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Executive Summary

The City of Arcata is located in Northern California and is the second largest city in Humboldt County. Arcata encompasses several neighborhoods, including Aldergrove, Alliance, the Arcata Bottom, portions of Bayside, California Heights, Greenview, Northtown, South G Street, Sunny Brae, Valley West, Westwood, Sunset, the Downtown/Plaza Area, Redwood Park, Bayview, Fickle Hill, and the Arcata Marsh. Arcata is situated at the north end of Humboldt Bay, the largest barrier lagoon in California, an area commonly referred to as North Bay. This is a landscape of creeks, sloughs, tidelands and wetlands immediately adjacent to the Redwood forests which once covered the rolling hills and bluffs around the Bay. According to the United States Census Bureau report of 2010, the city has a total area of 11 square miles and 1.9 square miles, or 17.25 percent, is water. A number of creeks and sloughs are located within the City limits and area of influence including Janes Creek, McDaniels Slough, Sunset Creek, Jolly Giant Creek, Butchers Slough, Campbell Creek, Fickle Hill Creek, Grotzman Creek, Beith Creek, Jacoby Creek, Washington Gulch, Liscom Slough, Gannon Slough, and the Mad River.

The built environment reflects both adaptation to and the reshaping of the landscape such as the placement of structures on ridges adjacent to creeks and sloughs and the use of raised walkways and basements to minimize the intrusion of water. Regional architectural styles incorporate the products of the local lumber industry and the cultural preferences of the residents. During the settlement period, homes and businesses were largely confined to the area adjacent to the tidelands and nearby hills. With the logging of adjacent forests, development began on the hillsides around the creek drainages, including the expansion of the road system. Nineteenth century reclamation projects further expanded the land base available for agriculture with the draining of thousands of acres of salt marsh. Historically the Bay is thought to have covered an area of 27,000 acres, and has been reduced to approximately 17,000 acres through land reclamation efforts of the 19th century. Most of the present agricultural lands including the Arcata Bottom and Jacoby Creek Valley were salt marsh prior to reclamation.

Although California was linked to national markets with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, Humboldt County would not be linked to the rest of California for another 45 years. Locally, the town depended on the lumber industry owned rail lines for common carrier service until the completion of the Redwood Highway. Highway 101, completed in 1926, encouraged the development of tourism services and commercial investment along the central corridors of G and H Streets. Much of the agricultural land within and closely adjacent to the City was converted to housing and industrial uses after World War II, which was a period of incredible growth throughout California. While the City had grown gradually through annexation and infill, the

construction and subsequent annexation of post WWII suburbs more than doubled the size of the town and created commercial centers outside of the urban core.

In 1979, a survey of 200 properties considered to be of architectural significance within the city limits was completed. That study focused on properties constructed prior to 1930. Subsequently the documentation of historical resources has been conducted on an individual basis up to 1930. This Historic Context Statement provides a set of broad themes that encompass the settlement and the development of the City of Arcata, from its founding in 1850 through the present day (2012).

New issues and new opportunities would face the City as the pattern of growth and development shifted from managing expansion to present day concerns about controlling infill, compatible development, maintaining a healthy environment, and promoting a sustainable economy. The City's early history as well as the record of how its residents managed to adapt to change and challenges over time is reflected in the cultural landscapes and historic buildings, structures and sites that remain today.

WIYOT HOMELAND (prior to 1850)

The present-day City of Arcata is located within the territory of the indigenous people known as the Wiyot. The territory which they inhabited was bounded by the Little River on the North, and incorporated all of the area surrounding Humboldt Bay. The population at the time of Euro-American contact was estimated to be around 3,000 people.

The City of Arcata is located within the homeland of the Wiyot people. Wiyot settlements included both permanent villages and temporary camps associated with gathering of food and materials or spiritual practices. Buildings and structures within this region at this time were semi-undergrounded constructions covered with wooden slabs, well suited to the local weather conditions. This was a culturally and linguistically rich region, and the Wiyot and Yurok region are the farthest-southwest people whose language family is related to the Algonquian which is generally found east of the Rockies. "Kori" was the name of the Wiyot settlement that existed on the site of what would become Arcata. The name "Arcata" comes from the Yurok term oket'oh that means "where there is a lagoon" and referred to Humboldt Bay which is a barrier lagoon. Potawot is the Wiyot name for what is now called Mad River.

Prior to European settlement, the region's landscape was characterized by seasonal wetlands, creeks and sloughs around the shore of the Bay, and was surrounded by forested hills. The Wiyot utilized the tributaries of Humboldt Bay for food such as coastal cutthroat trout, steelhead, and Coho salmon as well as for transportation. The annual fish runs on the Eel and Mad Rivers enabled them to smoke enough fish to provide a dependable source of protein during the winter months. Various plant species provided food, fiber, and medicine, and lands were managed to encourage the growth of beneficial plant and animal species. Supervised burnings helped to maintain open space for food, materials, and game. Early settlers often commented on the abundant game animals and the "natural" prairies and meadows to be found on the hillsides, which they found suitable for farming.

A network of trails around the Bay and inland on established trade routes would form the basis for roads and trails developed during the American Gold Rush settlement period. The arrival of gold mining interests and subsequent dominance of Euro-American settlers, who gained control over the land and resources, would prove devastating to the indigenous populations. While only archaeological evidence remains of the earliest indigenous communities, the historic transportation corridors which they established have been incorporated

into our local road system, including Bayside/Old Arcata Road, West End Road, Myrtle Avenue, Freshwater Road, and Fickle Hill Road among others.¹ Today, Arcata is the headquarters of the Big Lagoon Rancheria tribe, and the site of Potawot Health Village, a modern facility constructed on lands that are historically documented as fishing and gathering grounds.²

¹ Van Kirk, S. "Foster Avenue Project," May 2008.

² Potawot Health Village, Traditional Resources Program, <http://www.uihs.org/traditional-resources/traditional-resources-program>, 1/12/2011

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND EXPANSION (1850-1920)

The year 1850 was a politically transformative point in California history. After the 1848 American War with Mexico, the California Territory petitioned to become a state within the U.S. In 1850, statehood was granted, with the provision that it remained a free state. With Americanization of the entire territory of California in 1850, European Americans began to establish their political influence in the Humboldt Bay region. The Gold Rush proved devastating to indigenous populations, and those who did not die from introduced diseases were displaced and their access to traditional hunting, gathering and food sources was restricted through enclosure of tribal lands as private property.

By 1860, Humboldt ranked second in California counties for the production of lumber, and counted four sawmills in operation. Major neighborhoods and landmarks in Arcata began to take shape, including the Plaza, streets and railroad lines, and North Arcata and Bayview-East Arcata neighborhoods. Founded as Union Town or Union, the name was formally changed to Arcata in 1860. With major improvements in the regional transportation system now underway, the North Coast was becoming less isolated by the turn of the century. The infrastructure of the present day City of Arcata began to emerge in the 1880s. The first electrical power station was constructed in 1895.³ The Northwestern Pacific Railroad linking Portland and San Francisco was completed in 1914 and was greeted with a large celebration on the Plaza. One of the most significant events to occur during this period was the founding of Humboldt State Normal School in 1913. Located in the north sector of Arcata, the campus was constructed on a hill overlooking downtown (“college hill”). Initially a teacher’s college, the school eventually became Humboldt State University.

Gold Rush to Settlement

Resource extraction industries have played a major role in shaping the region since the arrival of the first traders seeking a shorter route to the Northern Mines. Mining shaped the earliest American settlements of Arcata and Humboldt County, as it did much of northern California. Although the North Coast of California had been explored by Europeans for several centuries, it was not until the American Gold Rush that extensive efforts were made to establish dependable routes to the interior along with permanent settlements. When gold was found on the Trinity River in early 1849, miners flooded the region. The Trinity and Klamath Rivers became the center

³Van Kirk, S. (1988) *Touring Arcata’s Architecture*, Arcata, California , White City Publishing, Arcata, Ca.

of gold rush activity in Northern California and by 1850 the Northern Mines were the second most productive gold fields in California.⁴

The Gregg Expedition differed from most companies of California Gold Rush miners who only planned to remain long enough to make a strike. In April 1850, members of the Gregg Expedition planned to settle permanently on Humboldt Bay and establish a supply center for the miners. They formed the Union Company and claimed all the land from the northern head of Humboldt Bay south along its eastern shore. They established two towns: Bucksport, which was opposite the mouth of Humboldt Bay, and Union on the North Bay.⁵ The Union Company subdivided the Union (Arcata) town site at the foot of Fickle Hill into blocks and lots.

The Gold Rush proved devastating to the indigenous populations, and from 1850 to 1865 the territory of the Wiyot had the largest concentration of Euro-Americans in California north of San Francisco. Those who did not die from introduced diseases were displaced and their access to traditional hunting, gathering and food sources was restricted through enclosure of tribal lands as private property. Many of these Euro-Americans had come from regions where Native Americans were feared, and many were interested only in securing their own claims. Despite efforts for a peaceful resolution to the conflicts, agitation by some settlers led to violence and a series of massacres of the indigenous populations around Humboldt Bay in 1860. The U.S. cavalry, based at Fort Humboldt in Bucksport with a company at Camp Curtis, on Janes Farm in Arcata, was called in to protect both settlers and Indians. Survivors of the massacre were driven out to distant reservations or marginal lands around the Bay.

Union became an important shipping point supplying local redwood for the Northern Mines and for the new settlements in San Francisco Bay and in the Sacramento Valley. This was the era of “Tidewater Lumbering”, when logs were floated downriver and into the Bay due to the limited road system. The Mad River canal was constructed in 1854 to connect the river and Bay via Mad River Slough. Homesteaders soon arrived and settled into farms and ranches in the Eel River and Arcata bottoms.

By 1860 Humboldt ranked second in California counties for the production of lumber, and counted four sawmills in operation. Settlements were small and even James T. Ryan and James Duff, considered leading citizens and founders of Eureka, had lived aboard their ship for several years. At the time of the 1860 census, what we now understand as Humboldt County was part of a much larger area that included the Northern Mining Districts and

4 Heald, L, et al, (2004) *Cultural Resources Survey of the Samoa Town Master Plan Site*, Arcata, Center for Indian Community Development, Humboldt State University. p. 10.

5 Coy, Owen, (1929). The Humboldt Bay Region 1850-1875: A Study in the American Colonization of California. Los Angeles, Ca., California State Historical Association.

was called Trinity County. During this first decade many people still lived in temporary situations, sharing room and board in exchange for labor, or living with extended family. Another arrangement typical of all ethnic groups was the bachelor household with several single men of related occupations. Due to the shortage of carpenters and builders, many of whom had headed to the mining districts, even in the major settlements of Arcata, Eureka and Bucksport it was not uncommon to find people living in tents.

The Trinity-Klamath strike, much like the gold strike along the 100 mile mother lode of the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, attracted a diverse group of non-native people. From 1848 to 1852, California's non-native population grew from 20,000 to 200,000 people. Gold Rush miners travelled from all over the world to reach California and one quarter of California's Gold Rush miners were foreign born, coming from China, Chile, Europe and Mexico. Whether American or foreign, most of the miners were young males under thirty years old.⁶

A high proportion of the immigrants to Humboldt County during this period came from New England and the Canadian Maritime provinces, especially New Brunswick. Britain had established a colony there in the later 18th century, which included a number of Loyalist families from New England, in a similar landscape of forests, sloughs and waterways. The result had been the development of a logging industry along with a major shipbuilding center where immigrants like John Vance, William Carson and Hans Bendixsen could establish the industries and economy of their homeland in a new region.⁷ The establishment of Fort Humboldt in 1853 brought a new mixture of immigrants to the area, primarily from Germany and Ireland, some of whom would settle locally after their period of service. A number of the officers had served in the "Indian Wars", and some were from southern states. By the end of this era, the new mix of immigrants included the Scandinavian countries, as well as Australia, China and India.

While a number had come in search of gold, many soon pursued the same occupations they had left behind, in fishing and farming, and some were followed by family members or neighbors from their old villages. Skilled trades such as carpenters, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths were essential though many had chosen to work in the gold fields first. The most accessible farmlands had been claimed by the first wave of immigrants so they often rented or managed dairies for other landowners.

