



*Founded in 1981, Chico Heritage Association—CHA—is an all-volunteer not-for-profit dedicated to the preservation of Chico’s cultural heritage.*

**April 2020**

*Written and edited by the CHA board.*

### **CHA Historical Research Resources & Covid-19 Hours**

Want to know more about the history of your neighborhood, or a particular building, event, or person? An important part of our mission is to provide resources and assistance for those interested in researching local history or conducting historical preservation. To that end, we maintain a significant collection of documents, maps, etc., that chronicle different aspects of life in and around Chico. It turns out that quite a volume of material has been published on the city over the years, but a lot of it can be difficult to find and access. It has been our goal to collect and make available as much of that material possible, and make it of use to our community.

Normally, our office hours are Monday through Thursday from 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm, but we are at present closed to the public due to the Covid-19 crisis. Until it’s safe to reopen, we are answering questions and providing research assistance via email at [chicoheritage@gmail.com](mailto:chicoheritage@gmail.com), or telephone at (530) 345-7522. Our volunteer staff will get back to you as quickly as possible, but please allow some time as we are not in the office every day.

### **Historic Preservation Month**

We have decided to err on the side of caution and so cancelled all our Historic Preservation Month events. We are hoping to plan some alternate events later this year, once the crisis has safely passed. Until then, you can read about the history of Preservation Month and CHA’s involvement in an article written by board member Liz Stewart in this newsletter.

### **Join CHA’s Facebook Page!**

Join our Facebook page for weekly (and sometimes daily) posts about the history of our community. Just search Facebook for “Chico Heritage Association.”

### **CHA Mission Statement**

The mission of the CHA is to encourage and support the preservation, maintenance, enhancement, restoration and protection of buildings, neighborhoods, monuments, artifacts, and natural resources that exemplify or constitute a part of the historic, architectural and cultural heritage of the greater Chico area.

### **CHA Meetings and Board of Directors**

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at 225 Main Street, Suite D.

*Board meetings are suspended during the Covid-19 crisis.*

Rod Thomson: President, Richard Macias: Vice President, Liz Stewart: Secretary, Sandy Lieberum: Treasurer, Margaret Siemsen, Nancy Deter, John Gallardo, Shelley Hutchens, Paul Lieberum, Eric Norlie, Adrienne Pustejovsky, Frank Roberts, and Randy Taylor

## President's Message

In a speech given in 1898, Member of Parliament Joseph Chamberlain told his audience,

I think that you will all agree that we are living in most interesting times. I never remember myself a time in which our history was so full, in which day by day brought us new objects of interest, and, let me say also, new objects for anxiety.

True, Chamberlain's claim about "living in most interesting times" has been overused to the point that it threatens to become cliché, but it certainly seems applicable to the present moment.

There have been many epidemics in world history, and some spread to become pandemics. Starting in 1347 Europe was ravaged by plagues that originated in the steppes of Eurasia earlier that century, spreading westward with merchants and other travelers until nearly all of Afro-Eurasia had suffered disastrous outbreaks that killed between 30 and 50 percent of the population. In some places plague continued to break out from time to time for several centuries. It returned in the mid-nineteenth century and became a global crisis, reaching San Francisco at the turn of the century where it circulated for several years.

When European adventurers and colonists started arriving in the New World, they brought with them a host of diseases to which the peoples of the Americas had no resistance. It is impossible to know the full scale of the loss of human life, but evidence indicates that entire American Indian civilizations were destroyed as a result, and the native population of the Americas plummeted by somewhere between fifty and ninety percent. To put that rather abstract range in perspective, it represents between ten and twenty percent of the entire *global* population at the time.

Influenza was the primary viral threat to mankind in the twentieth century, with pandemics occurring in 1957 and again in 1968. But it was the 1918 influenza pandemic that set the modern world on high alert thanks to its previously unforeseen virulence and lethality. For many years, historians calculated that the disease claimed approximately 50 million lives globally; more recent estimates have raised that number to 100 million, with around 675,000 deaths in the U.S. One characteristic that made the 1918 flu so much deadlier than usual was the fact that it tended to kill young, healthy adults more than any other part of the population because it turned their own immune systems against them. Something good did come out of this global crisis: establishment of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and similar organizations which have been on the watch for future and developing pandemics ever since.

