



The Cupola

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Pardee Home Museum

JULY 2001

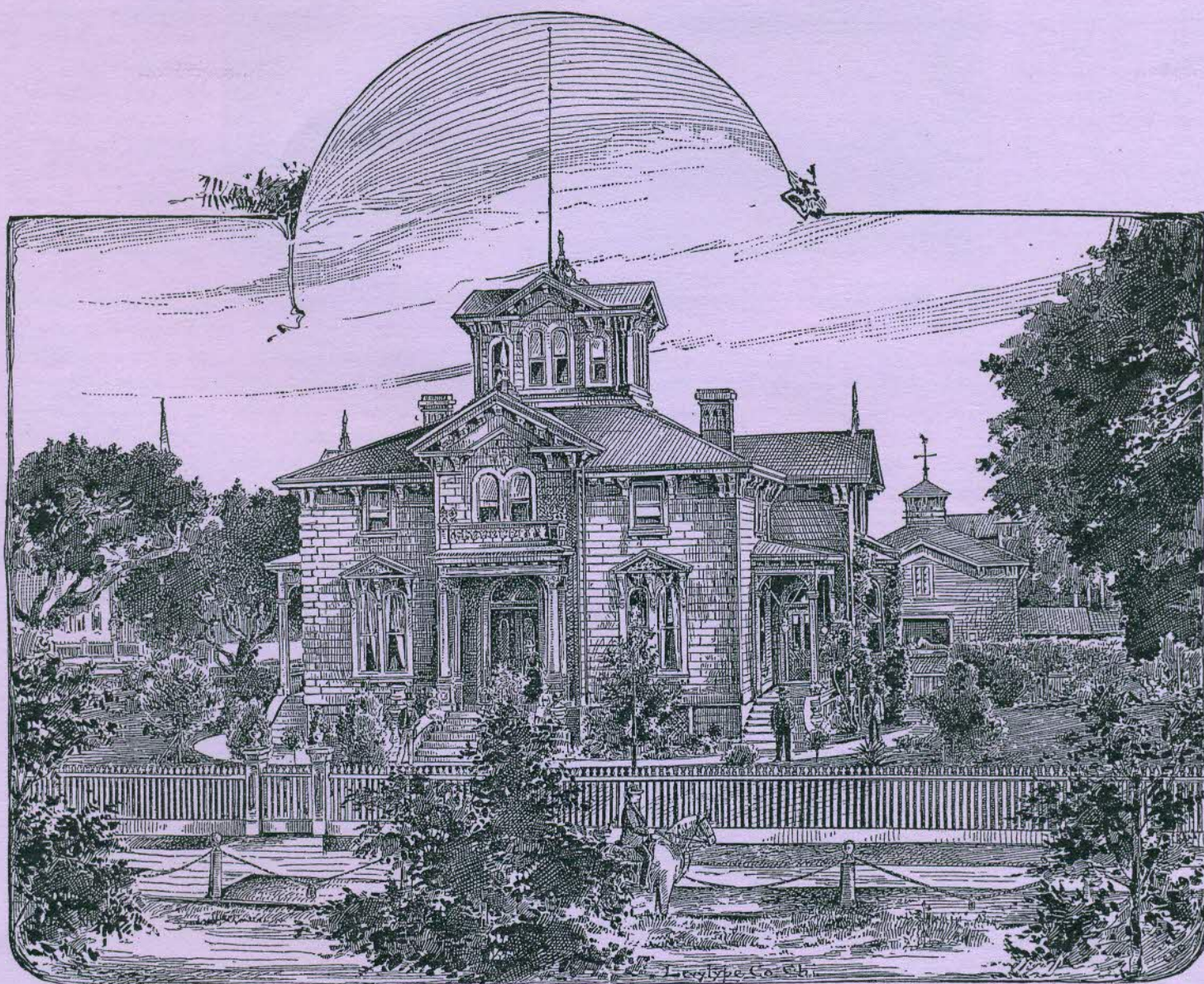
Oakland City Landmark, 1975

National Register of
Historic Places, 1976

California Historical Landmark,
1998

SPECIAL ISSUE:

The Architecture of the Pardee Home



RESIDENCE OF DR. E. H. PARDEE — COR. ELEVENTH AND CASTRO STREETS

From The Oakland Enquirer's 1888 Illustrated Guide to Oakland, courtesy of the Oakland History Room