At the time of the first local census, in 1850 a number of men had noted their primary occupation as "Capitalist" indicating that they were primarily interested in investment and business opportunities. By 1860, the most

⁶ Rice, Richard B., William A. Bullough, and Richard J. Orsi, (2002) *Elusive Eden: A New History of California*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, , p. 221

⁷ Heald (2004) p. 10

typical occupational category noted in the Census was agriculture, followed by maritime trades and then resource industries such as logger, packer or miner. Land laws such as the Homestead Act of 1862 promoted the "yeoman farmer" as the American ideal and agriculture as the highest and best use of land. The Homestead Act provided settlers with 160 acres of public land in exchange for a small filing fee and the obligation to complete five years of continuous residence before receiving ownership of the land. After six months of residency, homesteaders also had the option of purchasing the land from the government for \$1.25 per acre. Prior to this time, claims had been filed under the Preemption Act of 1841 which was established to grant rights of first purchase to individuals who were already living on federal lands, commonly referred to as "squatters." Purchasers were obligated to work continuously improve the land for five years or the government could step in and confiscate the claim if it remained idle for six months.⁸

Although few professionals were among the first group of settlers, even they would perform multiple roles in the new community. In 1860 Arcata boasted one doctor, who was pressed into service occasionally as a company surgeon at Fort Humboldt or Camp Curtis, while surgeons at the Fort reported visiting patients in Arcata and outlying areas. The presence of the Fort, a regional provisioning depot, was an economic boon to local merchants and tradesmen in these small communities who soon gained new clients for lumber, agricultural products and construction projects.⁹

Regional mining and lumber operations depended on transporting their product or resource to market in order to see industrial growth. Railroads provided that link in Arcata, where construction of the Dolly Varden Mill began in 1872 in the vicinity of the present St. Louis Road/Spear Avenue intersection. In 1875, the Jolly Giant Mill was built in the vicinity of what is now Granite Avenue off of L.K.Wood Blvd.¹⁰ Efforts were soon made to link these two mills to the Arcata Wharf by railroad.¹¹

Unlike Eureka, Arcata is located on the shallow north end of the Bay and is inaccessible to larger ships. To alleviate this problem, from 1854 to 1855, the Union Plank Walk and Rail Track Company constructed a railroad, the oldest in California, which ran from the southwest corner of Arcata Plaza to Union Warf, leading one mile out into Humboldt Bay (California Historic Landmark No. 842). The wooden rail line and wharf extended 11,000 feet into the bay and provided easy access from deep water, through the wide mudflats and directly to Arcata,

⁸ Guerra, Suzanne, (2008) The Legacy and Landscape of Tidewater Lumbering, unpublished manuscript

⁹ Guerra, Suzanne (2010), Household and Community: Population Analysis of Bucksport Township and Fort Humboldt: 1853-1860, for Fort Humboldt SHP, California Department of Parks and Recreation.

¹⁰ Susie Van Kirk, "Foster Avenue Project," May 2008.

¹¹ Humboldt Weekly Times 27 February 1875; Humboldt Weekly Times 28 April 1876.

also providing hourly passenger and freight traffic.¹² The railroad used a horse-drawn tram with grooved wheels to fit over the wooden pole rails, the first of its kind in all of California. In 1858, the railroad built a warehouse at the northeast corner of Block 159 in Arcata, now known as Jacoby's Building, which is also recognized as an historic landmark (California Historic Landmark No. 783).¹³

The 1870s was known as California's Railway Era. All along the West Coast, railroads opened up new markets and regional railroad companies sprang up throughout the state. On the North Coast, rail lines were established by logging companies in order to gain access to forest resources in the interior. The Union Plank Walk and Rail Track Company switched from horse power to a steam engine in 1875 and the wooden rails were replaced with iron. To facilitate more lumber-related commerce to Arcata, the rail track extended three quarters of a mile from Arcata to Dolly Varden Mill.¹⁴

The Plaza was the focal point of business activity and was used as a staging area for pack trains and the terminus of the short rail line to the Arcata Wharf. The Union Town post office opened in 1852 and Augustus Jacoby constructed his fire proof store at the corner of 8th and H Streets in 1857. Even in its earlier rough condition, the Plaza was the site of numerous public gatherings and the center of the town around which trade, commerce and civic life was focused. New commercial buildings were being constructed on G and H Streets, and Seventh Street was the link to the road to Eureka which we know today as Bayside-Old Arcata Road. Founded as Union Town or Union, the name was formally changed to Arcata in 1860.

Major neighborhoods in Arcata were beginning to take shape, including North Arcata and Bayview-East Arcata. Logging of what is now the Community Forest and Bayview-East Arcata had provided lumber for the construction of many buildings in the town. During its first few decades Arcata, experienced several fires which caused major damage to the downtown area, which still relied on a pump and bucket brigade. A major fire in 1875 destroyed the entire block on the north side of the Arcata Plaza and damaged adjacent buildings.

A number of adjacent small communities were established during this period that are now part of the City, including Alliance Corners and Bayside. Though largely surviving today as a street name, Alliance Corners had been an important staging area and was one of the last stops en-route to the interior via West End Road. It became an important agricultural community when the Arcata Bottom was diked. Bayside was the site of William Carson's first logging claim, as well as Augustus Jacoby's stone quarry, with two mills and a growing

¹² *Humboldt Times*, 15 Sept. 1855.

¹³ Heald and Roscoe, "Cultural Resources Study," p. 12.

¹⁴ Coy, O.C. (1929) *The Humboldt Bay Region 1850-1875: A Study in the American Colonization of California*. Los Angeles, Ca., California State Historical Association.

dairy industry on the marsh lands that were soon to be drained. Carson recruited workers from his home in New Brunswick to work in his operations on Washington and Jacoby creeks, many of whom brought their families. Some of the houses they constructed remain along Old Arcata and Graham roads. Major changes were underway in the coming decades that would reshape the cultural landscape of Arcata.

Landscapes of Prosperity

The California Gold Rush created a demand for timber for mining, railroads, shipping, and building throughout California. The key to this new lumber industry was the vast, virgin forest of giant redwoods, which covered the ridges and valleys along California's north coast. Despite the great amount of waste produced by the logging and milling processes of that time, California's dense redwood forests were incredibly productive, yielding 84,000 board feet per acre versus 5,000 board feet per acre for southern pine forests. The redwood forests also grew close to navigable waters around Humboldt Bay, where they could be floated to mills and readily transported by ship and later by ocean steamers.¹⁵

By 1881, Humboldt County had twenty-two sawmills, seventeen steam powered and five water powered. However, employment numbers fell to a record low level as the Depression of 1885 hit Humboldt County. Logging work was seasonal, logging operations could be widely dispersed, and even mills that operated year round might reduce operations. A worldwide depression during 1893 caused local slowdowns and closures that forced many workers to move on.¹⁶

To stimulate economic growth, the lumber industry instituted several technological improvements between 1882 and 1899. Mechanization increasingly replaced oxen and horse logging during this period. Two inventions, the 1882 "steam donkey" and the 1892 "bull donkey" enabled lumber production to expand and make more efficient use of the downed trees. The steam donkey was invented by John Dolbeer and took the place of the oxen teams that had once been used to haul timber across ravines and up hillsides. Robert Dollar's "bull donkey" could move trains of logs that oxen teams could not haul on skid roads. As a result, within ten years local lumbermen had tripled their yield.¹⁷ This increased production was offset by a glut in the market, but was then revived by a real estate boom, a cycle that would often be repeated in subsequent decades.¹⁸ Despite the boom and bust economy, the international market for lumber grew during the 1890s.¹⁹ By 1892, there were 50 mills in

¹⁵ Heald (2004) p. 10; Coy, O. C. (1929). The Humboldt Bay Region 1850-1875: A Study in the American Colonization of California. Los Angeles, Ca., California State Historical Association

¹⁶ Cornford, D. A. (1983). Lumber, Labor, and Community in Humboldt County, California 1850-1920. Ph.D., University of California.

¹⁷ Heald (2004) p. 13; Architectural Resources Group (1987). Eureka, An Architectural View. Eureka, CA, The Eureka Heritage Society..

¹⁸ Ericson, K. (1966). The Morphology of Lumber Settlements in Western Oregon and Washington. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁹ Daily Humboldt Times, 1893

Humboldt County, producing finished lumber and shingles, tank material, pipe stocks, coffin material, pilings, clapboard siding, posts, ties, stakes, lath and pickets.²⁰

The network of company owned logging railroads became the most dependable and accessible transportation system in the region by the 1880s, providing freight and passenger service as well as serving the system of logging camps scattered throughout the region.²¹ In 1881 two railroads dominated the Humboldt Region: The Arcata & Mad River Railroad (A&MRR) Company and the Humboldt & Mad River Railroad. The Arcata & Mad River Railroad absorbed the Arcata Transportation Company, and extended the line up the mad River to serve the mills at Warren Creek, Korbelt and Blue Lake. In 1886 A&MRR ordered construction of a roundhouse in Arcata, located in the block between 6th, 7th, I and J Streets (with the dimension of 60' x 100'). Adjacent to the roundhouse, a large building was constructed to store thousands of sacks of potatoes, one of Arcata's best known farm exports at time.

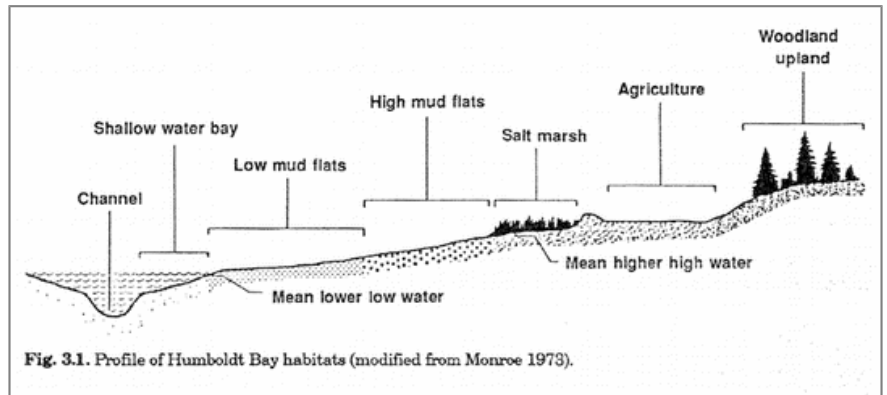
Although Humboldt County was still relatively isolated, with no direct road or rail connections to the rest of California, the seaport of Eureka offered passenger steamship service to San Francisco twice a week and a system of ferries linked all of the towns and mill sites on the Bay. Typical for that era, the town site had been platted on a grid even though the landscape was characterized by sloughs, gulches, creeks and marsh land. As the City developed, many of these areas were gradually filled in and streets extended across areas once considered inappropriate for development. Landfills often consisted of logging debris, slabs and earth sufficient to fill the area before the street was graded. Dirt roads were the norm between communities, and the major streets in town might also be graveled. Wooden sidewalks were in common use at that time; although residents sometimes complained about splinters and broken boards on well traveled streets these were an improvement during inclement weather.

²⁰Heald, (2004) p. 23; Cornford (1987); Eddy (1893); Hutchins (1967).

²¹; Erickson (1966); Stindt & Dunscomb 1(984).

Food was still largely imported and expensive so some early settlers of the Humboldt Bay region including Isaac Minor and Joseph Russ found it

economically feasible to start farms and dairies.²² The availability of water in the region facilitated agricultural production and soon most of the readily accessible lands around the Bay which were suitable for farming were claimed. This included lands identified on early maps as prairies



and meadows which had been managed by indigenous peoples prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans.

One of the major obstacles to further agricultural development was the limited amount of flat, dry land. During the American settlement period, settlement had been concentrated on the tidelands (the strip of land between ordinary high tide and ordinary low tide)²³. This area was particularly valued as the transportation corridor between land and sea, as seen on Old Arcata Road which follows the contour around North Bay.²⁴ These lands were often the only level sites available in heavily forested or rocky regions and were quickly converted for industrial or commercial use. The marshes and wetlands around the Bay were considered a hindrance. On September 28, 1850, the federal government had agreed to give all unsold swamp and overflowed lands “unfit for cultivation” to the states in which they were located. The Swamp Land Act of 1850 was intended to enable States to promote settlement and “reclaim” their wetlands. Land would be identified by the Secretary of the Interior which directed the Surveyors General in the states on how to identify, list, and reserve them for sale. Together with the Swamp Lands Acts of 1850 and 1860, which brought fourteen more states into the program, these programs opened new lands to development and led to the expansion of the national railroad system and the consumption of wetland forest products.

During the 1880s numerous reclamation projects created farmland and railroad beds on these marshlands, with the majority of the dykes and levees constructed on the North Bay by 1885. The flooding of the Mad River Bottom and sedimentation of North Bay led to the closure of the Mad River canal in 1887.²⁵ The first permanent efforts at reclamation in the Bottom were undertaken by Thomas Bair, President of the Bank of

²²; Coy (1929).

