

CHICO HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

p.o. box 2078 chico, ca 95927

Don't Give Us That Old Story

Again and again the old story: "the building can't be saved", "it's too far gone", "it would cost too much". How many treasures has Chico lost because owners were at the mercy of bad advice?

All too often buildings are pronounced unsalvageable on the basis of surface delapidation. Perpetrators of this disservice not only mislead owners but damage the fabric of the whole community when their well-intended, but improper advice leads to the decimation of historically or architecturally valuable structures. This pattern is difficult to counter because it often emanates from pillars of the community: contractors, do-it-yourself "experts", and all around "know it alls". Often the source is a contractor or architect whom we pay good money to know; all too often these professionals believe they can make more money a lot more easily by starting a building from the ground up.

What sometimes leads to these snap judgments to which we are all vulnerable? Would you believe--delapidated porches! According to Ray Murdoch, often porches and porchsteps in older homes were not built on solid foundations. Therefore, when they shift and are not repaired, the building itself appears crooked. Another signal for the bulldozer is--would you believe--bad paint. Cracked, alligatored and peeling paint all are produced by improper preparation. (Many do-it-yourselfers, and even contractors, discount the skill and knowledge required for proper paint application.) Poor use of color or neglect of highlighting architectural detail usually produces a "dead look" except to the appreciative eye. Builder Laurence Boag points out that some of the best old wood will have the marks of age, to his eye, a valuable patina. When a porch post has rotted or other areas appear tattered, the common leap in judgment, even by practiced builders, is to conclude that the substructure must be defective or "too far gone". Stop and think: did the consultant who has pronounced this doom donned coveralls and examined the crawlspace with a good light? Rarely.

A good example of the result is Chico's Third Street houses owned by Chico State. The University's policy is to permit the deterioration of these buildings with a view to invite support for their destruction. In this process, engineering reports that deemed the houses in sound structural condition were submerged, though later ferreted out by John Gallardo, President of Chico Heritage Association. State experts are now denying the University permission, on this basis and others, to tear the buildings down. The University Trustees are now claiming them way too valuable to trade for a street! --There are experts and there are "experts"!

The cost of rehabilitating an antique building depends on what the buyer wants to make of it. We do not recommend that buyers restructure an old building unless they have the utmost sensitivity and deep pockets. If you can use

the structure you begin with, the costs of rehabilitation may be conservative. This is particularly the case if you can do some of the work (well) yourself. After all, much of the work is simple but repetitious--scraping, sanding, cleaning up. Rehabilitating old houses can cost as much as building a new one but, if family and friends help, they may cost less. The end result is often worth a great deal more than the conventional modern home.

If the building you are interested in is plumb and level, do not be deterred by deteriorated detail. This is feasible to correct. Sometimes, frankly, the building itself warrants foundation and roofwork. The author has had at least fifty feet of foundation replaced in her home with no trouble and no regrets.

If you want advice we recommend the services of Laurence Boag, Ray Murdoch and James Worth as reliable and reasonable. All are experienced rehabilitators of antique structures.

Michele Shover



Annual Meeting

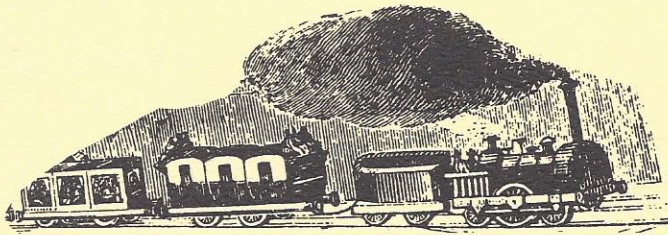
We are very fortunate that recently-appointed State Historic Preservation Officer Kathryn Gualtieri has agreed to be our featured speaker at the Chico Heritage Association annual meeting. She has said that one of her priorities is preservation in northern California and we expect that her talk will address that issue.

Another special feature is a display of artifacts recovered by Ray Murdoch during diggings in basements, outhouses and other interesting sites. There are treasures in those nether regions!

We are calling for volunteers to help us with refreshments. Any such generous individuals should call Robie Amer at 891-6665.

The date is TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11th. We will notify you later of the time and place.

Giovanna Jackson
Michele Shover



Southern Pacific Depot Hit By Vandals

Vandals have been striking at the Chico Southern Pacific Depot to such an extent that the Chico Heritage Board of Directors voted at their December meeting to discuss with the City the desirability of removing the contents of the depot to storage, pending an effective security plan.

