucid Sound and Picture produced videos featuring traditional *Fandango* music and dancing performed by Los Arribeños and the Alta California Dance Company.

About Castro Adobe State Historic Park

Located in Larkin Valley, near Watsonville, the two-story Castro Adobe, built between 1849-1850, is one of the finest examples of a rancho hacienda in the Monterey Bay area. In 2007, Friends began the years-long effort to restore the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe in collaboration with California State Parks. Over the next 17 years, Friends, State Parks, and the community came together to repair and restore the historic adobe inside and out. Work included earthquake repairs using hundreds of 85-pound adobe bricks made on site; seismic stabilization and a new roof; strengthening the second story with the insertion of an innovative steel beam; installation of a lift to guarantee universal access to the second floor; the addition of electrical and fire suppression systems; restoration of the historic *cocina* (kitchen) and the Potter-Church Garden; procurement of historic furnishings and completion of interpretive exhibits.

Friends produced an award-winning short documentary to mark the completion of the building's restoration in 2022: <https://youtu.be/rI4pXzt5ymY>. In 2023, the Rancho San Andrés Castro Adobe was awarded a Preservation Design Award for Restoration by the California Preservation Foundation.

About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Established in 1976, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) is a vital partner with California State Parks, creatively working to ensure our cherished local parks and beaches are thriving and available to all. Friends' innovative and collaborative community partnership provides support and investment for education, equity and inclusion, conservation, facilities improvements, historic preservation and cultural events. Friends currently operates a robust online ParkStore offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. Friends also operates ParkStores at Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff and Wilder Ranch. Learn more at www.ThatsMyPark.org or via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#) and [YouTube](#).

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