²³ Fig 3.1, Barnhart, Roger A., Milton J. Boyd, and John E. Pequenat, (1992) "The Ecology of Humboldt Bay, California: An Estuarine Profile." In Technical Report Series, edited by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Biological Report 1, Washington, D.C.

²⁴ Van Kirk, Susie, (2001) "Jacoby Creek Watershed History," Unpublished manuscript, Jacoby Creek Land Trust.

²⁵ Heald (2004) p. 20.

Arcata, in 1892, and the following year the Arcata Land Improvement Company was incorporated to reclaim marsh land west of the Harpst and Spring dike, which ran from Butcher Slough to Jacoby Creek. When the Arcata Land Improvement Company completed the dike on Daniels slough in 1895, about 1800 acres of marsh land had been converted for agricultural use. Swedish immigrant Lorenz Petersen had settled in Alliance, near Arcata and was involved in the Arcata Land Improvement Company and promoting real estate in dairy land with his brother Peter. Peter J. Petersen was the general manager of the Ferndale Creamery, the first incorporated creamery in the County. Dairy farming had been the Petersen family business for generations and they were ready to encourage the adoption of new farming practices.²⁶

Primarily subsistence farmers for whom dairy products were only a minor product, the earlier settlers resented the interference of these new immigrants and felt that the new practices were expensive or unnecessary. Prior to 1860 most farmers produced dairy products for their own consumption, bartered or sold the excess and processed their milk on their own farm. These operations were small, and could sometimes be very primitive, which did not ensure a consistent quality or quantity to the customer. The earliest dairy operations had focused on butter production, due to the unreliable transportation system, and often consigned shipments to outgoing sea vessels for markets in San Francisco. This was risky since shipments were perishable and the ship captain always added a substantial mark up to ensure his own profit.²⁷

The idea of a cooperative creamery, where farmers brought their milk to a central processing plant and were paid according to their production was still new. Small grain farmers were also being encouraged to convert their land to dairying. At this time Arcata was better known for its potato crop. Most land nearby was planted in grains while range cattle and sheep were pastured in the hills and there were few large dairy operations at this time. Dairy production expanded greatly with the introduction of clover as a staple food for cattle instead of relying on native grasses. The first cattle bred for dairy production were also brought into the county during this period, to replace the sturdy stock preferred by the subsistence farmer. The cream separator, introduced sometime around 1885, ensured greater profit to the dairy farmer by capturing a higher percentage of cream from the milk while saving time. By 1890 the Mad River and Eel River Valleys was undergoing a transformation from grain crops to dairying. In 1893 there were twenty six creameries in the county and by 1899 there were thirty two. By taking over production, the creameries allowed the dairy farmer to focus on herd improvement and dairying. This encouraged the development of the County Dairyman's Association, which brought together

²⁶ Susie Baker Fountain Collection, Vol. 4, Humboldt Room, Special Collections, , Humboldt State University Library, Arcata, California
²⁷ Coy (1929): Genzoli Collection, Library, Humboldt State University, "Every Dairy Farm Had its Own Creamery House 'Till Advent of Concerns", A. Genzoli, ND

dairy farmers from diverse backgrounds over common issues. Immigrants who could only lease their farms were able to work cooperatively with landowners and eventually many were able to purchase their own farms.²⁸

Though designed to provide access to inland forest resources, rail lines were soon pressed into service by farmers to transport agricultural products to local markets throughout the region. Because they were linked to shipping ports on Humboldt Bay, it enabled farmers to ship surplus dairy products, grains and vegetables to market in San Francisco.²⁹ The first creamery in the Arcata Bottom was constructed on Upper Bay Road in 1892 on the edge of the newly reclaimed marsh, and soon the area was dotted by small dairy farms.³⁰

As lumbering began to replace mining as the main regional industry, labor shortages drew immigrants to Humboldt County from northern Europe, the Maritime provinces of Canada, New England and the South. Local lumbermen recruited workers from their home states or territories, with the net result that new Englanders and natives of the Maritime Provinces dominated the population by the 1880s.³¹ During the 19th century, labor shortages were prevalent in Humboldt County due to its relative isolation. As a result workers maintained some flexibility to change jobs, and some homesteaders used seasonal work to supplement their income. Wages followed the fortunes of the industry as well as the larger economy. The average monthly wage for a lumber mill worker in 1893 was \$37.54, for a logging company worker \$43.34, while farm workers earned from \$20-\$35, and clerks ranged from \$40-\$60.

Many of these early immigrants left their mark on the social life of the community in the form of churches, clubs, fraternal associations and community halls. These groups provided social outlets, often assisted immigrants in obtaining employment, and aided in the integration of people from diverse backgrounds into the community. The Arcata First Methodist Episcopal Church was the first organized in Arcata in 1850, and the first church building appeared in 1854. Churches provided recreational activities as well as worship services. Various groups held annual picnics, reunions, and celebrated traditional holidays with friends and family.

Fraternal associations were also important in promoting spiritual, ethnic and political bonds and Arcata was the site of several conventions. When the Town Hall was constructed in 1896, the upper floor hosted the local

28 Bernasconi, Walter, (1963) "The dairy industry in Humboldt County up to 1914," History 196, Unpublished manuscript, Humboldt State University.

29 Heald (2004); Eddy, John Mathewson,(1893) In the Redwood's Realm, By-Ways of Wild Nature and Highways of Industry, As Found under Forest Shades and Amidst Clover Blossoms in Humboldt County, California. Humboldt Chamber of Commerce, D.S. Stanley & Co. Printers and Publishers, San Francisco.

30 Rich, Wm, James Roscoe and Susie Van Kirk, (2003) A Cultural Resources Investigation of the Proposed McDaniel Slough Marsh Enhancement Project, Located near Arcata, Humboldt County, California, Roscoe and Associates, Bayside, California.

31 Heald (2004).

Masonic and the Odd Fellows lodges.³² In 1889 the International Order of Oddfellows claimed over 500 members in Humboldt County.³³ The Pythian Castle, constructed in 1885 for the Knights of Pythias lodge, is significant for its long service as a social and commercial center as well as being an outstanding example of Queen Anne architecture.

Excelsior Hall, constructed in 1890 by Isaac Minor, served as a community venue for forty years for every type of popular entertainment, from the Lyceum speakers to professional theater companies, and was eventually replaced by the Minor Theater. The first movies were shown at the Hall, and in 1908 the Crawford Store was remodeled into a silent movie house and renamed the Plaza Theater.³⁴

The infrastructure of the present day City of Arcata began to emerge in the 1880s. The first electrical power station was constructed in 1895.³⁵ The Union Water Company was incorporated at the end of 1883 and within a couple of months the Volunteer Fire Department had been organized. The first municipal water system was drawn from Gannon (Campbell) Creek near the top of 14th Street and stored in redwood tanks. Although water was in the mains and hydrants were installed on each corner of the Plaza, water shortages and low pressure were still a problem during the summer months. This was a serious issue for City administrators who were paying \$300 per year for ten years just to assure public water service. A second reservoir was constructed in 1888, and in 1894 the Company constructed a dam across Preston Creek to alleviate public concern.³⁶

Although many newspapers were published temporarily, including the Arcata Leader published from 1879 -1881, the *Arcata Union* newspaper began publication in 1886 and remained the only newspaper in the community for more than a century. The first newspaper in the region was the Humboldt Times, established in Eureka in 1854. The Union was a weekly, carrying local news items, reporting on local government, social and business announcements, and served as an active promoter for Arcata. In 1901, it moved into a recently remodeled storefront on the corner of 9th and G Streets which would be its home until it was closed in 1996.

“The White City” and the Progressive Era

The new century began with great optimism. In 1893 the United States prepared to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s landing in the West Indies with a World’s Fair in Chicago which became a

32 Van Kirk, S. (1999) Humboldt County: A Briefest of Histories, Prepared for the Shades of Humboldt Project, Humboldt County Library; Guerra, S., (2009) *Centerville Dairy Historical Resources Analysis*, unpublished report ; Van Kirk, S. (1986) The Plaza, Arcata, California , White City Publishing, Arcata, Ca

33 Van Kirk, S. (1993) Historic Resources, for the Eureka General Plan Update, City of Eureka, Planning & Community Development Department.

34 Ttlow, Robert Thomas, (1967) A history of the Minor Theatre, Arcata, California, 1914-1924, Thesis (M.A.) San Francisco State College

35 Van Kirk, S. (1988) *Touring Arcata’s Architecture*, Arcata, California , White City Publishing, Arcata, Ca.

36 Van Kirk, S. (1985) A History of the Arcata Community Forest, City of Arcata, Arcata Ca.

combination of international trade show and a symbol of national power & progress. The image that was created in Chicago of the “White City, “at a time when the US was flexing its imperial muscles, was based on visions of classical Greece & Rome that was soon imitated everywhere. In California, both the City of Los Angeles and the City of San Francisco hired some of the Fair’s designers and adopted their own “City Beautiful” master plans.

At the urging of Arcata resident Charles Murdock, who envisioned the Plaza with fountains, shrubs and trees, a Plaza Improvement Committee made plans to beautify the space. With an early history as a provisioning center, the Plaza was the center of the commercial district but it still boasted numerous saloons. A bandstand was completed in 1901 and animals were no longer grazing on the square. Roses, boxwood, and palm trees were planted and benches were added. The bandstand was removed in 1906 in order to install the statue of William McKinley at the center of the redesigned town square. Radiating sidewalks were completed in 1910 and a fountain donated by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union was installed in 1912.³⁷ Arcata adopted the “White City” as its slogan and many of the buildings surrounding the Plaza from that era would echo the classical style of the World’s Fair.³⁸

With major improvements in the regional transportation system now underway, the North Coast was becoming less isolated. The Northwestern Pacific Railroad linking Portland and San Francisco was completed in 1914 and was greeted with a large celebration on the Plaza. The rail line now offered regular passenger service and stops along the way for the sports enthusiast interested in fishing, camping, or hiking. Prior to this period, regular steamship cruises to major ports on the West coast had been available for decades. Work on the three story Hotel Arcata began in 1914 and was completed the following year. Rooms featured steam heat, baths and private suites and the Hotel dining room offered everything from coffee to a ten course dinner. Regular bus service was offered to the train station, with auto stage connections to local communities.

While lumber technology remained virtually unchanged during the early 1900s, industrial expansion and a rush to acquire unclaimed timberland had ushered in a boom. All the major lumber companies now owned timberlands, conducted their own logging operations, owned all or part of local railroads and sailing vessels, and many had offices in San Francisco. Improvements in the rail system had been a long term goal for many of these companies who had sold their shares in local rail lines to the Northwestern Pacific Railroad in order to ensure the completion of the regional system.³⁹

37 Van Kirk, S. (1986) *The Plaza, Arcata, California* , White City Publishing, Arcata, Ca

38 S. Doniger, (2011) *Modernism in Arcata*, unpublished manuscript

39 Heald (2004); Erickson (1966).

One of the most significant events to occur during this period was the founding of Humboldt State Normal School in 1913. Located in the north sector of Arcata, the campus was constructed on a hill overlooking downtown (“college hill”). Initially a teacher’s college, the school eventually became Humboldt State University. Since 1914, the university has drawn teachers, staff, students, and visiting scholars to Arcata for almost a century. After a significant amount of lobbying by both Arcata and Eureka, Humboldt State College was established as the State Normal School in 1913. In 1914, William Preston donated 25 acres and the Union Water Company donated 25 ½ acres for the new campus, adjoining the Redwood Park. Nelson Van Matre was installed as the first president of the college in April 1914 and remained until July 1924. The faculty consisted of six instructors who served a student body of 61 prospective teachers. The first site was on 11th and M Streets, in a building that had served as the Arcata Grammar School. The college moved in January 1916 to a site then called “College Hill” in a tract called the Preston Addition which had been donated by A.W. Preston and the stockholders of the Union Water Company. The first buildings dedicated for college use were single story wooden structures and considered “temporary.” These housed the industrial arts and music programs, along with the gymnasium. Classes were held in the old wooden “temporary” buildings until they were demolished in the fall of 1950.

The City anticipated continued growth and prosperity. The Union Water Company installed a new pumping station on Janes Creek in 1909, and in 1916 purchased the Arcata Water Company. In 1884 that company had been unsuccessful in its bid to provide water for fire protection but had been allowed to provide water for residential use and now served fifty customers. The Union Water Company was finally sold in 1928 to a Minneapolis based corporation which began serving 300 water customers.

