



The P.B. Fagan House on Mission Street in Santa Cruz is an example of the Eastlake architectural style utilized by LeBaron R. Olive.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF ROSS ERIC GIBSON

Historic Houses

Eastlake style suited 1880s Santa Cruz

BY ROSS ERIC GIBSON
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New York architect LeBaron R. Olive came to Santa Cruz in 1886 and worked in the English-Roman style. He also designed in the Eastlake style, which was hated on the East Coast.

Although many disliked the Eastlake architectural style, the British furniture designer the style was named for, Charles Locke Eastlake, was highly respected.

In his 1874 book "Hints on Household Taste," Eastlake deplored the baroque ar-

chitectural ornaments depicting people, animals and foliage. He proposed that only structural elements be ornamented.

Eastlake called for a revival of simple hand craftsmanship and limited his furniture to lathe and jigsaw ornaments. His inspiration was Elizabethan furniture of the English Renaissance, with its mixed classic and Celtic ornamentation.

Eastlake's philosophy inspired Western architects to develop a style depicting the honest qualities of wood-frame construction. Stick style was the first evolution of this, and California architects began mixing Eastlake features with the style. Western mills began mass-producing Eastlake ornaments, and soon every simple stick element could be replaced with Eastlake gingerbread.

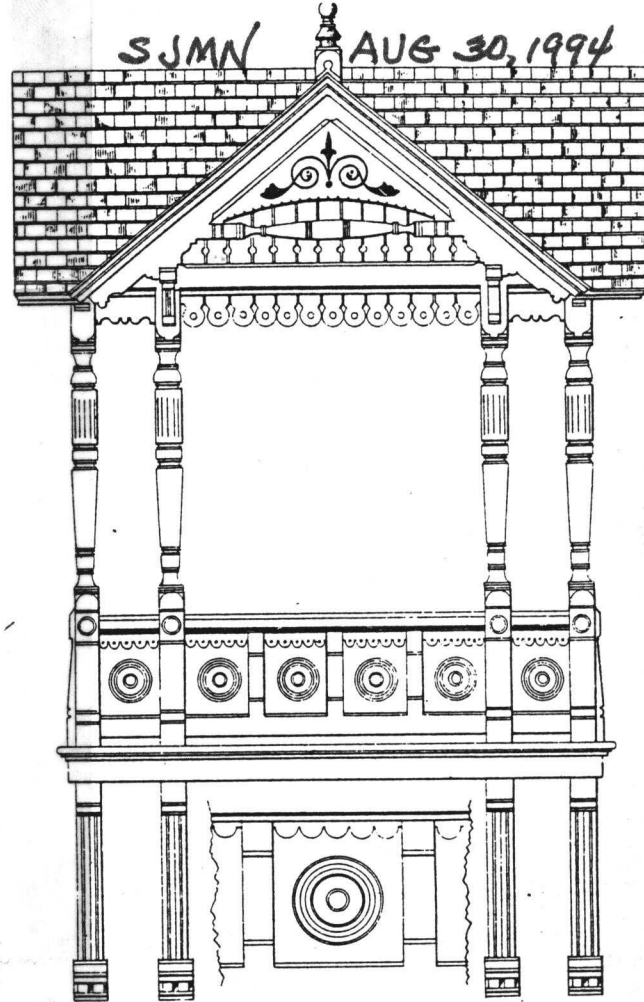
In Santa Cruz, Olive followed a trend popular with Eastlake architects and included a custom-designed millwork element on all his buildings as a distinguishing signature. As a trained architect, Olive was an exception on the West Coast, where many architects were former contractors without classical training. They mixed all styles of millwork that appealed to them, producing the free classic style commonly called Eastlake. At its height, even the sculptural baroque elements Eastlake despised were mixed into Eastlake style.

Eastlake loudly deplored his name becoming synonymous with this California travesty, and East Coast critics denounced San Francisco Eastlake as "not a revival style." It wasn't even architecture, but buildings



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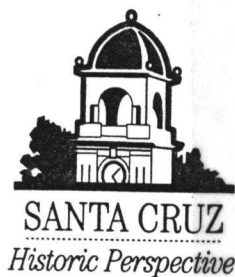
The Eastlake style, depicted in these sketches of a house and balcony, was named for British furniture designer Charles Locke Eastlake.

Eastlake style flourished in 1880s Santa Cruz

■ HISTORY

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constructed like pieces of furniture. Yet to West Coast builders, this was indeed the full expression of the wood-frame genre. Olive's Thomas J. Weeks House at 724 California St. was once finished in several shades of wood stain like fine furniture.



style's popularity with the public, and ornamentation once only available to the rich was now lavished on homes. Clients were either the gold rush nouveau riche, who equated opulent design with proper cultural ostentation, or the gold rush's stranded dreamers, who delighted in making mini-mansions out of worker housing.

This was Olive's specialty. The Baycliff model of Eastlake cottage served as a summer cottage or as a low-income, high-taste home. The Baycliff was a one-story house on a raised basement with an L-shaped facade consisting of a front gable with bay window and corner porch. Sometimes, as with the Fred O. Hihn cottages at 240 and 244 Walnut St., the inclusion of a corner tower or cupola turned the cottage into a small, picturesque villa.

Olive designed the 1887 McHugh & Bianchi Building, which stood at the head of Pacific Avenue, where World Savings now stands. It was among the first two Santa Cruz landmarks placed on the National Reg-

ister of Historic Places. But Golden West Savings demolished it over much protest in 1974, claiming historic preservation "Disneylandish."

The Eastlake style was never fully appreciated by critics in its own time. It was especially deplored by the German Bauhaus and international-style modernists, who erroneously called it a European revival. What they couldn't see is how uniquely American this style is. Today, even cheaply built Eastlake worker housing is highly coveted, and a real estate magazine calculated in 1989 that Victorians have a 15 percent higher resale value than comparable homes. Many of these buildings are declared landmarks not because they are old, but because they are works of art from an era when art belonged to the masses.

Local historian, architectural consultant and author Ross Eric Gibson writes a weekly history column for the Santa Cruz/Monterey edition.

Multicolored paint jobs were also denounced. Yet West Coast architects felt the gray, white or brown Puritan colors preferred on the East Coast were not appropriate for California's climate. They wanted sunnier colors to bring out the details.

Criticism couldn't dampen the Eastlake