

Weird House At Cedar And Sycamore

By Margaret Koch
Sentinel Staff Writer

It's called the Octagon House . . . but it's really a hexagon house.

The old structure verges on the mystic. It contains one room with 12 corners, one concealed doorway and not a square room in the whole place. Even the hallway leading to the upper story does not contain a square corner.

The Octagon House is located at the corner of Cedar and Sycamore streets. The history of the old place contains vague references to a "spiritual temple" but stories are incomplete.

The house is like a dignified but bewildered dowager who is clinging to a former era of high button shoes, jet chokers, antimacassars and chamber pots. Modern plumbing and electricity haven't dented the old girl yet — not really. She's still Victorian at heart. And she resents any invasion of her privacy.

She won't tell her age . . . and there's no one around today to give it away. But estimates are that the late Fred Cummings built the house for his family between 1884 and 1890.

It was put together with square nails — some of them

copper, according to the present occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Haskins.

Two gold coins dated 1886-87 dropped out of the wainscoting one day when Haskins was doing some minor repair work. Later he found a quarter (1858) and a half-dime (1873) and a New York trade coin dated 1863.

"He wanted to hunt for more coins in the walls but I put a stop to that," his wife said with a laugh.

In the cellar, Haskins turned up a whiskey flask of the 1850s and a pale green bottle which had been blown in two sections into a wood mould.

The Haskins have been told by neighbors that the house was used at one time for a spiritualist temple. And that story gained currency with their discovery of a spiritualist newspaper dated 1884.

At one time many years ago, a man named Wesley Fanning lived in the house, according to Mrs. Odessa Ryan, longtime Santa Cruzan who is familiar with the house. Fanning's wife was said to be a spiritualist. She kept "millions of cats" — just a slight exaggeration, according to Mrs. Ryan. And Mrs. Fanning also foretold a gold mine cave-in at Hubbard Gulch.

"The mine actually did cave in," declared Mrs. Ryan. "And Mrs. Fanning wouldn't let her husband work in it anymore, gold or no gold."

Mrs. Ryan remembered the circumstances because her own father, D. R. Guichard of Alba road, also was mining gold at the time and worked with Fanning.

One room in the house contains 12 corners and, standing in it, one almost gets the feeling that anything might be found in the odd-shaped closets and cubbyholes.

One of the strangest stories is that of the crooked pictures: "Every two or three days we go around and straighten all the mirrors and pictures in the house. No matter how often we do it, they get crooked again."

Traffic vibrations? Subterranean quivers? Who knows?

Whatever it is, the Haskins are calm about it. They live upstairs and operate an antiques business on the street floor. They say the crooked pictures and spiritualist stories don't bother them a bit. But not everyone feels that way about it.

"We have several relatives who turn down invitations to visit us. They won't stay over-



Twelve angles — and not a one of them square — that's what this confusing room contains. Not one room in the interesting old house contains a right angle.



Is there a hex on the hexagonal house? It's called the Octagonal house but it's really a hexagonal with an inter-

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