Of greater long term significance, in September 1904, the Union Water company donated 26 acres of second growth Redwood to the City of Arcata for creating a park, though it retained its water rights and access to the reservoir. A Parks Commission was established and asked to create a plan for “beautification, improvement and access” along with an estimate of costs. The Commission named the new facility Redwood Park and planned for a “boulevard” entrance at the top of 14th Street with a bridge over Gannon Creek. Volunteer efforts and fundraising events were planned in order to save labor costs. A two night park benefit of music, comedy and booths was held on May 26 and 27. In June a “Park Day” was held to clear brush from 5 acres for a picnic area and dance platform with a band stand. At that time it was suggested that the City hire a caretaker, and Park Commissioner Noah Falk offered to construct a house, but the idea was not approved at that time.⁴⁰

40 Van Kirk (1985)

While the beginning of this era was ushered in with renewed optimism, both World War I and the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 would be major blows. The loss of life in World War I and the epidemic both hit the local population of young and able bodied men who had traditionally supported trade and commerce.

Labor unrest had been rising early in the first decade, and labor reformers had urged improvements in the wage and benefits system but had largely been met with opposition from management. During World War I agreements between labor and industry management were negotiated both by government and business leaders and produced some stability for the duration of the war. On the North Coast the war brought some limited economic gains with contracts for materials, shipbuilding and agricultural products. It also brought a labor shortage which was only partly met by immigrant labor and the employment of women in some non-traditional operations such as manufacturing and maintenance.

Influenza first struck in many of the military camps, and soon had spread across the country. In Arcata, with a limited medical system, tending the sick became the responsibility every able bodied person. Churches stepped in to assist congregants, and often took in others who had no care givers. In the company town of Scotia an Influenza march was held to dramatize the need for face masks since the disease spread so rapidly.⁴¹ The continuing labor shortage after World War I would further encourage immigration into the area and provided an opportunity to rebuild.

⁴¹ *Clippings Files*, Archives, Humboldt County Historical Society.

THE INTER-WAR YEARS (1920-1945)

The economic success of the “Roaring Twenties” (1920-1929) was followed by the worst economic crisis in U.S. History-the Great Depression (1930-1941). The Great Depression brought economic hardship for the average American, and slowed building construction and architectural development during the period. Projects funded through the Public Works Administration (PWA) began in 1933 and the Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA) begun in 1935, provided numerous public resources to communities throughout California, including architecturally significant buildings and structures such as schools, libraries, civic auditoriums, parks, bridges. Arcata saw major improvements in the water and sewer systems, which still relied on the original Redwood pipes, sidewalks, and in public facilities while other projects were underway at the College.

The end of the decade saw signs of recovery, with increased property assessments reported in 1936 over the previous year. Auto tourism had increased after the completion of the Redwood Highway in 1926, with the growth of tourist services, motels, gas stations and restaurants along the commercial corridor of G Street. By 1945 there was increasing development outside the city limits. Annexation of the Harpst, Union and Preston Additions to the City of Arcata was approved by the City Council. Anticipating growth and a long delayed improvement in housing stock, the City was on the edge of a major building boom that would reshape the cultural landscape.

The Economic Boom of the 1920s

When Noah Falk had driven the first automobile into Arcata in 1903 the streets between cities and major roads were still usually graveled or oiled packed earth. While street improvements and board sidewalks were being installed on major streets many local roads were simply graded dirt. Throughout California good roads meant tourism and commerce, and savvy Progressive-era businesses, chambers of commerce, and even women’s clubs promoted road improvements, consistent signage, accurate maps, expanded services, and accommodations. As the highway transportation system improved, trucking and tractor logging were increasingly being adopted within the timber industry and would continue to encourage the expansion of local roads and connections to the interstate highway system.

The completion of the Redwood Highway in 1926 provided an all weather connection to San Francisco, and spurred auto sales locally. New garages were located along alley ways as well as fronting the public roads. Automobiles at that time were heavy, open-sided, with wooden spoke wheels that did not last very long on local dirt and graveled streets. While some residents adapted existing barns, shops and storage buildings to house

their new vehicle, others constructed garages and residential landscapes now often included graveled and paved driveways and walkways. While wooden sidewalks were still in common use, urban residents preferred paved sidewalks without the hazards of loose boards and missing planks.⁴²

With the introduction of an all weather highway between San Francisco and Portland, the most popular excursion soon became the four-day drive from San Francisco to Eureka. The same year that the redwood highway opened here, developers in Los Angeles were experimenting with a new type of motorist hotel: the Motel. The evolution of the Auto Camp or Auto court had already begun with a simple camp cabin upgraded to include hot and cold water, heat and private bathrooms. Auto camps evolved to accommodate the car and became auto courts and later the motels that we are familiar with today. During this period it required two or more days of nearly all day driving for the 200+ mile trip from San Francisco to Humboldt County.

Service stations would soon proliferate along G Street with an assortment of services to help out the stranded motorist. Tires, repairs, parts, painting, washing, wrecking, parts and dealers were often separate and would be consolidated over time. Some stations followed current architectural trends, trying to blend into the neighborhood, while others drew attention with designs influenced by the 1930s Streamline Moderne Style, including an apartment building at 506 G and the structure at 590 G Street that now houses the Hole in the Wall sandwich shop.

A variety of accommodations could be found along the Redwood Highway but this era looked more and more unfavorably on unregulated tourism. Civic leaders and local planners began to look at planned campsites with a wide variety of recreational opportunities, souvenir shops & small restaurant facilities to deal with the increase in tourists. With the opening of the Redwood Highway in 1926, the Chamber of Commerce led a drive to raise funds for an auto camping facility in Redwood Park. The auto lodge would be would provide kitchen, laundry, shower and toilet facilities for the auto traveler at a rate of 50 cents per night. The Park Keepers lodge was also constructed for the couple who would oversee the Auto Park. The Auto Park would continue in use until 1950, when it began serving as a community building. The Keeper's house and social hall were still in use in 1985.⁴³ In 1923 Arcata built its first auto court near today's HSU campus. In 1929 Howard Barter built the Barter Bungalow Court which featured 6 bungalows with its own kitchen and separate showers all in the latest style.⁴⁴

Construction of the new campus was underway at the college and Founders Hall held its first classes in 1921.

Although funds for a campus had been appropriated by the state in 1917, construction did not begin until 1920.

⁴² .Fountain,S, (1967) Susie Baker Fountain papers, Vol. 6, Humboldt State University, Eureka, CA.

⁴³ Van Kirk. (1985)

⁴⁴ Doniger (2011), Modernism in Arcata, unpublished manuscript

The Normal School became Humboldt State Teachers College in 1921, when control was transferred from the local board to the state director of education. Under the administration of President Ralph Swetman (1924-1930) state appropriations were approved for the new gymnasium and the new College Elementary School (Gist Hall).

Although the completion of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad system in 1914 had boosted demand, recent road and highway development had an impact on the local rail system. The Arcata & Mad River Railroad's expansion stopped in the late 1920s. First it discontinued its regular passenger service from Arcata to Korbell in 1928 as improvements to the local road system had made automobile travel more accessible to the average person. The final blow came with America's Great Depression and the closure of many Humboldt area mills. Since the A&MRR depended on lumber commerce, it was forced to shut down much of its operations as well. In 1933, the A&MRR discontinued all its services.

Spurred by a post war conversion from railroad logging to truck logging, in 1941 the company scrapped the engines, removed the track, burned the cars, and removed the turntable and spur lines. The City of Arcata graded the roadbed.⁴⁵ The roundhouse was converted into a truck repair shop. The car sheds on the west side of the property were removed and a new welding shop and tire shop were constructed. By 1954, the truck repair shop was converted to automotive repair and an auto sales office was added to the east end of the roundhouse. An electrical service shop was added to the west end and a large body shop has been built. This property remained in operation as an automotive repair and sales business, Isacksons Motors, until 2002.⁴⁶

The Great Depression and the New Deal

The economic success of the "Roaring Twenties" (1920-1929) was followed by the worst economic crisis in U.S. History-the Great Depression (1930-1941). The Great Depression brought economic hardship for the average American, and slowed building construction and architectural development during the period. This had a significant impact on the North Coast since the timber industry was the major driving force of the economy of the region. The industry had also developed an international market in the late nineteenth century, and a worldwide downturn offered no possibility of shifting to other markets. The influx of people coming into California seeking employment would cause an increase in competition for available jobs. Those who could not find employment in timber turned to the fishing industry, farms, and agricultural industry in the region, often with little success.

⁴⁵ Clark, 1969.

⁴⁶ Heald and Roscoe, p. 13.

Arcata had grown by 55% during the first three decades of the 20th century, from a population of 952 in 1900 to a population of 1,709 in 1930. Over the next decade growth was less than 9%, from 1,709 to 1,855. The nationwide depression had caused a marked decrease in markets for lumber worldwide. While the effects were not felt immediately after the crash, by 1933 many of the larger mills were forced to cut the number of working days or reduce the daily working hours. Some small operations were forced to close temporarily and many eventually went out of business. At the end of the Depression only the “Big Four” lumber companies had been able to remain in business, and were able to acquire some of the companies in distress. These were Dolbeer and Carson, Pacific Lumber, Hammond Lumber, and Holmes-Eureka. In Arcata, the California Barrel Company was also able to survive and became the major local employer after World War II.

In 1932, the Committee for Relief of the Unemployed began a drive for the assistance to the unemployed in Arcata and adjoining territories. Some companies were still able to operate at a reduced level for short periods while others tried to diversify and expand their markets. Robert C. Gayheart, owner of the Varsity Sweet Shoppe installed new equipment to manufacture ice cream. Early in 1933, the Arcata City Council called for a town meeting since expenditures for sewer improvements and for welfare assistance had depleted the funds in the city treasury. The council discussed the possibility of issuing scrip to meet the salaries of officials and other imperative needs.

The turning point of the Depression was the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President of the United States on March 4, 1933 and the institution of the series of programs called the New Deal. This program of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt between 1933 and 1939 and was intended to bring about immediate economic relief as well as reforms in industry, agriculture, finance, waterpower, labor and housing. The New Deal held that the federal government was responsible to provide for the welfare of those unable to care for themselves in an industrial society. This new approach opposed the traditional American political philosophy of laissez-faire.

Later that year, nearly 500 residents of Arcata and the vicinity gathered at the Minor Theater for a “National Recovery Administration” mass meeting that was part of a campaign aimed at promoting public awareness of the goals of President Roosevelt’s New Deal. “The alternatives, if the National Recovery Administration fails, are not pleasant to think of. Strikes, killings, internal disorders will be the rule rather than the exception. Our past difficulties will seem minute,” declared President A.S. Gist of Humboldt State Teachers College. Blaine McGowan, Humboldt County NRA coordinator summed it up: “The National Recovery Administration is not Democratic. It is not Republican. It is *American*.”

Civil works and public relief programs, designed to reach practically every unemployed man and woman in California, had been organized to the point where the entire six-way plan would be in full operation by the beginning of 1934, according to directors of the State Emergency Relief Administration.⁴⁷ The first objective of the New Deal program was to assist the large number of unemployed workers in the U.S. Agencies such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were established to provide government aid and temporary jobs to keep local economies moving during and after the Depression. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was a federally funded program designed to provide work for a limited number of unemployed Americans during the Great Depression by sponsoring public works projects regulated through the local municipalities. Between 1935 and 1943, one-fifth of the nation's labor force worked on WPA projects, the majority of which were in the construction industry. Construction ranged from the new construction and refurbishing of government buildings to highway construction and even art.

The end of the decade saw signs of recovery, with increased property assessments reported in 1936 over the previous year. Auto tourism had increased after the completion of the Redwood Highway in 1926, with the growth of tourist services, motels, gas stations and restaurants along the commercial corridor of G Street. By 1936, the California Barrel Company could advertise an annual payroll of approximately half a million dollars and almost 400 employees. The United Creameries Association and Golden State Milk Products Company represented an annual butter production of one and one half million dollars.

