

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic A. H. Chapman House

RECEIVED
OCT 08 1981

and/or common "Little Chapman Mansion"

OHP

2. Location

street & number 256 East 12th Street ___ not for publication

city, town Chico ___ vicinity of 1st congressional district /

state California code 06 county Butte code 007

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Michele Shover and Bernard F. Flynn, Jr.

street & number 256 East 12th Street

city, town Chico ___ vicinity of state California 95926

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Butte County Recorder's Office

street & number 25 County Center Drive

city, town Oroville state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A (No survey has been made.) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This house is a well preserved Downing cottage, an unusual architectural style in Chico. It was possibly designed by architect Henry Cleaveland, a disciple of A. J. Downing, who was working in Chico in the 1870's when the house was twice expanded to its present form. This is the original house in Chico's "Chapmantown" area. It sits at a slight angle because its placement as a ranch house predated the streets which were added around it in 1870. It sets on a one-acre lot with many of the original mid-nineteenth century trees and shrubs. It is a two-story clapboard house erected on a balloon frame with a steep-pitched, shingled roof. Its simple severity is due to a lack of applied ornament, as well as to the horizontal emphasis of the clapboards, the gable returns and plain frieze-boards beneath the eaves which lend a Greek-Revival flavor to it. The house corresponds to a particular Downing design. In 1870 Chapman described the house as a "German cottage" (Chico Enterprise). His stylistic description and the house itself jibe with A. J. Downing's house plan, "A Cottage in the Rhine Style" in Cottage Residence, Rural Architecture and Landscape Gardening (1842) (Library of Victorian Culture, 1967, p. 174). Both the Chapman house and the Downing plan have a "T" shaped appearance with front and side verandas, a bay window, and identical placement of the four gables on the steep, projecting roof. Additional characteristics closely reflect Cleaveland's recommendations in Villas and Farm Cottages.

The gradual construction of the house over a number of years, beginning with the 1853, still-extant, brick foundation piers, is indicative of the changing fortunes of its owners and of the community. The original structure, a one-story, two-room house with western veranda, was built on the piers in 1859. In 1870, more rooms were added at right angles forming the present T-shaped building. At this time, the front entrance was moved to the new south veranda, an eastern veranda (now partially screened) covering the well, a central fireplace, and the interior moldings were added. In 1874, the second floor with three rooms, the balcony with turned balusters over the south entrance veranda and a bay window on the west side of the parlor were added. French doors open from the second floor to the south veranda and over the bay window. The south veranda was later

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates See below **Builder/Architect** See below

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The A. H. Chapman house is associated with the entire period of Chico's settlement. Its origin in 1853 and development over the years was the work of several generations of individuals and families who were representative figures of Chico's economic and civic history. Today southeast Chico is called Chapmantown after the house's owner in 1870. The architectural significance of the house lies in its distinctive character as a Downing cottage which apparently was designed by Henry Cleaveland, an architect of national reputation who specialized in designing Downing cottages.

Specific dates

1853	Brick pier foundation
1859	Small house on foundation
1870	Addition to existing house
1874	Second storey added
1890's	Add-on kitchen

Builders in 1870

William L. Bradley
Leonard Briggs
Cleveland Walker

Architect in 1870-1874

Possibly Henry W. Cleaveland

"The Little Chapman Mansion" was built over a period of thirty years in the mid-nineteenth century. The original brick pier foundation was laid in 1853 by young District Court Judge George Adams Smith, who had come West in 1849. Smith had been trained as a bricklayer by his mason father in Indiana before taking up the study of law. He died of consumption before completing the house.

In 1859 an 1849 Irish immigrant physician, Dr. J. B. Smith, bought the 360 acres and built a small house on the piers. Assessment records showed the first improvements, including household furnishings, appeared that year. Dr. Smith was not related to George Adams Smith, but was his client in a lengthy series of civil trials in 1850-1851 concerning fraud by Dr. Smith's partners in a gold claim. When Dr. Smith lost his cattle herd in the drought of 1863, he was unable to make mortgage payments. His house and the remaining 160 acres were sold by the county sheriff to his creditor, James Tormey.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Shover, Michele. Chico's "Little Chapman Mansion": The House and Its People. Association for Northern California Records and Research: Chico, CA, 1981. (attachment). This footnoted and illustrated monograph is drawn from sources including deeds, assessment, census, (continued)

10. Geographical Data

NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property < 1 acre Assessor's Parcel No. 005-14-1-012-0
 Quadrangle name Chico Quadrangle Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>10</u>	<u>5919350</u>	<u>439176180</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification The property occupies City Lot 25 at the intersecting corners of Nelson and East 12th Streets in Chapman's North Addition. The main house lot is roughly 205' x 132'. An additional quarter acre is still attached to the northeast corner of the lot. This area was used as pasture and orchard from 1883 to 1921. See sketch map. List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Giovanna Jackson, Chair of Inventory Committee;
Michele Shover, Secretary (owner)

organization Chico Heritage Association date September 15, 1981

street & number P. O. Box 2078 telephone 916: 345-2005

city or town Chico state California 95927

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *K. Miller*

title SAPU date 12-16-81

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Delores Boyer Entered in the National Register *12/16/81*

For Acting Keeper of the National Register

Attest:
 Chief of Registration

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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partially glassed in as a conservatory, but this has since been removed. A shed-roof kitchen was added to the north side in the 1890's; a vent was added in the front gable in 1976, and the original balustrade and columns were removed in the late 1930's; otherwise, the house retains its 1874 appearance. The simple paneled front door with narrow transom and side-lights, as well as six of the other seven exterior doors and all of the double-hung windows, are original to the house.

