

# CHICO HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

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## Rubble Without a Cause

*The article below was written by Michele Shover for publication in the Enterprise Record. It appeared in "The Public Forum" section of the ER on September 29, 1985.*

### A Poignant Lesson

In the course of a single day this past August a bulldozer reduced to rubble the historic Camper home in the heart of old Chico. Only those complicit in its discrete sale and their equally discrete demolition order knew what was planned. Word passed through town quickly as the machine operators hurried to finish before objections could turn to action.

This venerable building dignified the corner of West Fifth and Chestnut Streets from 1872 until last summer. The two-storied frame home with its seven-gabled roof was designed and built by Indiana native Henry Wax Camper to house his own large family. Their home was the first building erected on West Fifth Street which became the fashionable avenue connecting Chico's downtown hotels and the railroad depot.

Henry Camper was a talented craftsman, a wagon and carriage builder, who thought to embellish the solid frame structure of his home with graceful accents. The slanted bay window in the parlor, a lovely staircase, comfortable rooms with ample natural light and fine wood floors all endured until the building's demise. Its generous veranda and picket fence were torn down years ago.



Old Chico's Camper Home: 1875-1985



### The Demolition Begins

In their rush to raze Camper's home, the new owners decided not to salvage any of its effects - its paneled doors; flooring, antique hardware or old glass. Neither did they save the "Walker Red", a two story high camellia plant which stood outside the dining room window. This beauty grew from a cutting which a friend brought to Eliza Camper from San Jose in 1884.

The Camper home's solidity reflected that of its creator. In Indiana, Henry Camper had been the business partner of Clement Studebaker who carried on their business manufacturing covered wagons and later automobiles. On Camper's first trip across the plains to California in 1850 he carried dispatches which he personally delivered to Mormon leader Brigham Young in Salt Lake City.

Later in the same trip at Hangtown, he observed Kit Carson deny the use of his horse to a lynching party. Camper made valuable contributions to Chico in the 1880's when he served as a school trustee and as a member of the city council. His wife, Eliza, was a mainstay of Chico's Methodist Church from 1872 until her death in 1916. Their home was a popular gathering place for Chicoans and was the deathplace of southeast Chico developer, Augustus Chapman, whose own home was lost to financial failure.

The demolition of the Camper house poses one more poignant lesson for us all. Again a building that would have been a celebrated architectural treasure in Sacramento, San Francisco, Yreka or Red Bluff has been left to rot, been arbitrarily declared unsalvageable and has been destroyed. What will replace it? A parking lot? A



cinderblock apartment set in asphalt? An office building? We all know how little any of these will add to the quality of our lives by comparison to what the Camper house could have been under responsible conservatorship.

The Chico Heritage Association mourns the neglect and the destruction of this historic home. We call on fellow Chicoans to assist us in protecting our fragile architectural heritage.

- If you own an old building, do not make secret sales. Put up a "For Sale" sign. Let us know. You might make more money. You might make the same amount and save the building too.
- Help us identify old buildings that are endangered. We may be able to find a new owner who will be good to it.
- If you own an old building and want to fix it up but don't know how, maybe we can give you names of Chico people who can help. Chico stores can supply the right materials. What they don't stock can be ordered. Rehabilitation is good business.
- Make it known that you want new areas of Chico to be well-built and properly serviced. But also insist that the city place high priority on the sensitive servicing of Chico's senior neighborhoods. They provide the special character which distinguishes our city. In many cities visitors stand in line and buy tickets to visit buildings like those being demolished in our town.
- If you are a member of an organization that owns antique buildings, let your governing body know that you expect them to conserve these properties or to sell them to owners who will.
- If you want to know whether a building is "worth saving", be very careful whom you ask. Many who know a lot about new buildings are not the right people to ask about what can be done for antique ones.
- If you own an antique building, don't deny it regular maintenance. And please avoid common maintenance mistakes such as aluminum windows and siding. When in doubt, find out. The Butte County Library will soon have a fine collection of books which the Chico Heritage Association is donating on the maintenance of antique buildings.
- Instead of building a reproduction Victorian home or office, why not acquire the real thing? The economics can come out about the same.