By 1937, Arcata's new municipal water system was finally nearing completion. Built at a cost of approximately \$55,000, the project had been funded by the WPA in 1934. The previous water system consisted of two reservoirs and a deep well on the Arcata Bottom. The local fire had chief pointed out that this could become dangerously low in case of serious fire, and residents had already discovered that water could become brackish. Work on the larger reservoir just above the college had started in 1935, with a dam creating a two acre lake. Under the new system water would be chemically treated. Pressure valves would also be installed at the city mains to maintain the flow of water. By 1940, the new pipeline from Janes Creek to the college reservoir was completed and ensured that all city water would be filtered.⁴⁸

Although there were relatively few homes or commercial buildings constructed during this period, Builders concentrated on the creation of modest and efficient houses in what has become known as the "Minimal Traditional" style. During the 1920s, the emphasis had been on shaping public taste and creating designs

⁴⁷ *Scrapbooks*, City of Arcata Collection, Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University; *Clippings Files*, Humboldt County Historical Society, Eureka, California

⁴⁸ *Scrapbooks*, City of Arcata Collection, Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University

appropriate for modern families. These found their way into magazines and plan books for the owner-builder. During this period, builders in even the largest markets in the United States typically constructed no more than 10 homes per year. Basic designs that could be adapted to a variety of materials and location had great appeal to owner builders. The World's Fair had introduced an array of new ideas and innovations which could be applied to the home of the future.

In 1933, the City began investigating the possibility of acquiring the Union Water Company and creating a municipally owned utility. Negotiations with the Company were difficult, with the price higher than anticipated by the City. In 1934, a special election was called for a bond act to acquire the company. Both the City and the Arcata Union began to lobby heavily for public support and the Bond was passed with a resounding margin of 399 to 76. Further difficulties in financing improvements delayed the project.

Increasingly, local government would turn to state and federal agencies for assistance in maintaining public infrastructure. Under the new WPA program partial funding for construction of a new dam was awarded in 1935 and was built at a cost of approximately \$55,000. By 1937, Arcata's new municipal water system was near completion. The original water system consisted of two reservoirs and a deep well on the Arcata Bottom. Townspeople were concerned that water could be dangerously low in case of serious fire and that drinking water could be brackish. Work on the larger reservoir just above the college started in 1935, with a dam creating a two acre lake. Water could now be chemically treated, with pressure valves at the city mains.⁴⁹

Construction of the new college campus had slowed during the Depression, though some projects were now eligible for federal funding. In 1932-33, the new tennis courts and the College Elementary School were completed. Nelson Hall, which served as the women's dormitory, was begun in 1939. In 1935 the curricula had expanded to the point where it was accredited as a full four year college, and was renamed Humboldt State College.

In 1937, the City Clerk could report a steady increase in construction permits, with new residential construction just outside the city limits and two new commercial buildings. One such building was the \$60,000 Arcata Theater at 10th and G Streets constructed by Redwood Theaters Incorporated. Constructed in Art Deco style and located on the Redwood Highway, it was an elegant addition to the new commercial block. Previously the site of the Brousse Brizard house, this also marked the start of the transition of G Street into a fully commercial corridor and expansion of the commercial district.

⁴⁹ Van Kirk (1985)

By 1945 there was increasing development outside the city limits. Annexation of the Harpst, Union and Preston Additions to the City of Arcata was approved by the City Council after a special election with 86 in favor and 64 against the proposal. In a debate that would become familiar over the next few decades, public opinion was divided about providing services to new areas when the City had no control over development, and whether the increased tax base would be adequate to cover the costs. Anticipating growth and a long delayed improvement in housing stock, the City was on the edge of a major building boom that would reshape the cultural landscape.

Design Influences in the Inter War Years 1920-1940

Following World War I, California's regional architecture was characterized by Revival architecture, reflective of a romanticized period of the past, the ideal domestic environment of the Arts and Crafts style, and the opulent Art Deco style.

Period Revival Style

Period Revival styles were employed for the development of homes and civic buildings. Revival styles prominent locally included the English Tudor, American Colonial revival, Mediterranean revival, and Spanish revival. Popularity of the revival styles was a result of the resurgence of regionalism and historicism in architecture throughout America. During the height of Revival style architecture, residential development had expanded into neighborhoods such as present day Northtown, Arcata Heights, East Arcata and Bayview and these styles were incorporated into commercial development as well.

Craftsman Bungalow

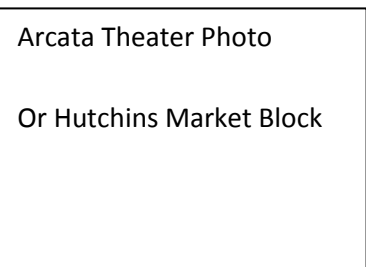
The most common house form of this period was the Bungalow and the most popular interpretation of the bungalow was in the Craftsman style. Between 1922 and 1929, suburban neighborhoods were filled with the American Bungalow, which averaged between \$1,500 and \$5,000, making it an affordable choice for the growing middle class. Natural materials were incorporated into the design, in the use of oak floors, exposed ceiling beams and brick or stone fireplaces, and foundations might incorporate stone or brick while siding was typically wood shingles or boards. These natural materials helped to integrate the building into the landscape.

The Craftsman style was a product of the anti-industrial ideals articulated by John Ruskin and William Morris, which resulted in the Arts and Crafts movement in England and the work of the Craftsman style introduced by the Greene and Greene brothers in Southern California. In 1901 Gustav Stickley began publishing *Craftsman Magazine* in New York, and the principles of handcraft, connecting with nature, and a return to the simple life spread across the country.

This style was well suited to both the building materials available on the North Coast and to the informal and outdoor oriented way of life that characterized the region. This was further reinforced by the redwood industry adoption of the style as part of its marketing strategy, with booklets of plans beginning in the 1920s that featured local homes. The bungalow court served as an innovative solution for affordable, higher density housing for the middle class, and was also adapted for working class housing. The bungalow court provided the convenience of apartment living while incorporating the amenities and privacy typical of a single-family residence with a front porch that looked out on a common area.⁵⁰

Early Modernism

Although residential development in the 1920s reflected an affinity for the Craftsman Bungalow and other Revival styles, the optimism brought about by a strong economy following World War I and a fascination with the machine, found expression in the new Modernistic style which included the Art Deco style (“zigzag”) and Art Moderne (“Streamline Moderne”). The earliest form



of the Modernistic styles was Art Deco, prevalent from 1910 to 1930. This architectural style was commonly used in public and commercial buildings and rarely used in residential architecture. The style employed smooth wall surfaces, usually of stucco, with stylized and geometric motifs such as zigzags and chevrons, used as decorative elements on the façade. Towers and other vertical elements projecting above the roofline gave the buildings a vertical emphasis.

The Arcata Theater (1935) is Arcata’s best commercial example of the Moderne style. New materials were now available including stucco and cement that offered decorative references to sleek machines and stylized geometric motifs. Offices, motels, restaurants and stores all underwent modernization with an emphasis on clean lines, glass and stucco. The lack of ornamentation and smooth-streamlined appearance were especially eye-catching to passing motorists.

The idealized machine influenced and shaped American culture in the 1920s and 1930s and was reflected in America’s lifestyle, art, and design. After 1930 Art Moderne became the prevalent Modernistic form. This style, like Art Deco, was most commonly found in commercial and public buildings. However, houses incorporating this style can be found scattered throughout the region. Characteristics of the Moderne style included smooth wall surfaces usually of stucco, flat roofs, horizontal grooves or lines in walls, as well as horizontal balustrade

⁵⁰ Architectural Resources Group (1987) [Eureka: An Architectural View](#). Eureka Heritage Society, Eureka, California.

elements, which gave the structures a horizontal emphasis. Local builders sometimes interpreted this style in wood, where unbroken horizontal board siding emphasized the long clean lines.

Another interpretation of the machine aesthetic was Streamline Moderne. For practitioners of the Streamline Moderne style, speed was the essence of the modern age. This aesthetic interpretation of speed became the symbol of progress to the American public. Practitioners of this style were not concerned with the purity of functional expression, but focused more on the notion of speed and modernity it could instill in the object or building. This style was used in the design of single-family homes, often evident in rounded corners, speed lines, or even a nautical effect with porthole windows and pipe railings.⁵¹

High Modernism

While California's regional architecture was experiencing a renaissance of Revival, Arts and Crafts and Moderne styles, a new architectural aesthetic emerged in Europe in the 1920s, one that stressed rationality, logic and a break with the past. This new aesthetic was coined the "International Style" in 1932, with the New York's Museum of Modern Art architecture exhibition curated by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson and entitled "The International Style: Architecture Since 1922". This style was a reaction against the ornamentation of previous decades. Like the Moderne style, most instances of the International style appeared in commercial buildings, skyscrapers, factories, and gas stations.

Frank Lloyd Wright came to California in 1917, and by the 1920s he had had created his "textile block" houses. The first of these houses was the 1923 Millard House in Pasadena. It was this house, constructed from concrete mixed with aggregate from the site that stressed Wright's notion of organic architecture in California that would influence generations of designers in the future.

Insert Moderne Gas Station OR
Sacchi Auto building

In contrast to the International style, other early Modernists in the United States were developing humanist expressions of Modernism characteristic of Scandinavian modernism. Arguing that form should follow function, they emphasized the use of natural materials, informal open planning, and the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces. The Great Depression and then World War II ushered in a long period of hardship, and only after World War II would architects and builders again explore this humanist approach to design.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Wright, Gwendolyn (1981) *Building the Dream, A Social History of Housing in America*. Pantheon Books, New York.

Design during the Depression

While the Depression put a stop to most residential construction, the demand for new homes continued at a lower level. The majority of new home construction was financed with the support of the Federal Housing Administration housing program, which emphasized small affordable homes. Many homes were constructed in the Minimal Traditional Style which emphasized compact homes with clean lines and no frills, along with interior spaces that emphasized efficiency and order. Some of America's middle and upper classes were not as greatly affected by the Depression and were still able to construct and reside in custom homes. While PWA Moderne style municipal facilities were common building types throughout California during the Depression, residential designs of this period include eclectic revivals such as Tudor, Pueblo, Spanish and modernistic styles such as Art Deco and Moderne. Although houses might have been reduced in scale, they often incorporated newer features including central heating, new appliances, larger bathrooms, and attached garages.

Prospective homeowners and owner-builders, were encouraged in their efforts to build their ideal home. Following World War I, returning soldiers and their families sought houses of their own and, combined with an increasing number of European immigrants, this led to a housing shortage. In an effort to improve the design of the single-family house and capture a new market share for the professional designer, a group of four architects from Minneapolis, Minnesota, started the *Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the United States, Inc* (ASHSB) in 1919 in order to *"improve the design of the single-family house and capture a new market share for the professional designer."* Using the familiar plan book, they offered designs for homes with from three primary rooms up to those with six primary rooms in a variety of styles. The intended homeowner ranged from those seeking a starter home to those in the newly emerging middle class. Plans were distributed through newspapers, magazines, and plan books.

In 1924, the ASHSB joined forces with the Better Homes in America Campaign whose stated purpose was that *"Inexpensive but attractive and convenient small homes should be accessible to all families."* The Better Homes Movement had begun in 1922 in the pages of the Butterick Publishing Company's household magazine, *The Delineator*, celebrating home ownership, home maintenance and improvement, and home decoration as means of motivating responsible consumer behavior. Not surprisingly it also expanded the market for consumer products by encouraging homeowners to incorporate the latest furnishings and appliances into their plans.⁵³

Although many people could still not afford a new home, these efforts encouraged everyone to remodel, rehabilitate, and to plan for the day they could build their dream home. The California Redwood Agency then

⁵³ Wright, Gwendolyn, (1981) *Building the Dream, A Social History of Housing in America*. Pantheon Books, New York.

employed a group of Bay Area and Los Angeles architects to provide plans for small homes. Architectural competitions were held under the auspices of the San Francisco and Los Angeles chapters of the American Institute of Architects which not only made the case for redwood as opposed to materials like stucco & cement, but offered plans for homes that were \$2,000-\$6,000 dollars throughout the 1920s. By 1938, a small house catalogue of planned homes were marketed to the LA region and the San Francisco office joined premiere home furnishings giant Barker Brothers to offer complete interior furnishings advice⁵⁴.

In 1938, the Arcata Union reported that Life Magazine carried a promotional advertisement for the California Redwood Association dealing with the “mystery of home planning,” according to Josh Spidell, manager of the Hammond Redwood Company’s retail yard in Arcata. The company also offered a free booklet on home planning to prospective home builders. Later that year the Arcata Union announced that the first annual Cooking School would be held at the Arcata Theater on November 3-5. The Theater management stated that it had spared no expense in bringing to Arcata housewives the most up to date type of cooking school available and were sponsoring a full length color movie entitled “Star of My Kitchen” showing the modern methods of cooking and home planning.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Humboldt County Historical Society

⁵⁵ Ibid

GROWING THE MODERN CITY (1940-1970)

Following the end of World War II much of California experienced population growth that stretched residential and commercial development beyond original city boundaries. Arcata experienced a severe housing shortage following World War II which encouraged a series of residential housing projects. Returning servicemen and their families, workers in local mills, as well as veterans returning to HSU on the GI Bill put a strain on the City's resources. Shortages of building materials and state and federal restrictions gave priority to the construction of homes and facilities needed by returning veterans. By the end of 1945, development was increasingly located adjacent to and outside of the city limits of Arcata.