An Appreciative Look at the Architecture of the Pardee Home Museum

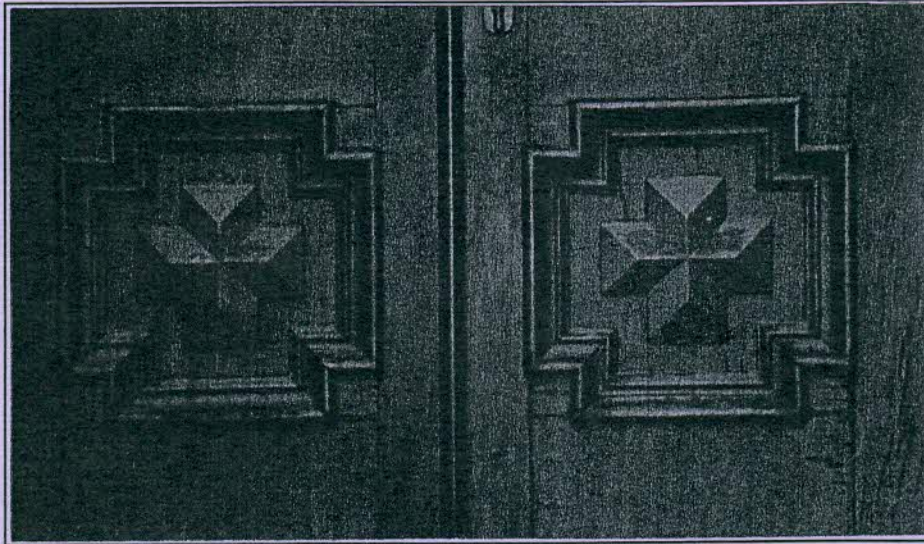
Italianate townhouses, built from the 1860's through the 1880's, are still common in the older neighborhoods of Oakland or San Francisco, but grand Italianate villas such as the Pardee Home were never frequently built in the Bay Area. Expensive land prices since the days of the Gold Rush have made the large lots which these homes require luxuries to most home builders in this area. Also, rapid population growth and redevelopment pressures have meant that the Bay Area has lost more of its Italianate villas over the years than a place like Iowa, where one or two extraordinary villas are found in virtually any town of note. The Pardee Home has, in fact, been described as the finest intact Italianate villa in the region, with its well-preserved main house, water tower, and coach house, all dating from 1868-69, and all intact on the original 30,000 square foot site located on the western edge of downtown Oakland.

In January, 1868, Dr. E.H. Pardee, a successful thirty-nine year-old oculist and former argonaut from San Francisco purchased the lot from one Henry S. Hudson for \$6,000, and commissioned the San Francisco architects Hoagland and Newsom to design a grand 6,500 square-foot home, in the Italianate villa style, complete with water tower, coach house, and picket fence. Work on the \$12,000 estate began in March, 1868, with grading and site preparation, and foundation construction began in November, with bricks purchased from the well-known Remillard Bros. of Oakland.

Construction peaked in the spring of 1869, with as many as ten day laborers assisting more skilled workers. Lumber was supplied by Dr. Samuel Merritt, millwork by Blethen and Terry, hardware from C. G. Reed, and decorative plaster, including medallions, by Mincinni. The windmill which once powered the water tower was installed by E.L. Wetmore in December, 1868; windmill plumbing was by R. Dalziel and tinning by James Dalziel (still a well-known name in Oakland). Painting the three buildings, done by D.W. Pratt, took nine months, from March to December of 1869.

The house was designed on a modified Greek cross plan, with prominent wings, complete with finials atop their gables, on three of its four sides (if there was ever a wing on the north, or rear, side of the house, it was lost to alterations years ago).

The most important of these wings is the balustraded portico, or entry porch, on the south, or main, facade of the house. This portico, reached by a gracefully curved stairway and flanked by Corinthian columns, is also framed by two pairs of arched windows featuring bracketed pediments with unusual, hand-carved tympanums. The elegant brackets found on these



Some observers have suggested that the design of the double panels on the front doors might symbolize the Greek cross plan of the house as seen from above.

windows are echoed in the cornice brackets above, which are found on all four elevations of the house with three different patterns of ornamental scrollwork. Likewise, the windows' triangular pediments complement the broken pediments seen atop both the portico and the cupola, or belvedere, which rises above the corner hips and gable ends of the gently pitched roof. Finally, the motif of double arched win-

dows is repeated above the balustrade and in the cupola. The scored redwood siding and the block-like quoins which frame each facade are meant to suggest to the viewer a stone house, in the Italian style. The rich composition of the main facade is for most visitors the highlight of the home's architecture, and it still stops many Eleventh Street pedestrians in their tracks so that they may dwell upon its many, rich details.

The principal rooms of the house are arranged roughly symmetrically on both the first and second floors around wide central hallways — eight-feet wide on the first floor, nine-feet wide on the second. The downstairs rooms are the front formal parlors; the dining room, back sitting parlor, and library toward the rear of the main hallway; and the "utility" rooms at the house's rear — kitchen, pantry, and servant's bedroom. Fifteen-foot ceilings and eight-foot arched windows contribute to the spaciousness of these rooms, and magnificent rosettes atop the central chandeliers and elaborate moldings around all doorways, cornices, and window bays accentuate their elegance. The magnificent bay windows on the first floor of the east and west wings of the house allow ample morning light into the back parlor, sometimes described as a "morning room," and afternoon sun into the dining room.

Upstairs the three original bedrooms and billiard room open onto the central hallway, and all four rooms, in keeping with the modified cross plan of the exterior architecture, feature unusual, sloped ceilings which lend a unique sense of space to them, particularly since all these ceilings were fully wallpa-

