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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Biry-Ahr House Restoration Underway

CASTROVILLE, Texas, March 4, 2016: The City of Castroville and the Castro Colonies Heritage Association (CCHA) announced that construction started on the restoration of the Jacob Biry – Steven Ahr Historic House on Monday, Feb. 29, 2016.

The Biry-Ahr house restoration is the first Phase of the planned Castro Colonies Living History Center that is intended to present the culture and history of the Castro Colonies of Castroville, Quihi, Vandenburg, and D'Hanis that were established in Medina County, Texas from 1844 through 1847. The Center is being developed and maintained under a corporative agreement between the CCHA and the City of Castroville and is planned to include:

- restoration of the Jacob Biry / Steve Ahr historic home into a living history museum;
- restoration of the existing historic dogtrot cabin into a living history museum; and
- construction of a new Visitor Center / Museum Building.

A local firm, Keystone Construction & Remodeling, is the General Contractor selected to perform the restoration. Some of Keystone's major subcontractors are the same firms that recently completed the restoration of the nearby Landmark Inn State Historic Site.

In 1975, the CCHA was formed to bring together those people who were interested in the culture and history of the Castro Colonies established in Medina County, Texas during 1844 through 1847. The CCHA Mission, in part, is to promote this unique heritage by: "Use of funds accumulated through royalties, memorials, grants, gifts, the sale of books and other merchandise, and also residual moneys of other sources left after general operating expenses to establish and operate an appropriate museum."

In 2005, the CCHA and the City of Castroville developed a plan to acquire the property known as the Jacob Biry – Steven Ahr Historic Home and Barn Complex; and to work together toward the development and operation of a museum. In 2006, the City of

Castroville purchased the property, located at 309 Paris Street in Castroville, for \$50,000, with financial support from members of the community, individual members of the CCHA, and a grant from the Texas Historical Commission.

Plans for the Biry-Ahr House include using artifacts and historic furnishing from area families to present the story of the Castro Colonies. Interpretative displays and interactive programs are intended to convey the colonization story and early history of the development of the Medina County area. There is also the possibility that in the future the Center could serve as a repository of genealogy records of the Castro immigration families. Area families interested in this program can contact Mary King with the CCHA for additional details at 210-854-9794.

The City of Castroville Area Economic Development Council, the CCHA, The Friends of the Landmark Inn, the Medina County Historic Commission, and the Castroville Conservation Society are currently working together to jointly promote the Castro Colonies Living History Center, the Landmark Inn State History Site, the Historic Steinbach House and other historic sites in Medina County. Councilman Philip King said, "The hope is these sites will become a history tourism venue, as well as an education opportunity for area citizens and local school children."



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