The best respect we can pay to the memory of the Henry Wax Camper house is to spare its peers the same fate. One of the best memorials we can leave to our own generation is our care and cultivation of the genteel and gentle neighborhoods which we hold in trust.

Michele Shover

## Our New Home

We are pleased to announce that our search for a home is over. Chico Heritage Association will be housed shortly in a small office on the second floor of the Nottelman Building--quite appropriate in that this building generated one of the sparks that ignited the drive for preservation in Chico. Jackie Headley, owner of the building, has kindly offered the space for our use at a very reasonable fee, and Laurence Boag has promised to donate his shelf-building skills. The central location at West 3rd Street is ideal for the needs of CHA, and we hope to "settle in" for a long stay.


Restoration and Maintenance Techniques  
For The Pre-1939 House  
May 1985 / Vol. XIII No. 4-52

# The Old-House Journal

## The Bungalow

*and why we love it so*

By Felice Pomeroy



AMERICA had a long love affair with the bungalow--for thirty years a torrid one--and the old flame is being rekindled. This is the story of how an exotic Anglo-Indian word came to mean a new American house style. Bungalows came from India, so say popular accounts, but it wasn't that simple. The word for "villages" of its kind existed for hundreds of years before any bungalows showed up here. "Bunglows," temporary and quickly-erected dwellings, were referred to by an Englishman in India in 1651; we find "banga," "bungalos," and "bunglows" before the English spelling "bungalow" superseded others by 1822.

THE ENGLISH in India were describing houses built for them by native labor: long, low buildings with wide verandahs and deeply overhanging eaves. Broad porches, floors of thatch and later fireproof tile, enclosed an insulating air space against tropical heat. They, around 1870, builders of the newly fashionable English seasonal vacation houses called them "bungalows," giving them an exotic, though not entirely large.

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## 3rd Street Language Houses Update

The University Board of Trustees in Long Beach has approved funding for the CSUC parking structure for 1988-89. The compromise worked out between CSUC and the City of Chico, which addresses the structure, also concerns most aspects of the University's future physical impact upon the city. It is by far the most viable alternative in the efforts of the Chico community to influence and control its future in the campus neighborhoods.

Among the elements of the compromise are provisions for the City to acquire the "3rd Street Language Houses" and the property they occupy, and for the University not to expand south of West 3rd Street. Chico City Councilman Bill Nichols deserves the most credit for initiating and forging the compromise. Credit also must go to the previous City Council, which insisted that the University's expansion and impact into the south of campus neighborhood--Chico's oldest--be limited and controlled.

The compromise is just that, a compromise; an effort by the City and the University to confront and solve some of the major problems facing that area of Chico. Numerous other groups--the Chamber of Commerce, the DCBA, Chico Heritage Association and others--have realized that this current compromise effort is the proposal with the best chance of succeeding, and the one with the most advantage for the greatest number of people.

Should the city acquire the "Language Houses", it would undoubtedly put protective easements on the properties, and then sell them. This would insure that their exterior architecture would be preserved. Should the University retain the buildings, there are certain State laws which pertain to their disposition and maintenance, which the University would be required to follow.

Chico Heritage Association has always maintained the houses must be preserved on their present sites. Who eventually owns them has not been our concern; their preservation is. In November, the University Board of Trustees will make further decisions concerning the compromise proposal, and at that time all parties involved will know more about the situation. Chico Heritage Association has worked vigorously toward the preservation of these old homes, and will not rest until that fact is accomplished.

John Gallardo



## Why Preservation?

Preservation is a "stuffy" word to some people. To them it may conjure up images of elitist do-gooders sticking their noses into the property rights of others. Often this image stems from the fact that some preservationists are university-related people, and/or newcomers to town--newcomers who sometime see what makes up a community with fresh and different viewpoints. These newcomers probably appreciate the many charms of Chico, in comparison to the places they left behind. Long-term residents may sometimes take these things for granted.

