

# CHICO HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

p.o. box 2078 chico, ca 95927

## CHICO'S STAR HOUSE

Chico's most unusual house, the octagonal Judge Daly or "Star" House, is a late example of a national fad popular during the 1850s.

The originator of the octagon fad, Orson Squire Fowler, was a popular phrenologist who advocated vegetarianism and daily exercise. He considered the octagon shape better than the usual square because it was closer to the sphere, the "governing form of nature." Some of the many rooms formed by this shape could be used for "a playroom for children, a gymnastic room for females and a dancing room" because "mankind are dying off like diseased sheep in consequence of pure ennui. They want action."

Few of these extraordinary houses remain. San Francisco has two, a 3-story, 5000 square foot one on Russian Hill (which sold 3 years ago for \$1.8 million) and a smaller one at Gough & Union belonging to the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (open to the public).

Chico's 8-sided example, the Judge Daly or "Star" House at 494 E. 5th Street, is a much smaller example than most but every bit as unusual!

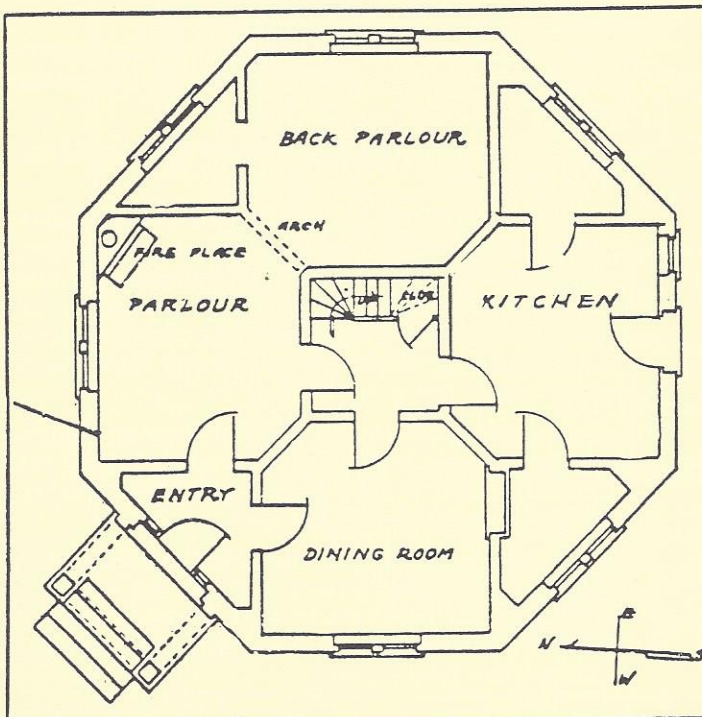


The Judge Daly or "Star" House (1881)  
494 East 5th Street, Chico

*The following is an article from the August 25, 1881 edition of the Record.*

## OCTAGONAL COTTAGE

Judge J.T.Daly has in process of construction on Fifth Street, in the Bidwell Addition to Chico, an octagonal cottage that has caused much comment among mechanics and builders as well as others, we have been led, out of curiosity, to examine it. The angles are 18 feet, with a gable for each, thus making it partially two-storied in height. The interior arrangement makes it complete with 10 rooms on the lower floor, and 8 on the second. It seems to be impossible to crowd greater number of conveniently large and square rooms, with closets, into the same space. The closets are so arranged as to cut off the angles in the rooms, that would otherwise occur in the octagonal form of the house. The rooms in the upper story will be under the roof, and extending from each gable to the dome running up through the center, will necessarily be of a rectangular shape, but still large and well ventilated. The arrangement of the rooms, places the dining room in the center, approached by the hall from the main entrance, lighted with a transom and by a large circular dome extending from the ceiling up through the roof. It is something new in the style of architecture for anything in Chico, and attracts much attention. The octagonal style of cottages, are, however, in vogue in the Southern States as affording cheap, roomy and convenient dwellings. The mistake of those who have attempted octagonal dwellings, has been in making the angles less than 18 feet, as less than that does not allow of their being divided into appropriate rooms and closets.



Floorplan of Octagonal House



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*From the June 1909 edition of Duffy's Interurban Guide and Magazine of the Great Sacramento Valley, borrowed from Sylph Bronson, comes the following interesting article written by an unnamed Chico merchant of the time.*