To date, the casualties in and about the building include:

- 1) Bentwood hat rack - stolen
- 2) "Chico" sign - stolen (recently recovered by Chico police in the process of an arrent on other charges at a private home)
- 3) Train-side lightpost - struck down (removed to City yard)
- 4) Second train-side lightpost - globe knocked over (put back in place by City)
- 5) Regulator clock (gift from Chico Heritage) - pendulum twisted (clock removed for repairs)

Why has all this occurred? The depot is open and unsupervised from midnight until approximately 5 a.m. Chico Heritage has asked the City to provide for the building's closure between trains; however, no system seems fiscally feasible to those in positions to act on the problem. There is no insurance on depot contents, so the City must pay for repairs and replacements.

We look forward to a time when the depot will be fully rehabilitated and secured against vandals whom, at the present, have full rein in and around this valuable facility.

Michele Shover

The Chico Museum

Plans are nearing completion for the mid-February 1986 opening of the Chico Museum. The museum, which will operate under curator Dorothy Wenzel, former anthropology instructor at Butte College and California State University, Chico is located at Second and Salem Streets. The structure was once the City Library, built in 1904 with a \$10,000 Andrew Carnegie grant. In 1939, it was extensively remodeled to the present exterior appearance. It was vacated in 1982 when the Sherman Avenue branch library opened.

Members of the Chico Museum Association, chaired by Jim Morehead, have raised \$110,000 through membership drives and donations to remodel the building. The museum will be divided into a north and south gallery, and will also house a Chinese Taoist Temple which has been in Chico for more than 90 years. The north gallery's center floor space will host various exhibits, traveling as well as local. A semi-permanent collection of early Chico artifacts will be placed in display cases along the north gallery wall, including one devoted to Chico's founding families.

The south gallery will feature the work of various local artists. Special programs for adults and children will include films and lectures, in-depth exhibits and hands-on and interactive displays.

Because state laws and tax codes prevent the museum from charging admission, the museum will depend on private donations the first couple of years. Additional financial help is needed, both for costs of renovation and initial operating expenses. All contributions are tax deductible. Anyone wishing to contribute to this project may do so by calling 891-4336. To build a bright future, we must cherish the past.

Helen Carlisle
John Gallardo

Retrofit Right

The Oakland City Planning Department has once again provided older-home owners with good practical information. Rehab Right was developed for those who needed to rehabilitate their old homes. Now Retrofit Right tells "How to Make Your Old Home Energy Efficient."

If you own or rent an old house in Oakland and want to reduce your gas and electric bill, you don't lack for suggestions. Your utility company, insulation contractors soliciting business, and your neighbors, to name a few, each have their own recommendation. But none of them answers these questions: Which energy conservation steps make the most economic sense for your house, family and budget? In what order should they be pursued? And, should you do the work yourself or hire a contractor?

Retrofit Right does. This book sets out a strategy that is tailored to the architectural style of your house, the make-up of your household, and your inclination to tackle building projects yourself. Retrofit Right also suggests how to combine energy conservation with rehabilitation while respecting the historic character of the old house.

Copies of Retrofit Right are available at the Public Library, the Chico Heritage Association office and two copies are available for purchase from Giovanna Jackson (345-2005 evenings) for \$7.20.

Giovanna Jackson

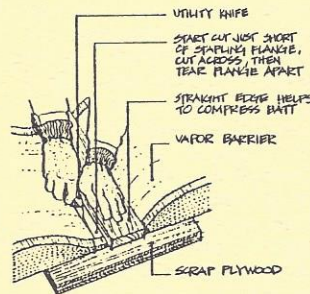


Figure 2-10 Cutting Batt or Blanket Insulation

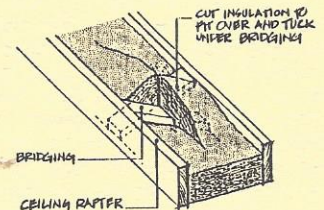


Figure 2-11 Installing Batt or Blanket Insulation Around Bracing

Board of Directors

President:
Vice President:
Secretary:
Treasurer:

Robie Amer
Pattie Bellefeuille
Laurence Boag
Jackie Headley
Dorothy Hill
Giovanna Jackson

John Gallardo
Michele Shover
Emily Newton
Louis Poor

Nancy Lindahl
Ray Murdoch
Chuck Nelson
Gary Simmons
Liz Stewart

What's New in the *Old House Journal*

Since the *Old House Journal* is now available at the Public Library (courtesy of Chico Heritage Association) and at the Chico Heritage office, I thought that a brief summary of this fascinating and useful little magazine might be of interest to both pre-1939 house-owners and those of us who are just old house fanciers.

