
HISTORIC HOMES TOUR



MAY 21, 2006

THE PEARL CHASE SOCIETY
INVITES YOU TO
VISIT FIVE INTRIGUING HOMES
AND GARDENS IN
THE HISTORIC HEDGEROWS
OF MONTECITO.

SUNDAY, MAY 21 • 11A.M. TO 4P.M.

EL CONTENTO

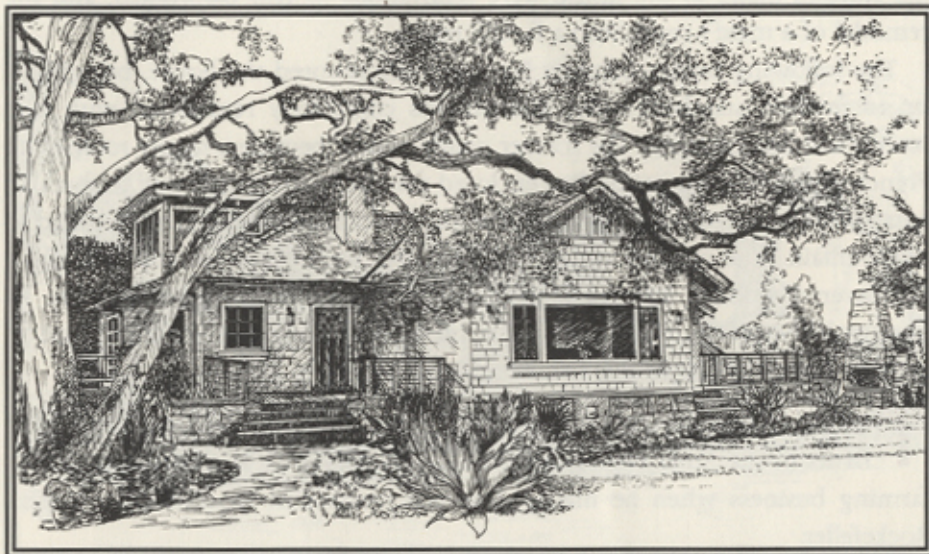
1569 SAN LEANDRO LANE

Homeowners: ANN KALE AND BOB KUPIEC

House Managers: Carolyn Cogan and JoAnne Treloar

Style: Early 1900s Craftsman

Architect: Unknown



Gail Lucas

EL CONTENTO WAS BUILT ON LAND THAT WAS ONCE PART OF THE HIXON Farm. In 1868, the Hixon family had moved from Illinois to California where, 20 years later, Isadore Hixon would purchase eight acres of land in lower Montecito. She lived there with her mother, sister, and brother George, a carpenter and farmer. Thus the Hixons became a part of an influx of Midwestern farmers who hoped to make a living in this area. After 1914, Mary Seville Hixon, the surviving member of the family, began subdividing the rest of the farm into residential lots, retaining some of them for her own estate.

The original ownership of this Craftsman home is still uncertain. Was it the home of the Hixon family, built by George Clinton Hixon? Or was it built by Marion Watts, who owned the property in 1905 and named it **El Contento**? We do know that by 1916 Ella K. Jewett owned the property, which then included two additional dwellings, two garages, and a pump house.

In 1918, Ella's son, Edward Taylor Jewett, and his wife, Mary Elizabeth, came

to reside with his widowed mother. Edward was an artist known for his exquisite wall hangings and tapestries, which complemented the Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival architecture of the 1920s. A well-known bibliophile and a restorer of notable book collections, he was celebrated for his illustrations on vellum of Omar Khayyám's **Rubáiyát**. Edward and his wife built a home behind the main house and lived there.

The house then passed through several owners and underwent a series of additions and remodels. In 2004, Bob Kupiec and Ann Kale, intrigued by owning a 100-year-old house, purchased the four-bedroom, three-bath home. Bob, an architect, and Ann, a lighting designer, are particularly sensitive to the kind of revisions and restorations that will preserve **El Contento** for future generations. To bring the house up to code, Bob replaced the rotting wood shingles with concrete shingle siding, and the roof with tile shingles. The aging post and pillar foundation was exchanged for a concrete wall faced with cast sandstone. The Kupiec/Kales also reduced the length of two wooden porches, setting them behind the gable to improve the proportions of the front elevation of the house.

INSIDE, THE FRONT PORTION OF THE HOUSE RETAINS ITS ORIGINAL CHARACTER. The simple beamed ceiling is supported by large corbels and stretches to the interesting cluster of three fireplaces. These fireplaces, which share one flue, once heated the living room; the east room, which is thought to have been a bedroom; and the large bedroom in the center of the house. The original fir floors had been nailed directly to the floor joists and were worn through. Bob covered the floors with hand-scraped American black walnut.

The Kupiec/Kale dining room, which was originally a bedroom, contains the fourth original fireplace. The kitchen and bathrooms have been remodeled, using exquisite natural stone tiles set in striking, random patterns. A previous owner had added the large skylight in the kitchen.

The tower seems an anomaly on what would otherwise be a classic Craftsman home. Just one square room, it originally had a wooden exterior staircase and no access to the rest of the house. What was it? A tower with a water tank? A room with a view? A previous owner's lookout? It remains an architectural mystery.