Hall of Records

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Landmark: What Now?

The Octagon: A Success Story

By MARGARET KOCH Sentinel Staff Writer

Architectural fascination had a lot to do with the preservation and restoration of the former Santa Cruz County Hall of Records.

Today it is the county's Octagon Museum and its future looks bright.

It seems that for a period of years in the 19th century, architects were intrigued with the octagon shape. And about 90 years ago a number of octagonal buildings were constructed in California, both of wood and brick.

have gone the way of progress, probably demolished to make way for hot dog stands and supermarkets. But Santa Cruz County's brick octagonal will stay. It has earned the title of "architectural gem" - bestowed upon it by historians . The new County Gov- treasures. and architects alike. Today it is winning plaudits from just about everyone.

A few years back — less

than 10 - it was earning tually be demolished. groans and sighs from overcrowded, hard-pressed county officials. As the Hall of 1882 to 1968 - about 86 growing county.

One of the first Sentinel preserved. articles calling attention to the Octagon and the importance of saving it when the Hall of Records moved out, was written by this preservation and restoration writer in early 1966. At that The majority of them time there were ominous rumbles as to the building's

> and driven past the building for so many years that they weren't "seeing" it anyfor granted.

ernmental Center was then

After the article appeared, Donald C. Biggs of the California Historical So-Records, it was in use from ciety in San Francisco came to Santa Cruz to see the years. And during the last building for himself and ascouple of those decades it sess its historical value. He was sadly inadequate in immediately issued a space and facilities for the statement that it was one of a mere handful of the unique But it was unique in de- octagons remaining in the state today, and should be in Santa Cruz, were old and

> By November of 1966 the Santa Cruz Historical Society and SCOPE had gone on record as recommending the of the building.

architectural historians from the Northern Pacific Santa Cruzans had walked Coast Section, visited the then-empty structure to evalue its importance. They were unanimous in approvmore. They mostly took it ing its preservation as one of California's architectural

under construction and the committee had been rumor was rampant that the formed, bids were let and

Monterey with supervision ation. A federal grant of \$25,000 for restoration came

The actual restoration was touchy work. Old photos were unearthed that showed how the octagon looked in 1882. The bricks, made here soft and had been painted several times. Special techniques were necessary in removing layers of paint in order not to wear the old bricks down to nothing.

In 1969 a group of building would make a fine, small county museum, to be used for displaying limited collections of documents. books, art and other prizes. An auxiliary organization, Friends of the Octagon, was formed to provide volunteer staff members and to conduct special fund-raising By the following year, a events. Al Schadel was ap-

brick octagon would even- plans were underway by the result of all these de- 20th century.

Architect Francis Palms of velopments, with the useful future of the old structure by Jerry Hughes, county assured. The Octagon's Fesdirector of Parks and Recre-tival of Trees is becoming an annual Christmas event.

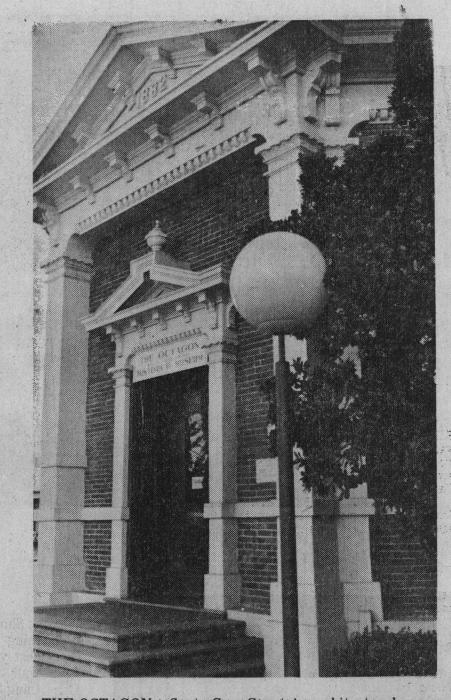
> Art shows and historical displays have drawncrowds -sometimes almost too many for the space.

> The octagonal cost \$10,000 when it was built in 1882 by the California Bridge Com-

One old story goes that the octagonal shape was "borrowed' by bemused architects from the shape of It was decided that the the California octagonal gold coin of 1856.

> That story might - or might not — be true. What is important today is that the building is here to stay with a bright role to play in the county's cultural and his-. torical future...

An "architectural gem" of pointed as museum curator. yesteryear that is making a A happy success story is successful transition to the



January at Cooper House

A public reception from 6 to 9 p.m. January 9 will open the anuary Exhibition at Cooper ise. All artists will be there and has a B.A. in art from UC years. Berkeley where he also had two

Smith has painted since 1966 developing for the past two

Dupont is a noted per-