The nineteenth century room arrangement remains the same except for the conversion of a tiny library into a first floor bathroom and a pantry into a powder room. A narrow hall with a steep stairway, the parlor to the left and a bedroom to the right, leads to the sitting room which retains the original quatrefoil gas-fixture rosette. (The parlor and dining room rosettes have been replaced with contemporary nineteenth century copies.) All rooms retain the 1870's wall, window and door moldings. The soft-wood floors in the sitting and dining rooms were laid in 1859, those in the 1870 addition are also soft wood from Chapman's mill. The dining room, formerly the kitchen, retains the utility wainscoting and original kitchen drawers with pot-metal pulls. Furniture, photographs, and other artifacts from previous owners have remained with the house.

The present owner is in the process of renovating the interior of the house. When it is completed, a turned balustrade and columns will be added again to the verandas and a picket fence will encircle the property restoring the exterior to its late 1870's appearance.

The "Little Chapman Mansion," unpretentious yet dignified, is a reminder of the graciousness of early Chico life as it sits on the border between an important commercial thoroughfare and a low-income area.

A woodshed and garage of more recent construction are also on the site but are non-contributing to the fabric of the structure.

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In 1870, purchaser of the house and property was Augustus Chapman, an 1860 emigrant from Michigan to Chico. Mr. Chapman was owner of a hotel, general store, and a large lumber mill with a retail store in Chico. Chapman designed a subdivision which developed rapidly and which is known to this day as Chapmantown.

Chapman probably called on the help of architect, Henry Cleaveland, in designing the addition across the south of the Dr. Smith house in 1870 and in adding the second storey in 1874. Cleaveland was available in Chico while completing the Bidwell Mansion. Cleaveland was a major Downing disciple and the house is a Downing cottage. This type of Downing plan Chapman described to the newspaper as a "German cottage." With the addition of the second storey in 1874, the house appears to be a close interpretation of A. J. Downing's "Cottage in the Rhine Style" in his book, Cottage Residences, Rural Architecture and Landscape Gardening.

In 1877, Chapman moved to a large Italianate home he built across the street. (This Italianate house burned in 1909.) The present house became known after the move as "The Little Chapman Mansion" by way of contrast. After the Chapmans, the house was owned briefly by A. B. Collins, manager of the Parrott Grant Ranch, who came to California in the 1850's. Mr. Collins was well known locally for developing the county fair and for developing improved livestock breeding.

From 1883 until 1921 the house was owned by the Gilman Nelson family. Nelson traveled west to California in 1860. He was a pioneer wheat farmer on the Llano Seco south of Chico. The little Chapman Mansion was his town house and the main residence of his family. In the 1890's the Nelsons altered the house by adding a solarium over half of the south veranda (since removed in the 1950's) and by placing an add-on country kitchen at the north end of the house.

"The Little Chapman Mansion" is possibly the only Downing cottage in Chico. To date, no others have been identified. Other National Register structures include an Italian villa, an Italianate house and a Greek Revival house.

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While the house is set on an unusually spacious lot by modern standards, the generous grounds were not unusual for its period. The original perspective on the house from the street remains intact. Because the first foundation was laid in 1853, almost twenty years before the streets around it were planned in 1870, the house is not centered squarely with the street. The owners plan to replace the missing ornate balustrades and the turned posts of the verandas. They also plan to erect a fence like the original picket. With these restoration projects completed, the house in its setting will present a reasonably accurate interpretation of its nineteenth century character from 1874 forward.

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and voting records; interviews with former residents and local history buffs; physical inspection of the house; examination of forty years of Chico newspapers - e.g., Chico Record, Chico Examiner, and others; local histories - e.g., Wells' and Chambers' History of Butte County; Smith and Elliott, Butte County, California Illustrations; George Mansfield, A History of Butte County; a diary of former resident, Sarah Chapman; and books by Alexander J. Downing and Henry Cleaveland cited in full in Sections 7 and 8.

East 14th Street
formerly Chapman Street

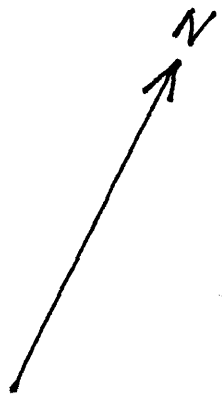
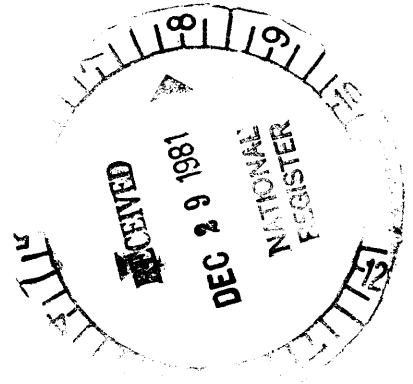
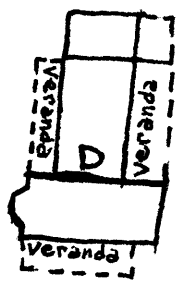
Nelson Street

205'

132'

132'

70'



East 12th Street

(formerly Bidwell Avenue)

JAN 28 1982

Olive Street

From Sanborn Map of Chico
Last corrections as of 1945. Correct in 1981
Scale: 50 feet = 1"

hem-
lock
street