The automobile influenced the development and organization of urban centers by enabling people to move farther away from downtown and drawing growth away from the urban core to outlying areas. Expansion of commercial corridors such as G and H Streets created links between the urban, rural, and suburban areas of the city. Growth of commercial and residential areas along major highways such as Valley West adjacent to Highway 101 and Highway 299 further stretched the boundaries of the City. In the years following World War Two, Humboldt State University continued its development and expansion.

The last part of the 20th century has been characterized by rapid and major growth, and only within the last decade has this pattern slowed. From 1940 to 1950, Humboldt County's population increased by 53 percent, and then increased another 51 percent to 104,892 by 1960. City leaders had anticipated a population of 5,000 by 1970 and were planning city services to meet the anticipated increase but that population goal would be reached a full decade earlier. Much of the population growth would occur in adjacent unincorporated areas of the County which had been largely agricultural. These level, open lands adjacent to the City were attracting both housing development and industrial growth because they required little site preparation, reducing development costs. Immediately after World War II, the City also faced two decades of deferred maintenance of aging infrastructure.

General conditions appeared to be improving by 1941, in part due to wartime labor shortages. One out of every fifteen people in Humboldt County was still on some type of relief, totaling 2, 979 people according to a study by the California Taxpayers Association. The figure, they stated, did not include persons receiving aid through federal agencies such as the WPA (Works Progress Administration), FSA (Farm Security Administration), CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and NYA (National Youth Administration). There were 1,486 persons receiving social security, 61 receiving blind aid, 170 dependent children, and 258 receiving indigent aid.

County Welfare Work, as social services programs were called at that time, accounted for 61 percent of the per capita payments by Humboldt County government in 1940-41. A study by the California Taxpayers Association reported that expenditures for this category included relief payments to the needy, aged, blind, children and county indigents, as well as hospital services, probation and detention. Indigent aid in Humboldt County for July had dropped 36% from the previous year, due to demands from both industry and for the military which opened up opportunities for both men and women.⁵⁶

World War II proved to be the single act that would pull the United States out of the Depression as it resulted in re-opening the U.S. economy to international trade, increased demand for American exports, and a growing national defense industry. During World War II, the nation’s resources were devoted to the War efforts, with the United States the primary manufacturer of war material for the European allies. Industries which had been nearly idle in California, including lumbering, aircraft and shipbuilding, were now booming and created jobs for many people who had been unemployed during the Depression. New military recruits arrived from every state in the country, increasing the state’s population. Military bases along the West Coast became the launching points for the Pacific fleets and held strategic importance. Locally, the lumber industry, ship building, and agriculture were all considered important to the war effort, and employers made an effort to hire and retain dependable workers, including women and new arrivals from other states.⁵⁷

Industries placed an emphasis on mass production to meet current demand at a limited cost. Design was ruled by the simplification and standardization of housing for mass assembly. Architects focused on the demand for worker housing and the practical needs of women running households without servants. While the lumber industry had experimented with the byproducts of lumber production for almost two decades, wartime shortages furthered the development of wood products such as plywood, veneers, composites and plastics.

Year	Population	Growth /Decline
1860	554	(Union)
1880	702	22.0%
1890	962	37.0%
1900	952	-1.0%
1910	1,121	17.8%
1920	1,486	32.6%
1930	1,709	15.0%
1940	1,855	8.5%
1950	3,729	101.0%
1960	5,235	40.4%
1970	8,985	71.6%
1980	12,850	43.0%
1990	15,197	18.3%
2000	16,651	9.6%
2010	17,231	3.5%

⁵⁶ Scrapbooks, City of Arcata Collection, Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University

⁵⁷ Heald (2004).

Innovative uses of space and new materials developed during the war influenced the design of residential architecture after World War II. Ideas first applied to mass produced worker housing during the war, such as the use of inexpensive materials in home construction, the integration of indoor and outdoor living space, and the elimination of formal spaces like dining rooms would all become important components of postwar middle class housing.

Construction of homes after the war was encouraged by the federal government's initiatives in the 1930s and 1940s to encourage home ownership, including mortgage terms conducive to the average American family and the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, commonly known as the GI Bill. The Federal Housing Administration also influenced how homes and neighborhoods were designed by promoting a 534-624 square-foot dwelling known as the "minimum house" with a kitchen, a multi-purpose living room, two bedrooms, and one bathroom.

By 1936, the FHA was advocating for well-designed communities at the neighborhood scale. These would become the standard approach for the development of the suburbs in the postwar years. Guidelines outlined the proper street patterns, and integrated schools, parks, playgrounds, and commercial areas.⁵⁸ These concepts were incorporated into the planned communities that were created in Arcata after WWII, including Westwood and Sunny Brae.

With the advent of World War II, the economy had begun to recuperate as more people went back to work, and the virtues of home and family life became the focus of the American people. In the peacetime economy, former servicemen would expect the consumer goods, inexpensive housing, vocational training, college education, and automobiles which had been unobtainable during the war and Great Depression. The large number of people unable to find housing created a desperate need for a variety of housing and for many of them the answer would be found in the new suburbs.

Postwar Arcata

Following World War II, California experienced a period of unprecedented urban growth and economic expansion with a population increase of fifty-three percent between 1940 and 1950. This included not only returning veterans, but immigrants and new residents who decided to relocate to California. By the end of 1945, development was increasingly located adjacent to and outside of the city limits of Arcata. In an effort to gain some control over development, the annexation of the Harpst, Union, and part of the Preston Additions was approved after a special election. The Union Addition dated back to 1889, Harpst to 1902, and Preston Place to 1905, and included both residential and commercial development.

⁵⁸ Wright, Gwendolyn (1981)

In an effort to control industries from being developed in residential zones, in 1946 the Arcata Planning Commission adopted a draft zoning plan for Arcata. The plan was prompted by the confusion arising from new industries coming into Arcata and adjacent areas, where the pattern of use had allowed owner operated shops and services as home based businesses. The city was now to be divided into five zones, though there would be no attempt to get current owners to relocate or cease operations. These were:

R1-Single family residential district.

R2-Multiple family and apartment houses

C-General commercial district

M-Industrial district

A-Agricultural district

Although improvements had been made to the sewer system within the last decade with assistance from federal loan programs, ensuring adequate public services for a growing community continued to be an important issue. Water bonds for a proposed project on Jacoby Creek were defeated when public opinion still favored the development of a larger water supply. The opposition came from voters who wanted further study, and to press for consideration of an alternative project for wells between Arcata and Mad River. Sewer improvement bonds on the same ballot had been readily approved by two thirds of the voters.

The year 1947 would see incredible growth as the post WWII economic recovery sent the population to 3000 within the city limits, and almost double within its sphere of influence. Arcata had already grown by 62% since 1940, and the strain was beginning to be felt. In January, building permits issued in Arcata high an all time high of \$176,460. The largest single project, for \$40,000, was attributed to the Van-De-Nor Lumber company for construction of a sawmill and remanufacturing plant. The California Barrel company added two new warehouses, Coast Redwood added a workshop, and Sound Lumber Company added a one story lumber mill. Other major projects included a new church building for the Seventh Day Adventists, and a two story building for the Nazarene Church.

Local newspaper headlines reported Arcata as a "lumbering boom town, with thirty mills in operation" as local business owners projected a population of 10,000 in five years. The estimated payroll in the lumber industry was set at \$4,000,000 annually. While the logging industry had declined to only three major mills in the region during the Depression, new building materials such as particle board and plywood had been developed in the

interim. Thirty or more local wood product mills were now producing lumber, veneer, shingles and Redbark-redwood insulation for both domestic and export markets. Sites for lumber, shingle and remanufacturing sites, especially along railroad lines, were being purchased or optioned in large numbers.

Returning veterans and workers drawn to newly created jobs in the wood products industry had increased the demand for affordable single family housing. By the spring of 1947, preliminary surveys had started for a new housing subdivision to be constructed by Chester Spiering of Portland, on the Ghilardoni Tract on the northwest outskirts of Arcata. This would be the area known as Bloomfield Acres. The project developers promised a minimum of 50 to 100 homes which would sell for \$7,000. The news was welcomed by local community leaders who cited a serious housing shortage. Spiering planned to begin construction on April 1, with the first six units to be completed by May 15 and projected that 50 homes would be completed by the middle of September. Spiering was the son of C.W. "R" Spiering, logging manager for the new Humboldt Plywood Corporation, and had been involved in the lumber industry in Washington like his father. By June, the City Council had received a petition for the annexation of Bloomfield Acres from the Blakeslee-Spiering Company. The first new streets in the subdivision included Iversen, Blakeslee, and Zehndner Avenues, as well as Q, R, and S Streets.

After receiving reports of numerous leaks breaking through old pipes, the City Council had voted to replace the wooden pipe line with iron pipe on G Street from 13th street to the northern city limits. Though long considered the outskirts of town, North Arcata was now beginning to grow and had added new apartments and several businesses. The council also approved plans and specifications for new sewers on college hill and adjacent districts. Prospective locations for a downtown location for the new Arcata Post Office were under review in 1948 by the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. Building permits were also issued for a new fire station.

The two largest industries in Arcata were dairying and lumber, which together contributed 2113 employees and a combined monthly payroll of \$518,520. Although dairying would continue to be important in the region, the sale and conversion of dairy land adjacent Arcata had increased to meet the need for housing and industrial sites. Due to the large number of mills in Arcata and the increasing number of housing tracts in adjacent areas, it was not surprising to find that air pollution had become a public concern by 1949. The industry created the Sawdust Control Committee, headed by C.E. Magnusson, manager of the Sound Lumber Company, and was reported to be conducting a detailed study of burners that promised soot and sawdust control. Local Fire Chief James A. Wyatt reported that all mills could be improved as far as the fire hazard and sawdust, but that the black ash problem would need the cooperation of all mill owners.

By the end of the decade, G Street had become a busy thoroughfare, the “Redwood Highway,” and traffic safety was a concern of both residents and shop owners. Downtown businesses began to note the difficulty of crossing the street during peak traffic periods, the lack of downtown parking, and the consequent blocking of alley access by parked cars. At the north end of town, faculty and students at Humboldt State College were increasingly concerned about the street crossing at Highway 101, and had appeared before the City Council to advocate for a stop light. As it entered its second century, the City of Arcata was growing very rapidly.

More than 700 residents gathered in front of the recently completed Fire Hall as Arcata held its 100th birthday celebration on April 30, 1950. Mayor Allan Ham dedicated a unveiled a bronze plaque with a list of the members of the Gregg-Wood party and the members of the Union party. An American flag and the California Bear flag were both were installed on the new flagpole which had been installed on the approximate location of the camp site of the Gregg-Wood party on December 24, 1849. Music was provided by the Arcata High School band and choir, and tours were provided of the new building.

By the end of that year it was clear that infrastructure improvements were needed. Traffic congestion during peak hours on G Street was of sufficient concern that the City Council asked the Police Commissioner to study the problem and assign an officer to direct traffic at the Plaza intersections from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the intersection of Ninth and G Streets. As in many small communities at that time, only the primary arteries were paved while other streets might be graded, graveled and oiled to reduce dust. A master plan for implementing long term street improvements had been adopted by the City Council in April, 1950, with a focus on regularly scheduled major improvements to the whole system instead of temporary repairs or patching.⁵⁹ The state highway project underway in 1951 would close the west end of 19th Street, eliminating access to the college gym and athletic field. The City Council agreed to assist with street improvements that would impact college after President Cornelius H. Siemens had made a formal request for assistance to improve 17th Street to Union Street and one and one half blocks on Union Street.

The new sewage disposal plant was also nearing completion. The plant was authorized by the City following the order by the State Board of Health to stop the discharge of raw sewage in Humboldt Bay. Constructed at a cost of \$80,000, it was planned to serve an estimated 1970 population of 5,000. Due to the rapid growth which Arcata experienced in this period, ensuring a safe and dependable water supply would continue to be a concern for the next two decades. In 1944, a drop in the water supply had prompted the City to authorize purchase of water from Eureka while a water shortage in 1947 had proved to be costly due to pumping costs for well water.