Even though my personal do-it-yourself scenario has me in a comfortable chair, article in hand, directing someone else doing it, I've actually found OHJ articles to be extremely helpful in contracting out work--at least I now know how things should be done.

The December issue has the annual index and several practical articles well-illustrated, as usual, with drawings and photographs. The cover article is a personal account of "Reconditioning Floors"--useful for those who want to revive their wood floors without getting involved in sanding and refinishing.

A substantial and thorough article deals with when and how to "Strip Paint from Exterior Wood"--for the really committed do-it-yourselfers.

All of us who have old photos or photos we hope to pass on to younger family members will find the suggestions of where and how to store them in "Making Photos Last. . . & Bring Back the Old Ones" to be of interest.

Whenever I read an article like "Caveat Emptor, the Pitfalls of Restoration", I realize that my involvement in restoration is definitely in the vicarious category. However, some of you might find the challenge quite exciting.

Giovanna Jackson

It's Not Too Late

Liz Stewart is now available to prepare building histories and architectural descriptions for interested owners. Liz was director of the second phase of the Chico Historic Building Survey. In this effort Liz supervised volunteers performing building research. Chico Heritage no longer has grant money to extend the survey but buildings continue to merit documentation. The value of such records to owners is that certain documented buildings may be designated suitable for application of the City's historic building code which is somewhat less restrictive than the regular code.

Liz explains that owners will gain useful information through building documentation. For instance, they can discover the names of former owners and their contributions to Chico; names of architects can often be identified and the work of a number of contractors is becoming documented. Research can explain how the property was used before buildings were applied to the land. One of the most valuable types of information is the period and architectural style. Once you know this, you can readily learn how to treat the building, i.e., appropriate fixtures, hardware, even furnishing styles. Names of modern descendants of previous owners will provide possible sources of early photographs, which are another useful guide when restoring or rehabilitating your structure. New survey forms can be added to the survey files which are maintained in City offices and CSU, Chico's Meriam Library archives as part of the City's historical record.

Liz's rates are modest for the rich return. She can be reached evenings at 345-6986.

Michele Shover

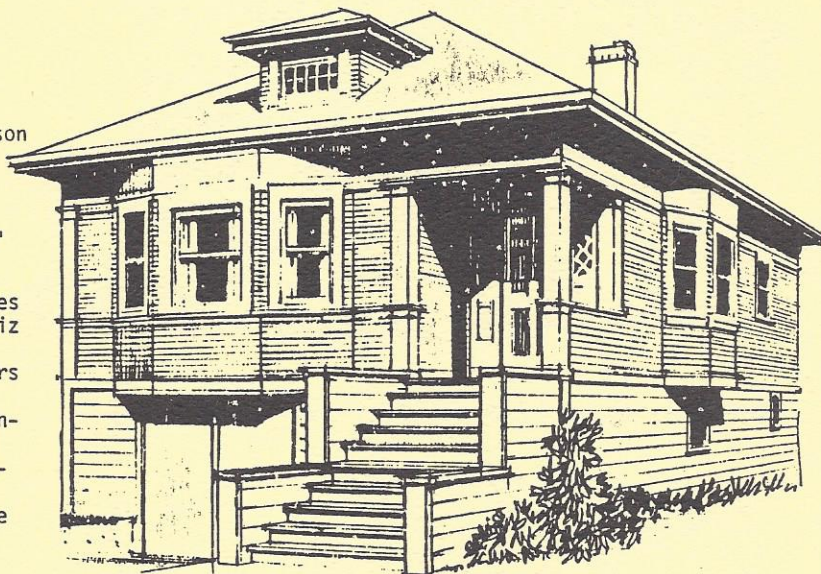
On the Market

We call to your attention two desirable historical structures now for sale. Both have retained their original integrity and would be a pleasure to put into prime condition.

