ARTI
FACT

WHEN WEST WAS EAST

RUMORS OF CALIFORNIA GOLD spread far and wide in the mid-19th century—as far as China—inviting a wave of hopeful immigrants. The Chinese people worked the claims others abandoned. Their persistence paid off, and in little towns across northern California, prosperous communities sprang up. The successful prospectors bought up entire blocks from their Anglo owners, and soon there were Chinese grocery stores, gambling halls, rooming houses, and restaurants. **THEY BUILT CHURCHES TOO.** Weaverville's Taoist temple—one of its ornaments displayed here—is the oldest of its kind in continuous use in the United States. Built in 1874, it is now on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places and preserved as part of California's park system. **PHOTOGRAPHED FOR POSTERITY** by Jack Boucher of the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey, which also produced measured drawings, it is officially known as the Weaverville Joss House, a title that may be a relic of early Chinese contact with the Portuguese ("Joss" being a Chinese approximation of the Portuguese "Deos," or God). **THE TEMPLE AMONGST THE FOREST BENEATH THE CLOUDS,** as the Chinese called it, served not only as a place of worship, but as a community social hall, a place to conduct business, a fraternity house, and even a traveler's hostel. Outwardly, it is a combination of the functional and fanciful, a traditional clapboard A-frame accentuated with Asian features. **TODAY VERY LITTLE REMAINS** of Weaverville's Chinatown. By the early 20th century, many of its residents had returned to their homeland. The Joss House, however, remains as a reminder of the past and a haven for modern day followers of Taoism.