

The Old and the New Reference Abbott House on Tour

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Chuck and Esther Abbott, pioneers in the move to preserve and live in old Santa Cruz homes, have proven it is pleasant and practical to do just that.

They have restored three, themselves, and live in one of the two, at the corner of Lincoln and Chestnut Streets. Built in 1880, it is the handiwork of a contractor who believed in lots of T.L.C. (tender loving care) for houses. He was lavish in his use of fine paneling and woodwork.

Its architectural style is Queen Anne, which was much in vogue after Victorian Gothic.

The Abbotts have lavished more T.L.C. on the old houses, lifting them from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Carved wood curlicues — the kind that are not made anymore — have been collected by the Abbotts and used to decorate their houses. With a coat or two of spanking white paint, the trim turns the houses into real traffic-stoppers.

The Abbotts' own home will be open to the public for the YWCA Homes Tour August 14 from 1-4 p.m. Tickets are available at the Y or at the home. Three other homes also are on the tour which is being run in conjunction with the Y's 23rd Annual Antiques Show-Sale.

"We are great believers in preserving atmosphere in the form of old houses, old buildings, old trees," Chuck Abbott says.

They are nationally-known photographers who gained their fame while living in Arizona. Their pictures of Navajos, mountains and all kinds of scenery, cowboys and campfires, rain forests — the list is endless — brought them fame and fortune and many awards, over the years.

Their ideas for their two houses in Santa Cruz are just as unique as their ideas for photographs. They "practiced" on their first old house in Tucson, turning an ugly duckling into a real Cinderella, before moving here.

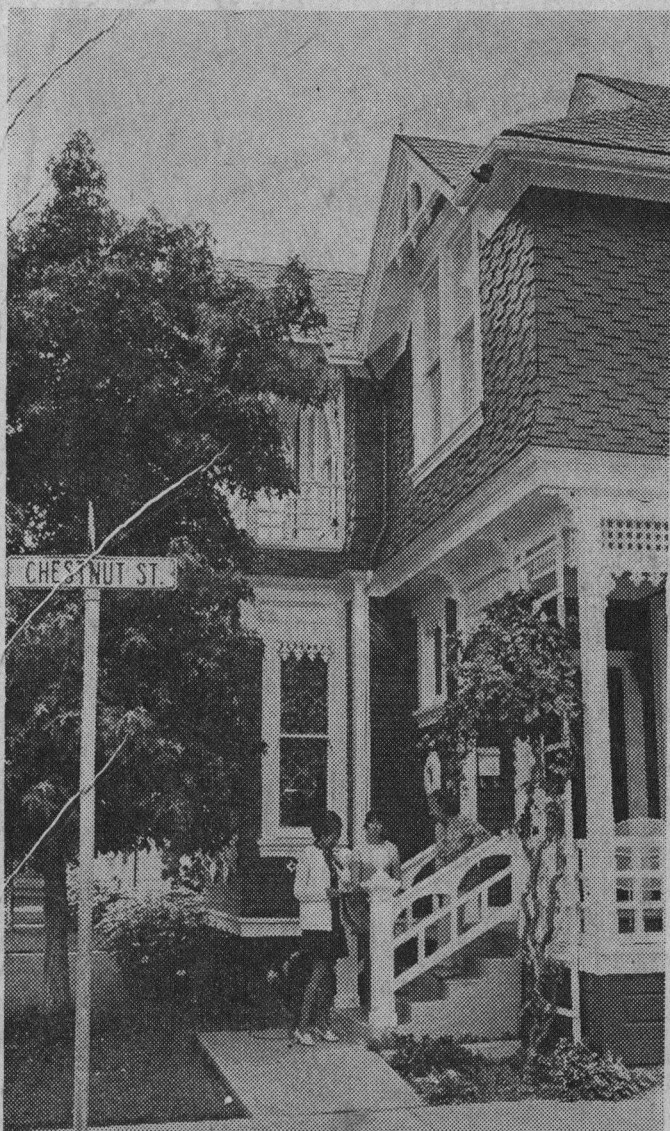
However, old houses are just a small part of the Abbotts' story. Chuck has been beating the drum (successfully) for a number of community projects. He is credited with the idea for Pacific Garden Mall and for helping put it over. He also is pushing Project Foresight, which includes ideas for a "downtown oasis" for the heart of the city, and a "quaint" Santa Cruz at a fraction of the cost for going modern.

The downtown project is coming along nicely with the Mall, Cooper House, for which Chuck also gets credit (he brought Max Walden here to look at it), and the octagonal Hall of Records.

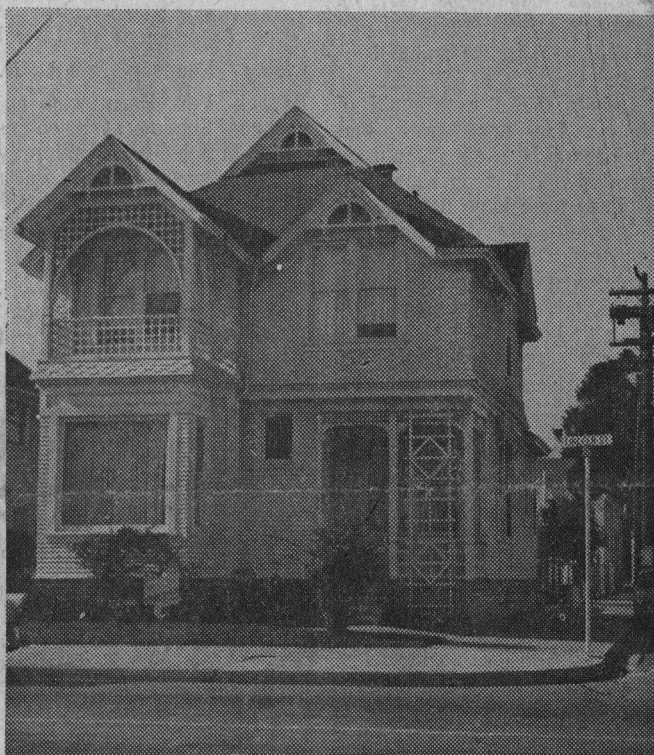
The whole picture is beginning to fall into place like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and Chuck and Esther Abbott have had a lot to do with many of the key pieces.

They also built and donated a brick lighthouse at historic Lighthouse Point, in memory of their younger son who was lost while surfing near there.

The Abbotts have shown their sets of colored slides a countless number of times, to



"After" facelift job, the Abbott house above, with (from left) Mrs. Robert Finnerty, Y board chairman; Mrs. Hugh Johnston, board member, and Mrs. Chuck Abbott. Below, house "before" the Abbotts renovated it.



get their points across about community atmosphere and beauty.

"Beauty is good business," they both maintain.

They even photographed local stores to point out how they hide their beauty under hideous signs and a clutter of ugliness. To top off their pep talk the Abbotts also prepared a series of color photos showing local merchants how their stores could look with a few added trees, plantings and different types of signs.

Chuck and Esther have been honored and presented with many awards for their photography over the years,

and now they are collecting awards for their civic projects. SCOPE and Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce are among the most recent groups to recognize their work.

They are busy now with a new idea — or maybe it's just the same general idea with a new label: PROD, standing for "Private Rehabilitation of Downtown."

Chuck, particularly, will be riding herd and PROD-ing anyone who will lend an ear.

The Abbotts mean it when they say: "Beauty is good business." They also seem to know what they're talking about.



Chuck Abbott surveys Pacific Garden Mall with satisfaction . . . He also is responsible for the restoration of an entire row of old flats on Lincoln Street.