The first is the Morse House at 217 Flume. This is an Italianate building erected approximately 1894 by a relative of Samuel F.B. Morse of telegraph fame. The five-story frame building is well-located for offices or a "town house". Fronted by an open veranda with turned posts, it also features a boxed cornice with a frieze under the roofline and brackets.

The second building, at 458 East Seventh Street, is also a square Italianate constructed by prominent rancher, Hugh T. Bell, in 1874 when this lot was at the town's eastern edge. The Bell home has the original siding and still boasts its early refinements: two (not one, but two!) single story slanted bay windows. The original turned posts at the entry are missing but can be replaced locally. The intact quoins at the corners and double brackets under the eaves lend pleasing touches to this early home. A single family house now used for multiple residence housing, the Bell house is located in a quiet neighborhood convenient to downtown.

Consider rehabilitating one or both of these "Chico gems". Call Justin Smith at Sears-Porter Realty, 342-7521.



A Special Gift

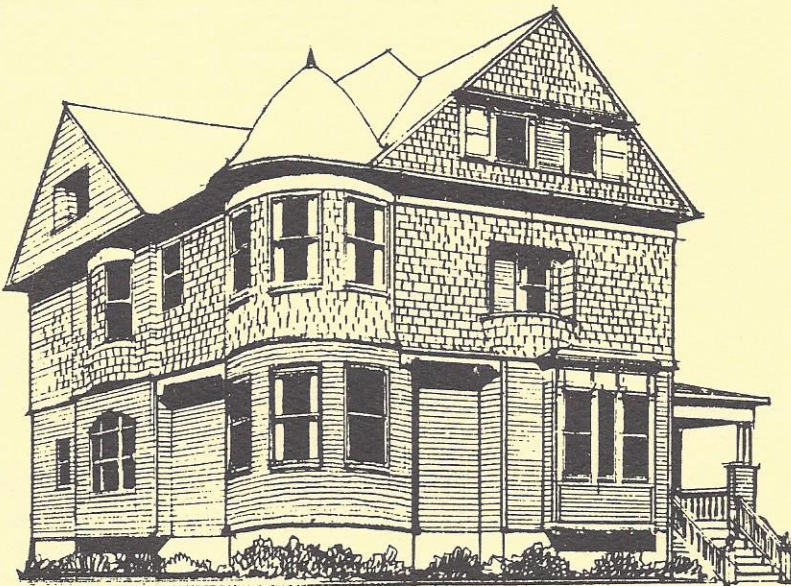
The Chico Heritage Association wishes to acknowledge a gift of research materials from the estate of Mary Poor Carroll. Mary, the only daughter of Chico Heritage board member Louis Poor and his wife, Marian, died July 16, 1985 from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Mary was commuting home to Chico from work in San Francisco on her M.A. degree in Urban Planning which she was completing under the auspices of Antioch West College. She leaves a small son in her parents' and brother's care.

Louis and Marian contributed Mary's research materials on urban planning to our organization's library. We will be finding her collection helpful in wrestling with the opportunities and challenges which preservation in Chico presents us all.

"Chico's Gems" Program Available

Need a program that is more than a time-killer? "Chico's Gems" is the generic title of the Chico Heritage slide show program which is available for Chico schools and organizations. Giovanna Jackson has presented a number of these programs, and Liz Stewart is now willing to carry this banner of preservation education. In September alone Liz appeared before the Retired Public Employees, the Elks Auxiliary and two public school classes. Liz extends herself to adapt the content of her program to the interests of the group, e.g., pre-1875 buildings, Diamond Match houses, pretty houses, commercial buildings and so forth. Liz can also provide a walking tour of the older parts of Chico. If interested in a "Chico's Gems" program for your club or organization, contact Liz in the evenings at 345-6986.

Michele Shover



Nominating Committee

John Gallardo, President of Chico Heritage Association, has selected Liz Stewart, Emily Newton and Laurence Boag to serve as a nominating committee to fill eight positions open on the Chico Heritage Board of Directors. Those members interested in serving on the board should contact one of the above-named individuals. Nominations from the floor at the annual meeting will also be accepted.

Michele Shover

Do know any friends or acquaintances that would be interested in being on Chico Heritage Association's mailing list? If so, mail their name and address to CHA, P.O. Box 2078, Chico, CA 95927, or call 895-3848 with the information.