Many of the newcomers may have watched helplessly as architectural treasures in their own hometowns fell to bulldozers and wrecking balls. Such an experience does something to a person, which brings us to the current situation in Chico. Many people of this city are aware that the aesthetics of Chico make it an attractive place to live, added to the fact that we have such wonderful people here. Yet, as a community, we are failing to do enough to insure the continuity and improvement of these aesthetic qualities for the future. Examples of this failure are:

- 1) The historic Camper House, West 5th and Chestnut (1872) was bulldozed into a pile of rubble this August (see article in this issue). No effort was made to salvage, or allow moving of the structure. The property owners reportedly "are not sure what will be done with the property." This is a tragic loss to the community.
- 2) Less than five years ago the City removed the row of cement hitching posts from the block on East 8th Street between Main and Wall Street. These were virtually the last remaining physical reminder of the colorful past the "Junction" area played in Chico's early days. Only two posts remain around the corner on Wall Street. The reason given for removing the posts was so that parking meters could be installed, and because car doors were hitting them.
- 3) One of the two American chestnut trees in front of the Barnard House, West 3rd Street and Normal (1884), was recently cut back completely to the trunk on the street side, threatening the future survival of the tree. While pruning may have been needed to keep the tree from growing into power lines, a complete cut back was not. The two trees framed the entrance to one of Chico's most beautiful and imposing old homes, formerly the home of Mavis Todd Brown. Plans are underway by new owners to restore the structure, and apply for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The two trees were among the oldest and largest in the world, and in the past have supplied seeds for disease-resistant stock around the country. The loss of one of these trees would be irreparable. The agency responsible for such drastic pruning must bear the full responsibility for such actions.
- 4) The future of the former St. Johns Episcopal Church building, West 3rd and Salem, is clouded. This National Register listed property, designed by distinguished architect Arthur Benton, has sat vacant for several years with no maintenance. A recent proposal by the owners called for the removal of most, if not all, of the stained glass windows, stuccoing of most of the exterior and building of an incongruous addition. A recent fire, apparently caused by derelicts who gained access, damaged part of the interior of the property.
- 5) The historic Stansbury Home, West 5th and Salem (1883), also a National Register listed property and owned by the City of Chico, has recently been undergoing serious challenges to the preservation of its historic and aesthetic integrity. In the process of undergrounding utilities in the area, four concrete and metal boxes of varying sizes have been put into the lawn area at the home. Now, the proposal is made to

make the corner where the Stansbury Home rests the bus transfer terminus for city and county buses. The resulting increase in traffic, noise, air pollution and trash would seriously threaten the aesthetic qualities of the property. A review of this situation, and future impact upon the Stansbury property, is being made by both the Stansbury Home Preservation Association, which operates the home, and by Chico Heritage Association.

The Stansbury family donated two-thirds of the property, and sold the remaining one-third to the City, on the condition that ". . . the historical and aesthetic interests be maintained." The City of Chico accepted the property on those terms. It has proven its interest toward that end in the past by such action as the successful completion of the restoration of the home in 1980. Now, a long-term, comprehensive plan must be developed which will insure the preservation of the entire property for the future. This outstanding architectural and historical property must be protected from all negative impacts.

- 6) Incompatible development in the older neighborhoods of Chico threatens the aesthetic qualities and architectural integrity of the very heart of our community. Once we ruin our old neighborhoods, we have ruined forever a big part of what this town is.