The reason I bring all that up is to propose the following: The Covid-19 pandemic is worrisome, but, based on current information, it does not appear capable of the same level of destruction as the diseases discussed above. As of April 22, WHO reported 36,405 coronavirus related deaths worldwide, while the CDC tallied 44,575 in the United States. If casualties reach the higher end estimates put forth by the Trump administration, that would mean a death rate of around 1 in every 1,636 U.S. citizens. The rate for the 1918 influenza pandemic in the U.S. was 1:152, more than ten times higher. I have spent a lot of time studying both that event and the demographic collapse of Europe due to the Black Death. For what it's worth, this historian is of the opinion that, unless it mutates into something deadlier, the Covid-19 pandemic is not what many doomsayers are claiming.

But that is not to say we should not worry about Covid-19! We should, and we likewise should all heed the recommendations of expert medical people. At present, social distancing and staying at home remain the very best options available for limiting the impact of the disease by slowing its spread. That is why we made the decision to close the CHA office for the duration, even before Governor Newsom issued his executive order. All of our members are important to us, so we hope you are adhering to the guidelines too.

The one thing all the world's pandemics to date have in common is this: humanity survived and returned to its long-term pattern of continual growth and productivity. That has occurred in every instance to date, and it will be the case with Covid-19.

Finally, I predict that everyone who stockpiled toilet paper is going to feel pretty sheepish when this is all over.

My best to you all,

Rod Thomson, CHA President

## A Partial History of the CHA Preservation Awards

By Liz Stewart, CHA Board

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by Congress in 1949, began sponsoring Preservation Week in 1973. CHA was organized in 1981 and announced its first preservation events the following year. They included walking tours, a slide presentation by John Nopel, a photography exhibit at La Salle's on Broadway, and an antique show at Stansbury House. The week ended with special services at Bidwell Memorial Church and Bethel A.M.E. Church. That spring marked the surge of the "Adopt a Building" program in Chico State classes led by Giovanna Jackson. Student research contributed to the success of the Historic Building Survey done by volunteers throughout the community. These events formed the basis for most of our subsequent Preservation Week and Preservation Month celebrations that followed, though we have not given awards every year. And not all were given in May which is National Preservation Month.

Long-time members may remember our "Pig Out for Preservation" barbecues. The first one was held in Dave Kilbourne's home on Alamo Avenue; later they were held on the lawn at Michele Shover's home on East 12<sup>th</sup> St. We encouraged competitive croquet matches, members contributed great food; there was piano entertainment and beer was donated by Sierra Nevada Brewery.

In 1985 CHA began giving restoration awards. They went to four well-known buildings: **Silverstein Park**, 430 Broadway; **Lee-Mansfield House**, 344 Flume St.; the **Burkett House**, 229 Flume; and **Little Chapman Mansion**, 256 East 12<sup>th</sup> St.

For at least two years we gave "History Awards" at our mid-winter Annual Meetings. These have honored **Clarence McIntosh**, **Ted Meriam** and **John Nopel**, and later **Michele Shover** and **Joseph McGie**.

In May 1989 CHA received a Governor's Award from George Dukemejian for establishing "a strong local preservation organization" and for "surveying historically significant resources." The Greek House Beautification contest was our focus for two separate years; fraternities and sororities competed for awards by doing lots of work on their homes- with the assistance of several local businesses. **Stuart and Sally Thompson**, owners of **Lee Pharmacy** at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Broadway, received an award for Interior Renovation, "maintaining a sense of history of the space." CHA has not limited itself to a single set of criteria, but has looked around to see what exciting work was being done locally by historians, home and business owners. We recognized the Thunderbird motel for keeping its familiar sign in place, and the owners of M & T Ranch for restoration of their historic **Reavis water tower**. We gave awards for Best Façade Improvement, the **Waterland Breslauer Building**, 4<sup>th</sup> & Broadway; Best Restoration of a Public Building to the City of Chico for the **Old City Hall** 5<sup>th</sup> & Main; Best Adaptive Use of An Historic Structure and Exemplary Use of the Mills Act to David Meraz for his work on a **former church at 12<sup>th</sup> & Laurel**; and a Rehabilitation award to Father Hanson, pastor of the **St. Augustine of Canterbury Episcopal Church** at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Salem. We have singled out **Mike and Nancy Campos**, **Ray Murdock** and **Wayne Cook** for preservation awards at different times for their work on properties in the South of Campus Neighborhood Historic District.

More information about the historic structures mentioned above can be found on our website under a link to the Historic Resources Inventory or on the City's website under the Planning Department.



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Bidwell Bowl Amphitheater; Faculty Row Houses; Humboldt Wagon Ruts and Rock walls; Downtown Post Office; The Esplanade; Anna Barney/Dean House; Bridge Replacements; Heritage Trees; A.M.E. Church; Train Depot.