Shoo Fly

- Shoo Fly? This was the title for a miscellaneous items column in the 1870's Butte Record published by George Crossette in Chico. Crossette's home is owned now by Floyd Meyer who has put it in fine shape. It is at the southeast corner of Ivy and Fourth Streets. (The carriage stepping stone out front came from the Folsom Prison granite quarry and was a gift to Crossette from State Prison Director A.H. Chapman of Chapman's Addition.
- Stansbury House Association officers met with the City to review plans for streetlights to be placed adjacent to the streets next to the building. When confronted with the necessity to purchase period fixtures, the need to place the lights there suddenly became unnecessary.
- The old St. John's Church has won Architectural Review Board approval for its new life as an upscale restaurant. The stained glass windows will be repaired and the shingle siding on the foundation retained. The repainting in other colors is perhaps regrettable but less damaging than the earlier more extensive proposal. A more serious loss in the newly approved plan is the elimination of the long north porch.
- Has anyone seriously taken notice of the urban grove of valley oaks setting in the middle of the 2300 block of the Esplanade (behind Duke's Cork 'n' Bottle)? It looks almost pristine, and certainly vulnerable to the next "great idea" for a shopping center.
- When will Chico catch up with Orland? Proud members of that city have identified and saved a variety of buildings associated with various periods of its past. These have been moved to a "theme park" at the fairgrounds. While it is preferable to save buildings in place, at least the Orland citizens understand how even buildings that served ordinary purposes made important contributions worthy of future recognition.
- Thanks City staff and Council Members! Plans for re-vamping the Council Chambers will respect the fine entry by changing around it rather than through it.
- On your Sunday drive around town, drive west on 6th Avenue. Past the jog in the road you will note a sparkling white cottage with yellow trim (across from an orchard). Jamie Payne did the work on this house which he is selling to a caring new owner. Chico has so many cottages that deserve treatment equal to this. Thanks, Jamie.
- Credit is also due Chuck and Maria Ruiz who remade a circa 1880's home at 526 West 9th Street. The couple has created a sound, well-planned home while respecting most of the original design.
- A good Christmas memory: the "candle" lighted windows in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Glen Shol at 996 Vallombrosa Avenue. Their deep blue bungalow has been lovingly restored to prime condition.
- While in Willows, our eagle eye Liz Stewart spotted the iron cresting which once adorned the F.C. Lusk Building (later the Native Daughters Hall and now, alas, the Madison Bear Garden). A resident there, apropos of preservation, told Liz that Willows lost most of its older buildings to an aggressive salvage company's operation.

Michele Shover

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Arts and crafts people - here's your chance to help Chico Heritage Association! We need your help to make and paint Victorian house ornaments for fund raising. Call Robie Amer at 891-6665 for details.

Remuddling of the Month

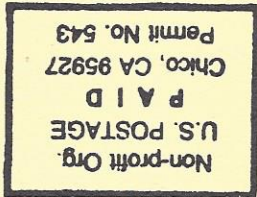


Soon To Be Rehabilitated



Rehabilitated Home

This month we bring you a Chico example of "remuddling", but with a happy ending in sight! The two houses shown are not only neighbors, but twins. They are located at 706 and 718 West Sixth Street. The house with the railing across the front was rehabilitated properly several years ago, while the other was masked behind poor siding which covers the original clapboards. New owner of the latter house, Ray Murdoch, will remove the inappropriate changes made over the years to recover the original charm of this cottage. If you are in the neighborhood looking over these houses, note the red house and the blue house to their immediate west. These also belong to Ray and will give you an idea of the quality of work he has in mind for his newest acquisition.



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Please help Chico Heritage Association preserve and enhance the historic cultural resources of our city. We need your membership and your participation. Become a part of Chico. Join Chico Heritage Association.

I want to become a member of Chico Heritage Association: _____

Please renew my membership in Chico Heritage Association: _____

Name: _____ \$ 5 Senior/Student _____

Address: _____ \$ 10 Individual _____

_____ \$ 25 Family _____

_____ \$ 50 Business/Prof _____

Telephone: _____ \$ 50 Supporting _____

\$100 Patron _____

Activities I would like to help with:

Preservation legislation ___ Typing ___ Programs/Tours ___

Education/Publicity ___ Baking cookies for fund raisers ___

Advisory on preservation planning ___ Membership ___

Fund raising ___ Telephone ___ Other: _____