From these six examples we can see that in the last few years many of the truly important parts of our heritage have been threatened, damaged, or destroyed. Does "preservation" still seem "stuffy"? In the case of Chico, preservation means trying to preserve what we have. We all love Chico, so why aren't we all doing more to work for its preservation? Countless communities across the country lament the loss of their unique character and charm in the name of "progress", or "development", or "growth", or simply a lack of caring. There have been a number of significant achievements in Chico in the area of preservation, such as the Silberstein Park Building, the Stansbury Home, etc. These are all wonderful and great, but true preservation of the character and charm of Chico requires that more than just isolated examples of our past be preserved. Streetscapes (such as the 3rd Street Language Houses) and neighborhoods must be preserved, and our beautiful street trees must be protected and nurtured. Private individuals and businesses may undertake the preservation of individual buildings, but to be truly successful, a preservation ordinance must be adopted by Chico.

Communities such as Yreka, Petaluma and Woodland have found such ordinances to be greatly successful and beneficial for all involved. Surely Chico deserves as much, and is capable of enacting such legislation. An ordinance is a must for Chico if our architectural heritage and the charm and character of our community are to be preserved.

Our City government, our schools and our churches should be the leaders in the preservation of our cultural heritage. They are not. Without such direction and leadership, the keeping of our links with the past is a real challenge, and the younger generations need such connection to our heritage now more than ever. We must all do our part. We must all be preservationists.

John Gallardo





## Here and There

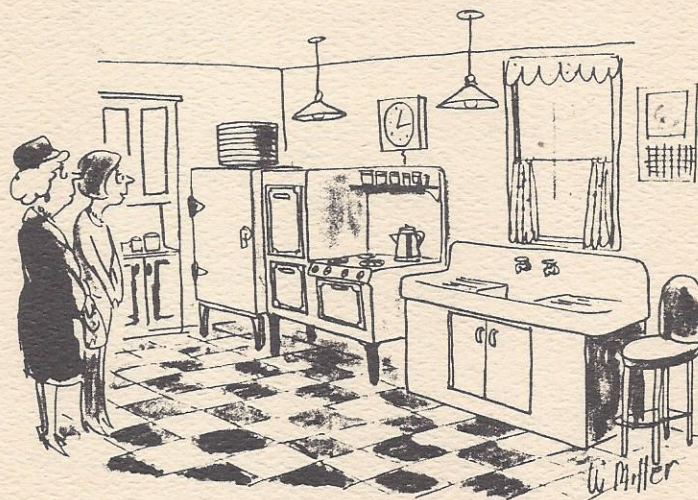
- The Barnard House (1884) at 238 Normal Street is bracing for rehabilitation as an office building. New owners, Gail and Gordon Brown, have hired contractor James Worth to create six or seven offices. The planned interior work will retain the high ceilings, the original spaces and elegant stairway. In treating the exterior they will remove the screening which had been applied to the facade and restore the verandas on the first and second floors. The foundation is in good shape but they will rewire and replumb the building. The model from which they plan to work is provided by photographs from 1910. Bud Tracy, who along with others rehabilitated the Silberstein Building, has been offering advice as has Giovanna Jackson of the Chico Heritage Association.
- Check out the cornice at the top of the building at 119 Broadway. The owners have taken the trouble to attempt to bring back the original look, at least on the upstairs.
- Our thanks go to the Chamber of Commerce's Transportation Committee and Board of Directors which have developed a proposal for the sensitive and practical rehabilitation of the Southern Pacific Depot area, including the Depot Park.
- Need custom wooden windows made to replace outworn ones? Call Neil Morgan of Durham. (He will also make wooden storm windows which are first-class insulators.)
- Are you looking for balusters, railings or other turnings? Call Del Stubbs or Alan Dorr.
- Chico is well-placed for the new vogue. Cogniscenti of historical architecture are promoting bungalow styles. While a large proportion of Chico's better Victorians have been bulldozed, we remain favored with a wide selection of bungalows. How many of their owners know they have a treasure? (Owners stay tuned.)
- The Architectural Review Board is trying to preserve the original facade of the old downtown Episcopal Church. Preliminary plans called for stucco over the building's shingles and removing the stained glass windows. The Board turned down the proposal and awaits the next set of plans.
- One of the three Bicknell cottages (simple Queen Annes built about 1901) has been subjected to a stucco attack. Check out the corner of Sixth and Hazel to compare the original siding with the "modernization". We're going to submit photos to the Old House Journal for the "Remuddling of the Month" feature.
- The Bullard House on East First Avenue is still for sale even though the sign is down. Pat and Patricia McCarthy, having accomplished their goals in this project, are ready for a new challenge.
- Among the small attractive antique cottages for sale in Chico is one at 494 East 7th Street whose owner, Michael Ramos (895-8478), plans to move to Paradise. He and his wife have done much to reestablish the original charm of the eighty-or-so years-old building; however, there is more to tackle. The house has retained the original siding, windows and much of the interior woodwork.