⁵⁹ Scrapbooks, City of Arcata Collection, Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University

In 1949 and again in 1953 the City was forced to tap a well on the Mad River in order to provide an adequate water supply, and had also begun treating its water. At this time, the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District undertook a major water development project on the Mad River and had signed contracts to supply the Georgia Pacific and Samoa pulp mills. Although the primary source of water for the city was the four Mad River wells, the old water system was still in use and maintenance costs were high. In 1960, the City decided to enter into agreements with the District. A bond act was passed in 1962, and the City began construction of the new water system which would finally be completed in 1964.⁶⁰

Several apartments were completed in the first three months of 1951. Two new businesses that opened that year, Cooper Sales which sold house trailers and a trailer court were indicators of the continuing need for affordable housing. At that time, trailers were also being used at the college to alleviate the student housing shortage. While many students returned to college on the G.I Bill, a higher percentage of these new students were married and some already had families. County supervisors had recently accepted the second phase of the Sunny Brae subdivision in the unincorporated area east of Arcata, with an additional 100 homes and the extension of Chester Avenue to Buttermilk Lane. The Northern Addition was annexed to the City, following a stormy session on the proposed annexation of Sunny Brae in November 1950. Sunny Brae would be completed in seven phases from 1950 through 1956, and was the largest development project in the County at that time. Although 100 lots had been sold in the first tract, title was still held by the Blakeslee-Spiering Company.

Twenty residents of Sunny Brae had appeared at the meeting to question the advantages of being incorporated into the city. David Cline, a representative of the developer, indicated that it was not their desire to be included within the city limits. Mayor Allen Ham point out that, although sewers, water, and roads within the subdivision would be complete, as city residents they could receive street lights, lower water and insurance rates, fire and police protection, and garbage service. The following month a final decision on annexation was postponed again after a 90 minute session with 75 residents of the subdivision who were opposed on the basis that they had purchased their properties because they were suburban. They also cited concerns for the poor condition of City streets and their uncertainty about the ability of the City to provide services to such an extensive area.

Local growth had spurred improvements in the regional transportation system as well. District highway engineer A.M. "Pete" Nash, speaking at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in early 1951, announced that groundbreaking for the new freeway would occur in June. He pointed out that the freeway entrances were designed to handle heavy traffic, and that there was also a proposal to widen Seventh Street (Bayside Road) to

⁶⁰ Van Kirk, S. (1985)

four lanes between the city and the new route. This was the main road linking Bayside and the new development in Sunny Brae to the center of Arcata. ⁶¹

An offer from the state highway department to purchase a strip of land at 9th and E streets led to a discussion of using the property instead to provide badly needed off street parking downtown. The site, only two blocks from the Plaza, was described as adjoining the old canyon creek bed and would require draining and filling. A 100 car parking lot was proposed by the City on one square block between F and E and 9th and 10th Streets, funded by bonds with parking revenues used to pay them off. Early in 1952 negotiations between the City and the State Highway department resulted in an agreement to align the new freeway on the eastern side of the city ballpark, provided with a new fence and compensation for lost land.

Along with returning veterans, a growing number of families were moving into Arcata. By the end of 1952, Oden Hansen, District Superintendent of Arcata Elementary Schools, announced the awarding of a contract for the construction of Bloomfield School, located west of the new tract Bloomfield Acres. The Arcata Recreation Department announced long range plans to complete the conversion of the Arcata Ball Park into a ball park and recreation area. This included remodeling the club house into a combined roller rink and indoor recreation center for local youth, a children's playground, tennis courts, and alterations to the grandstand. The construction of 60 new housing units in the recently annexed Brookside Terrace subdivision south of Bloomfield Acres was scheduled to start at the end of the summer. At an estimated cost of \$8,500 to \$9,500, these were two and three bedroom homes with fireplaces on large lots. The tract included paved streets and concrete sidewalks with city water and sewer service, and was expected to be completed within four months.

Growth of Suburbia

Following the end of World War II much of California experienced population growth that stretched residential and commercial development beyond original city boundaries. Arcata experienced a severe housing shortage following World War II which encouraged a series of residential housing projects. Returning servicemen and their families, workers in local mills, as well as veterans returning to HSU on the GI Bill put a strain on the City's resources. Shortages of building materials and state and federal restrictions gave priority to the construction of homes and facilities needed by returning veterans.

The demand for new homes along with government programs established to assist working class families and veterans increased the demand for new homes at affordable prices. Homeownership doubled in the postwar years due to federal assistance from the Federal Housing Administration and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act

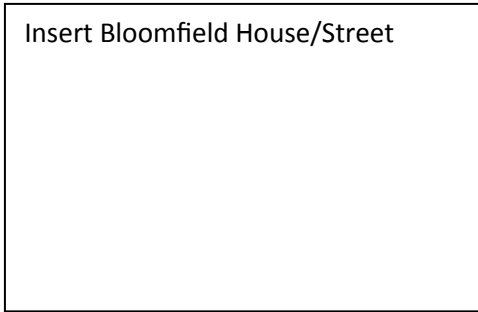
⁶¹ Ibid

of 1944 (commonly referred to as the “Government Issue”, or GI Bill). Both the department of Veteran’s Affairs and the Federal Housing Administration directed their investments toward new buildings in the suburbs, often ignoring the older residential core.

The GI Bill established a set of guidelines which set the price range for affordable housing between \$6,000 and \$8,000 and the range in size between 800 and 1,000 square feet. The government supported the Minimal Traditional style, encouraging that style and form of residential building. New principles of community planning were being incorporated into residential developments around the country. Housing reformers advocated for well designed communities at the neighborhood scale, offering all the facilities needed to provide service to the community. Developers adapted this neighborhood-scale approach to community planning by designing tracts around a curvilinear street pattern to accommodate pedestrian traffic.

During the pre war years, a developer bought land, provided utilities and infrastructure, and sold it in parcels to individuals who in turn would hire an architect to design their custom home. The Housing Act of 1949 made it profitable for the developer to build multiple houses from stock plans. As a result, suburbs were created as communities of 300-400 nearly identical homes. These large-scale suburban developments were successful due to the popularity and convenience of the automobile. The automobile enabled people to move to these developments outside of the city center, and attracted commercial developments to move outside the established urban core to accommodate their customers.⁶²

Early residential tract building typically featured small, modest homes in the Minimal Traditional style, such as those in the Bloomfield Tract, and offered simple and straightforward designs that could be constructed at a low cost. Housing tracts were usually constructed within close proximity to shared community amenities, such as shopping centers, religious buildings and schools. Suburban homes tended to be smaller houses with a homogenous design (basic architectural detailing, scale, setting, and style). These homes would often be placed in groupings of similar houses on a curvilinear street grid.



The Rise of the Automobile

⁶² Wright, Gwendolyn, (1981) Building the Dream, A Social History of Housing in America. Pantheon Books, New York.

A major factor in the suburbanization of the United States was the development of the highway system. At the turn of the 20th century automobiles were a luxury accessible to the wealthy, while the majority of Americans took advantage of the network of streetcars and/or subways to get around cities. Road construction and improvements were eventually halted with the onset of the Great Depression. The construction and maintenance of roads built during the 1930s were only feasible with the help of state Emergency Relief Act funds and federal WPA funds.

The Collier-Burns Act of 1947 allocated California counties substantial amounts of money for roads and required that a registered civil engineer oversee county road construction. Roads in the United States proved to be inadequate to handle the increased use of the automobile. Development of the state and federal highway system during the 1950s answered the growing demand of the American society centered on the automobile. In 1956 the Interstate Highway Act provided \$25 billion for construction of a new interstate highway system.

The automobile influenced the development and organization of urban centers by enabling people to move farther away from downtown and drawing growth away from the urban core to outlying areas. New building types were designed to accommodate the auto culture, such as drive-in theatres, drive-in and drive-thru restaurants, gas stations, and the suburban shopping center with large parking lots. The ability to connect Arcata with other local cities and the metropolitan centers of San Francisco and Portland via Highway 101 became an important factor in the city's continued growth.⁶³

Expansion of commercial corridors such as G and H Streets created links between the urban, rural, and suburban areas of the city. These roadways connected the newly developing residential neighborhoods, services, the University, and the numerous small industrial sites along the main highway. Growth of commercial and residential areas along major highways such as Valley West adjacent to Highway 101 and Highway 299 further stretched the boundaries of the City.

Mid-century Modernism and Regional Style

Just as social reformers during the Progressive Era had felt that improvements in housing could address the unrest of industrial workers, architecture was viewed as a cure for social problems by addressing practical concerns of daily life through good design. Modern design of the 1920s and 1930s was characterized by the use of modern industrial materials and building techniques, minimal use of ornamentation, and avoided reference to historic styles. Modernist design was now integrated with the postwar consideration for the happiness of the lives of those who lived in these homes and their preference for a more informal and natural environment.

⁶³ Hayden, Delores (2004) A Field Guide to Sprawl, W. W. Norton & Company

In 1941 a young modernist architect built an example of this experimental modern style in Bayside. The Vietor House, now an office of the Humboldt Area Foundation in Bayside, was built by architect John Yeon. He was also featured in the 1946 New Museum of Modern Art's exhibits and in books illustrating the possibilities for modern design on small modern homes. In a chapter entitled "Small Houses Can seem Large" the Modern Museum of Art places Yeon's work next to Frank Lloyd Wright's house in Palo Alto as a model of the possibilities for uninterrupted space. In a chapter on ventilation: "Light and air come from different sources. All the glass is fixed between the supporting studs, and the room is ventilated through slatted transoms above the glass." Ideas such as these would eventually be incorporated into the custom and tract house development in places like Sunny Brae and Westwood, since housing prices would remain high after World War II and designs for small houses became more popular.⁶⁴

California's early architectural heritage had been heavily influenced by Spanish colonial architecture, the folk forms of New England, and the ornate wooden structures of the Victorian era. The middle class focus on carrying out an appropriate social life in the nineteenth century had resulted in an emphasis on large formal spaces such as halls, parlors and dining rooms. During the mid-20th century the primary purpose of buildings and structures was to meet the specific needs of the inhabitants, including physical, economic, social, and aesthetic wellbeing. The mid-century approach to Modernism incorporated the International style and Frank Lloyd Wright's principles of organic architecture, along with a concern for landscape and site relationships and the use of natural materials.

This style's clean lines and hard surfaces proved to be a popular style for civic and commercial buildings. While the avant-garde nature and the expense often made them unpopular with the public, they introduced many innovations into everyday architecture. Local architects, developers, builders, and the public at large adapted stylistic characteristics such as large windows, open floor plans, and the integration of indoor and outdoor space, to suit their specific needs.

In California, regional style took two unique approaches which derived from two important schools of design in the postwar period. One in Southern California, centered in Los Angeles, reflected a high-art modernism exemplified by the work of Richard J. Neutra. The second school of design formed in the Bay Area around San Francisco took an approach to Modernism that combined the simplicity of Modernism with attention to natural materials known as the Bay Region Tradition or "soft" Modernism. Some of the key architects from this period include William Wurster, a supporter of the Bay Region Tradition along with Thomas Church, landscape

⁶⁴ Doniger, Susan,(2011) *Modernism in Arcata*, unpublished manuscript

architect. One prominent example of this style is the development known as The Sea Ranch. The Bay Regional style that developed at the University of California Berkeley incorporated the use of wood siding or wood frame with stucco, vernacular to western domestic architecture, and the consideration of the natural landscape in the overall design.

Regional Modernism

By the 1950s tract developments began to feature a variety of styles to appeal to the American homebuyer. These included Tract Ranch, Split-Level and Contemporary. Larger lots enabled homes to be constructed with more variety, featuring lower, horizontally oriented structures. Typically, the basic model floor plan was architect designed and then sold to a developer who added custom features. Tract homes featured the latest styles and materials, providing the modern homeowner with efficiency and accommodation to the modern lifestyle.