## CHICO, THE "FRESNO" OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

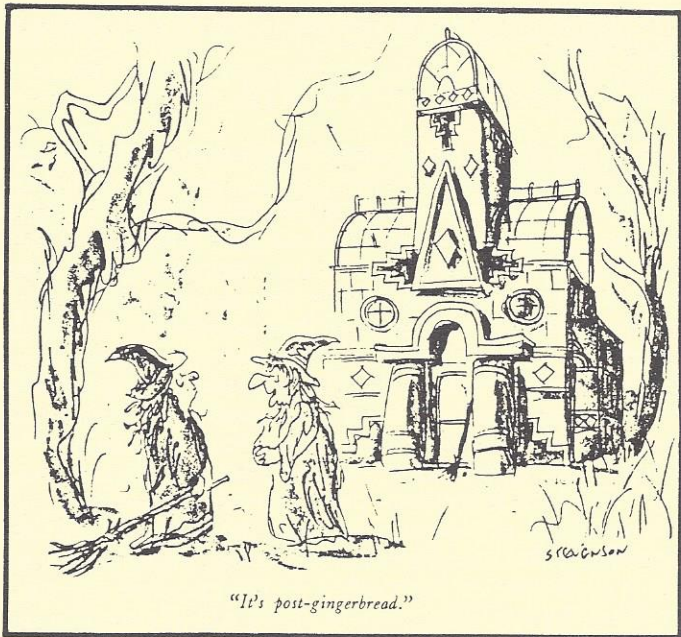
After reading the above heading, you may be tempted to ask "When?" I will answer: When the merchants awake not only to the possibilities but to their duties I have often thought that the average business man should devote more of the time and money that he now spends in the effort to proselyte some of his competitor's patronage to bringing in new trade and the developing of new markets. For instance, the recent wonderful development of the town of Paradise means increased prosperity to Chico as well.

And this and every other effort of this nature should receive all the encouragement and support possible from the merchants of Chico. The developing of new towns, the subdivisions of those wonderfully rich valley lands adjacent to Chico, which are now being placed on the market at such reasonable prices and terms, is by no means all. It is just as necessary to draw them nearer, and secure their trade by the extension of Northern Electric Railway lines, thus bringing rapid and cheap transportation facilities and enabling the farmer to quickly and cheaply place his products in the market and take his purchases home.

I am in a position to state that to my personal knowledge Chico is at present receiving considerable trade over the Northern Electric Railway that in the past went the other way. I believe the merchants of Chico should awake to the fact that it is for their interest, and the interest of Chico that they boost the Northern Electric enterprise and give it their support and patronage in every way possible. The extension of the Northern Electric Railway north from Chico means much to Chico, and the entire northern part of the State. We can do, if we try.

## CALIFORNIA'S OLDER AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS\*

- \* California has approximately 1.1 million buildings that were constructed before 1940. As many as 150,000 of these date from the 19th Century.
- \* About a million of California's pre-1940 buildings are residential structures.
- \* Nearly 1,353,000 dwelling units or about one out of every seven dwelling units in California is located in a building built before 1940. In many areas the percentage of older housing is much higher than the State average. In Los Angeles 22.7 percent of the housing stock was built before 1940, in Oakland, 41 percent, and in San Francisco, 58 percent.
- \* Half the dwelling units in pre-1940 buildings are occupied by renters, the other half are owner occupied. In 1980, over 3,075,000 people or one out of every eight Californians lived in a building constructed before 1940.
- \* California has about 113,430 nonresidential buildings built before 1945, or approximately 100,000 that were built before 1940. This means that between 25 and 30 percent of California's present stock of non-residential buildings is made up of pre-1940 buildings.
- \* *From Background Report Prepared for the California Heritage Task Force and National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1983*



"It's post-gingerbread."

## CALL US!

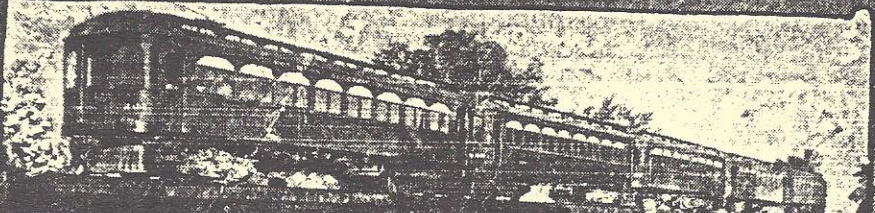
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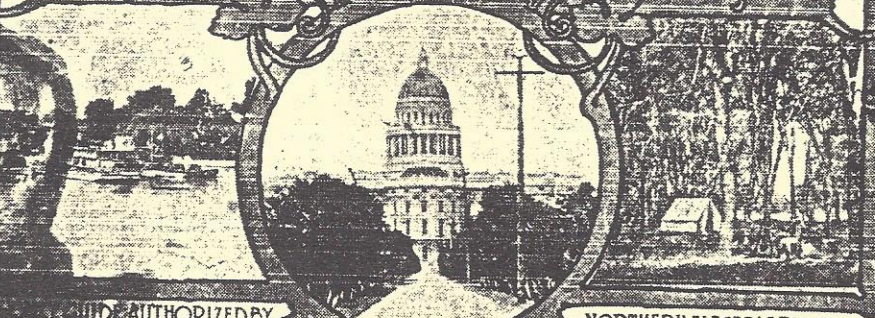
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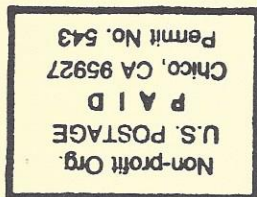
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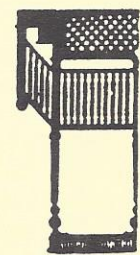
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Cover From Duffy's Interurban Guide & Magazine  
of the Great Sacramento Valley (June 1909)





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