## Remembrances Overseas

This past August I had the opportunity to visit the homeland of a grandfather I had never met. The country was Finland, and the location was near Rovaniemi, a town nestled just below the Arctic Circle line. I was guided by relatives to the actual parcel of land owned, worked and lived on by my grandfather and those generations before him. The setting was idyllic. A magnificent blend of purple, white and mustard-colored wildflowers danced gently in front of me as I viewed the unspoiled beauty and serenity of the land. A backdrop of white-trunked birch trees were on my right and on the left, the quietly flowing Kemijoki River. There was something strangely missing, however--my grandfather's home. An overwhelming sense of nostalgia came over me. I longed to actually see the simple yet stately two-story brick-red wooden building that had embellished the land since the 1600s. I wanted to enter the front doors as my grandfather had, walk across the crude wooden floors, and settle near the cookstove to view the outside landscape through one of the many white-framed windows. Sadly, all that is left of the house is the foundation's front step and a handful of treasured photographs. The house succumbed to the destruction of the war, having burned to the ground like most of Rovaniemi four decades ago.

While war was the cause of loss in the case of my grandfather's house, Chico is experiencing similar losses at the hands of its own citizens. How tragic it is to needlessly lose parts of our town that provide a sense of history, and give us tangible remembrances of the Chico of yesteryear. We must take action now to protect our heritage so it will live on for our children and their children. We must not wake up one day only to be able to say, "All we have left are the photographs".

Pattie Bellefeuille



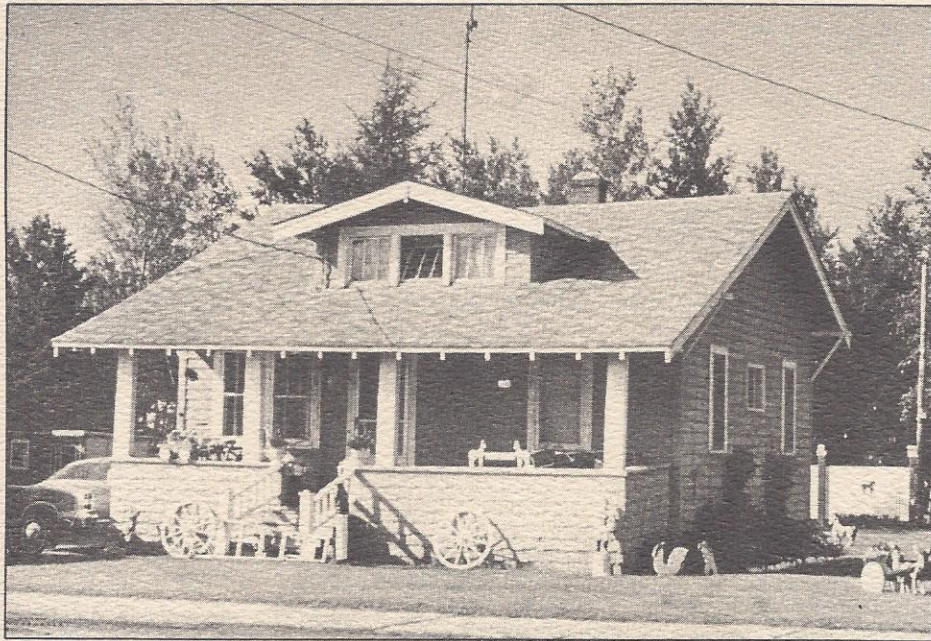
"We just had the whole kitchen redone, Mom. Isn't it terrific?"

