

The next time you drive along 17 Mile Drive near Bird Rock, be sure and take note of our shining historical star, the Casita de Lemos, or Gingerbread House as it is locally known. You may have noticed the colorful new roof painstakingly recreated with the guidance of board member Zigmont "Jody" Le Towt III. Numerous repairs have been made to the exterior of the house. The stucco finish has been restored and will be painted to match the original color once the interior is renovated.

Many of Pedro de Lemos' "mystery building methods" were revealed during renovation. Pedro may have been a painter, printmaker, architect, illustrator, writer, lecturer, Stanford Museum curator and influential theorist... but builder??

The first mystery was encountered after removal of eleven tons of concrete from the roof. Without applying the normal layer of waterproof roofing paper, Pedro nailed chicken wire directly to the roof decking and then applied concrete up to 4" thick. Much of the decking had rotted away. The mystery: what was holding up the roof?

Pedro, or whoever helped him, took a whimsical view of framing. Normal wall framing spaces studs 16" apart. Pedro's studs were spaced 18", 19" or 21" and were randomly made of Douglas fir, pine, redwood, or left over tongue and groove flooring. Areas have recently been completely reframed to meet code.

One wall on the lower level measured 32" longer than the corresponding wall in the kitchen immediately above it. The rotted kitchen floor

collapsed revealing dry rot in supporting beams and an unknown chamber below, thus explaining the difference in measurements. The chamber had been concealed by the kitchen pantry above and the back of a closet on the floor below. The east wall of the kitchen, also badly decayed, was



*"Before."  
A view of the entryway to the  
Gingerbread House showing  
its deteriorated condition.*



*"After" the new exterior. Interior work is still needed.*

suspended in mid-air, being held up by two large nails at either end. The mystery: what had been holding up the wall, the roof, the north end of the upper level, and the 300 lb refrigerator that had been removed from the kitchen just a month before? A new bearing wall has been constructed and stairs installed in the discovered chamber.

A laser level revealed that the block wall and northwest corner of the building were 2" lower than the rest of the

room. Crawl space under this floor allowed access to the corner where a large pile of sand was found. The sand was dug out, revealing another mystery: why did Pedro, having run out of concrete before the west and north footings could meet to form the corner, throw a large piece of redwood timber into the void and cover it with sand and complete the final framing above? Concrete has been poured to replace the sand and the floor now rests on the new footing.

This adventure in restoration of a landmark that qualifies for listing in the California and National Registers at the local level of significance has become a major financial commitment for the Conservancy. Once fully renovated, it will provide significant revenue to fund maintenance and conservation of 1,350 acres of open space under Conservancy purview. Find out about open space properties and other projects underway at <http://www.delmonteforestconservancy.org>.