The Ranch style was the dominant style of residential design during the mid-century and was based on the early Spanish haciendas built throughout Mexico and Southern California in the 1800s. These had been characterized by a single-story sprawling floor plan which integrated indoor and outdoor space. Cliff May is credited with reintroducing the Ranch house in the 1930s, and is the architect typically associated with the style on the west coast. His post WWII designs adopted modern post-and beam construction and combined the characteristic indoor/outdoor living spaces of the haciendas with the simplified lines of Modernism. In 1958, May published a book of his designs in conjunction with *Sunset Magazine* called *Western Ranch House* which made his approach more widely available.⁶⁵

The Ranch house was uniquely suited to neighborhood-scale development because it could be inexpensively constructed and mass-produced. During the 1940s and 1950s the Ranch house appeared in subdivisions throughout the United States, and was the most common style in seen in suburban California. Developers adapted the basic form in a variety of styles, a practice that led to its renown as the most popular housing type of the postwar era.⁶⁶

A later housing type that gained popularity in the mid-1950s was the Split-Level house. The first split-level house is a variation of the Contemporary or Ranch style house, a one story house with a two-story portion that incorporates living space above and a garage and basement below. Later versions, popular in the 1970s, introduce a true multi-story house with garage and utility rooms on the lowest level, entry and family living

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Wright, Gwendolyn (1981); McAlester, Virginia and Lee (1996) *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

spaces on the mid-floor, and bedrooms on the upper level above the garage. This “Split Level” was particularly well suited for sloping or hillside lots, and the evolution of this style is evident in Sunny Brae where the first Split Level style homes were constructed around 1953, and in Bayview-East Arcata with a cluster of Split Level homes on Spring Street constructed around 1975.

Community and regional planning during the mid-20th century was highly influenced by the automobile. The automobile created new development patterns, drawing growth away from the urban core, and encouraging both suburban tract development and disinvestment in city centers. New building forms were introduced to accommodate the automobile culture. Regional shopping became the primary commercial and social gathering place for the community and marked a decentralization of commercial development to newer suburbs.⁶⁷

Climate and topography has always played a significant role in the development of regional styles and the Northcoast is well known for moderate to cool temperatures year round and higher rainfall. While stucco and even adobe were widely incorporated as standard building materials in this period, local architects and builders often interpreted these same modern styles in wood though they might add a brick or stone veneer. Commercial and residential buildings alike were designed with consideration for achieving the most comfortable living environment possible. This was accomplished through the incorporation of large overhangs protecting the walls and windows of the building from the sun or rain. In many commercial buildings, landscaped courtyards helped to establish a feeling of unity in the design.

The majority of residential examples from the period include extensive outdoor living spaces in the private areas of the home, such as covered patios connected to the home’s interior by glass doors, minimizing the separation between indoor and outdoor space.⁶⁸ Modern materials incorporated in these structures included components manufactured locally from wood-products such as Masonite, Plywood, wood laminates and wood paneling. Some local designers and builders also incorporated the lines of wooden siding to emphasize the streamlined and stripped down forms.

Examples of mid-century Modern architecture are prevalent throughout Humboldt County. Notable examples are found in Arcata particularly along the commercial corridors of G and H Streets, and the residential neighborhood of North Town.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ PAST Consultants (2009); Doniger (2011)

Mid-century Landscape Design

The primary focus of residential landscape design in the postwar era was in the suburban backyard which was an outdoor living space. Foundation plantings, specimen trees and shrubs were the only improvements in the largely unoccupied front yard. The size of the new suburban lot was often smaller than the standard for residential lots of previous eras, so landscape architects had to maximize the resources available. Raised planting beds with pathways constructed from a variety of hardscape materials defined the space. Common fencing often included new materials such as corrugated cement asbestos board or fiberglass panels. Detailing often included redwood retaining walls and un-reinforced concrete paving. Local variations included split rail fencing and stone edging to add a rustic touch to the modern tract ranch, volcanic rock, stone or brick lined paths or edging. Spiering homes often included fruit trees or a non-fruiting ornamental tree⁶⁹.

Commercial Development and the Shopping Center

Following the rationing and hardships of World War II, postwar prosperity enabled Americans to revel in their new standard of living. The expanding highway network around the country influenced the development of the commercial strip and suburban shopping center. People wanted to live on the periphery of downtown where the homes, shopping centers and schools were new, not in the urban center which was perceived to be crowded and blighted.

Shopping centers were designed for the postwar automobile culture, with large parking lots and improved roads, and became a primary commercial and social gathering place for the community. These required large tracts of undeveloped land, so the earliest of this type locally were incorporated into large suburban developments such as Westwood and Sunny Brae. Large expanses of open space accommodated

Sunny Brae Shopping Center or
Westwood Shopping Center

the automobile with parking lots located at the front and sides of the building, and landscaping and signage along exits and entrances.

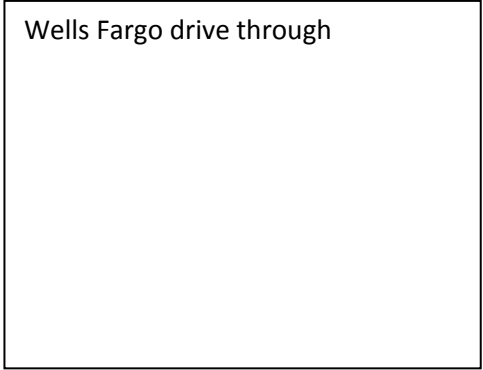
Buildings now had to serve as a billboard to capture the attention of customers as they traveled by at high speeds. Modern shops, restaurants, car dealerships, and gas stations all used large windows revealing the interior and vibrant signage to act as advertisement rather than fine architectural detail. Commercial buildings identified by large eye-catching signs were typically designed in the Contemporary style defined by projecting

⁶⁹ Ibid

roof lines and glass storefronts. Another style commonly applied to commercial architecture during the postwar period was the eye-catching Futurist or Googie style of with bright colors, over-sized neon signage and exaggerated forms intended to attract consumers.⁷⁰

Multi-story buildings from the period—primarily office complexes—treated all elevations of the building as identical and only gave definition to the entrance. The most radical change in commercial architecture came in the development of drive-in and drive-through facilities. The drive-in was most often seen in the form of banks, theatres, restaurants, and motels. This trend can be observed along the primary commercial corridors of G and H Streets, along Samoa Boulevard, and in remnant segments of the old Redwood Highway.

Signage played an important role in design for mid-century commercial buildings, and were essential for attracting motorists day or night. Signage for street facing buildings was generally large, with freestanding letters attached to the façade or roofline, and often lighted with neon to attract attention. Buildings with private parking lots usually incorporated tall signs which rose above the building, and were large enough for passing motorists to identify the location from the road.



Wells Fargo drive through

At the north end of the Redwood Highway in Arcata, Northtown had become a successful commercial district that served Arcata Heights and East Arcata, as well as the growing college community. Humboldt State University had grown to include adjacent faculty and staff housing, and the influx of students after World War II had increased the need for on- and off-campus student housing for both single and married students. The Redwood Highway would be improved in 1951 and again in 1957, which only served to increase the number of motels and restaurants to serve the tourist industry.

Another result of mid-century development characteristics of suburbia and urban sprawl was the construction of industrial parks and office parks. Development outside of the urban core allowed businesses to expand their operations and often move closer to the suburbs where many of their employees lived. These parks often acquired large spans of undeveloped lands with space for buildings and easier parking for clients and employees.

71

70 Hayden(2004)

Urban Renewal

Ownership of a single-family home in a semi-rural environment became the American Dream. This ideal was further enforced with the 1949 Housing Act, which called for “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family.” This was the first urban renewal legislation passed by Congress. Funds were available for clearance of “blight” or “slums” in urban cores, while emphasizing new construction for replacement of building stock, encouraging the demolition of older structures. The Act also permitted the acquisition of open space and the construction of infrastructure such as water and sewer lines onto the newly-cleared land. In effect, suburbs were now being sanctioned and supported with tremendous subsidies by the federal government.

Zoning and planning became the tools with which social organization would develop in the postwar period. Redevelopment and Revitalization took an active role in urban planning in the postwar period as business and government agencies attempted to develop orderly growth patterns. While buildings in the downtown commercial district around the Plaza received some upgrades, the 1950s generally marked the decline of downtowns around the United States due to the shift of populations to suburban tracts and growth of the new “shopping centers.”⁷² City officials reported that 36 new business licenses had been issued in the first six months of 1951, with some of the businesses located outside of the city limits but in areas recently annexed.

Lena and Nelo Dal Porto obtained a license for the North Town Five and Ten, and George Hugnin planned to remodel Hutchins Grocery two of numerous small businesses that served the growing campus community in North Arcata. Generally regarded as the outskirts of town, the North Town business district increasingly served students from both Arcata High School and the growing campus community of Humboldt State College as well as the new apartment complexes and developments in the Sunset District. The North Arcata Merchants Association had recently criticized the city sweeping service and moved to ask for a more regular street cleaning system. Commercial properties had developed along the north end of G Street during the 1920s, providing services for neighborhood residents as well as automobile repair and lodging for tourists along the Redwood Highway. Humboldt State College was poised for major growth and expansion and, along with the freeway expansion, meeting the need for student housing and services would impact the busy neighborhood. The planned expansion of the North Arcata business district was a concern of both merchants and the Planning Commission.

⁷² Hayden, Delores (2004) [A Field Guide to Sprawl](#), W. W. Norton & Company

Though some of the new suburban tracts had only recently been annexed, they contributed to some longstanding problems. Citing “dangerously low water pressure” in the Sunny Brae district, in 1951 residents of the new suburb had appealed to the Council in December for assistance. As a temporary measure, the Council approved the installation of a booster pump after reaching an agreement to provide water. Then early in 1952, Bloomfield Acres residents were informed by the City Council that they had little hope for more than routine maintenance work on streets within their subdivision. Streets had been constructed when the project began five years before and residents now reported that the roads were full of holes. Road and street improvements became even more of a concern as formerly rural areas were developed, as rural roads were more frequently used by heavy equipment and not maintained to urban standards. The presence of new schools, churches, homes and businesses increased traffic in areas which had typically been one lane roads.

Implementation of the new zoning law (adopted in 1946) was not proceeding as smoothly as expected. Rezoning of the entire block on which the Henry Billings motor shop was located at 6th and F Streets in 1952 from residential to commercial, was rejected after protests from residents of adjacent properties. This prompted an angry response from Billings. A compromise was reached to rezone only the site of the shop and an adjacent building. While the law was to be applied to new projects, a number of projects had already been approved before the law was signed and had led to some confusion. Proposed rezoning of North 11th Street between I and F was expected to meet the same opposition.

Educational Facilities

Fresno-based architect Ernest J. Kump Jr. is credited with the school design known as the “Finger Plan.” This plan is unique in its design of school campuses as a series of modular, rectangular one-story units separated into classrooms. The openness of the Finger Plan provides daylight and cross-ventilation through the exterior sheltered walkways instead of corridors. The success of the Finger Plan is evident in its adoption by architects throughout California who saw the design as suited to California climate with the blending of indoor and outdoor space.⁷³ Local examples of this type include the Pacific Union School, Sunny Brae Elementary, and Arcata High School.

In addition to housing, the GI Bill provided servicemen the opportunity to attend college. In 1947, World War II veterans accounted for 49% of college admissions nationwide and by the time the original GI Bill ended on July 25, 1956, 7.8 million of 16 million World War II veterans had participated in an education or training program. America’s fear of losing the Cold War to the Soviet Union began the space race to surpass the Soviet Union in

⁷³ PAST Consultants (2009

science and engineering. The national response was to increase educational funding and higher education would become one of the single most powerful agents of change in American society.⁷⁴

Under the administration of President Ralph Swetman, 1924-1930, state appropriations were approved for the new gymnasium and the new College Elementary School buildings as well as the land on which to build them. Arthur S. Gist, president from 1930 to 1950, oversaw the expansion of the college to 78 acres. In 1932-33, the new tennis courts and the College Elementary School were completed. In 1935 the curricula had expanded to the point where it was accredited as a full four year college and renamed Humboldt State College.

Redwood Bowl began as a WPA project in 1930 and continued as a PWA project with classes in civil engineering providing most of the field work. Along with Humboldt Village, the veterans housing unit, and the men's dormitory called Redwood Hall, it was completed in fall 1946. A revised master plan, under new President Siemens, proposed 12 new buildings for the campus.

The original campus buildings on the present site were constructed in the Mediterranean Style, including Founders Hall, Nelson Hall, the Industrial Arts building and College Elementary School (Gist Hall). More recently, the campus is a catalogue of modernist architectural styles. Buildings from the 1940s reflect the influence of the International Style, with clean lines and band or ribbon windows. The Brutalist style, was popular in campus design across the nation during the 60s and is characterized by generally blockish, strong geometric structural forms and can be seen in the Theater Arts Building. Materials commonly used are concrete with the texture of the wood formwork intended as the finish. The most recently completed building of note is the Behavioral and Social Sciences Building which is an energy efficient LEED certified building.

⁷⁴ Ibid