Taken from The New Yorker magazine

## Board of Directors

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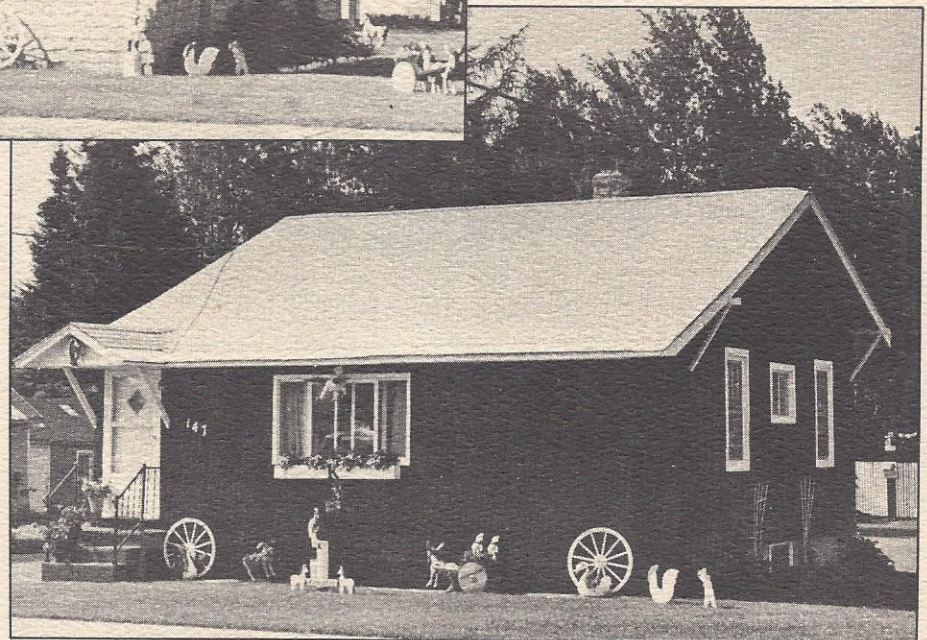




## Bungling of the Month

*The article below was taken from the May 1985 issue of The Old-House Journal.*

For this special issue, we found a bungalow remuddling--or "Bungling." This Bungalow in Tupper Lake, New York, would be unrecognizable were it not for the lawn ornaments. Gone are the special Bungalow characteristics. The front is covered in darkly stained fiberboard shingles; the end wall, with vertical siding. The welcoming porch is gone, as is the dormer that gave light to the upstairs bedroom. What's left is just a box, indistinguishable from any tract house of the past forty years. (Thanks to Daniel D. Reiff of Fredonia, New York, for the photos.)




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## Architectural Salvage in Chico

The Old House Emporium (934 West 8th Avenue) is Chico's answer in miniature to Sunset Salvage in Berkeley. Bill and Kathy Squyres have put together their skills as a building contractor and antique dealer respectively to operate Chico's best building salvage company. The selection of doors is a delight - French doors, paneled doors for interior use and the like. Beveled glass is plentiful and at least one door recently in stock featured an engraved glass window. Also available, of course, are wooden-framed windows and clawfooted bathtubs, or parts thereof. Banisters are a good bet as well as boxes of tile and gingerbread (sawn wood ornaments) which come and go. Hardware and electrical items are a staple. The Old House Emporium is open Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1). It is situated behind the Trading Post which is located at 923 West 8th Avenue.



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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50 Supporting \_\_\_\_\_

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Activities I would like to help with:

Preservation legislation \_\_\_\_\_ Typing \_\_\_\_\_ Programs/Tours \_\_\_\_\_

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Fund raising \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_