Downtown Fires

In the late 1970s, two buildings on the corner of 9th and H succumbed to fire.

In the 1990s, Hensel’s Hardware (9th and I) lost its Quonset hut style building. A second fire destroyed the Fuerwerker Building on 9th St, and then in 2001 a building that housed Marino’s, the Northcoast Environmental Center and an Auto Paint store burned to the ground.

Some of us wondered if there was a reason or if it was just coincidental. Was it a sacred site? Human negligence? A gas leak? An arsonist? Or was it just something that happens with old buildings? We still don’t know. We miss these buildings and the memories they held for us.

Photographs were taken of people watching each fire to determine if the same person showed up again and again. Actually, there is a different story for each fire. The Marino story is that a lit cigarette was thrown out of the west apartment window and lodged itself in the trash between the Marino’s and Northcoast Environmental Center buildings starting a fire that devastated ½ block of downtown Arcata on July 31, 2001. Kevin Hoover did a complete story with photographs and interviews of property owners that was published in the Arcata Eye in the edition following the fire. This a historic photograph of Marino’s (anyone remember the starlit ceiling?) and the replacement building designed by Julian Berg for Hone-Wolf. Future issues of the HSSA newsletter will feature stories about the other fires.

Upcoming Events

HSSA Board Meeting 10 a.m. to noon at Phillips House Museum the first Wednesday of the month. All members are welcome.

May is Preservation Month
HSSA and the Historic Landmarks Committee will be celebrating on the Plaza during the Farmer’s Market on May 6th and 20th.

A Photographic History of Arcata’s Creamery District
Join us at the Arcata Playhouse on Sunday, May 21, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

Vintage Clothing Sale
Saturday, September 23rd from 10-2: We will be accepting donations of jewelry, scarves and hats.

Be a Docent
The Phillips’ House is always in need of new docents. At present our faithful and very appreciated docents are: Dan Hauser, Sherry Eaton, Ann McClary, John Barstow, Nancy Atkinson, and Jaffa Dugan.

If you or someone you know might be interested in spending a Sunday afternoon in our sweet Museum, please contact Docent Coordinator, Jaffa Dugan at 822-3534.
President’s Message
From Alex Stillman

Spring has come. The Phillips House Museum cleared the “office” in preparation for a new exhibit that will tell the story of a 1970’s HSU student. I found some pieces of clothing from my 1970’s HSU student days that may be used. What we cannot use will go into the vintage clothing sale in September. This includes my mother’s clothing from the 1950-70s.

HSSA Annual luncheon speaker, Steve Lazar, who presented Postcards from Arcata, is a passionate collector of Humboldt County postcards. Postcards are a perfect way of identifying buildings and landscape changes over the years.

HSSA is fortunate to pour wine in downtown Arcata during Arts! Arcata. Various businesses offer us this opportunity to raise funds.

Claudia Israel spoke to the Humboldt County Society of Pioneers about the Phillips House at their March meeting.

Docents, On Sunday, March 26, Dan Hauser hosted a group of 4H youths earning their history badge. Docents often have interesting groups come with stories to share about Arcata’s history.

De-accessioning As we prepared the office/storage area upstairs for a 1970’s bedroom, we came across several items that were given to new homes. A photo of setting the spike on the Falk railroad was given to Julie Clark at the Bureau of Land Management, a 1941 photo of the Arcata High School Band went to Arcata High School and will be in the music department. The folder containing Life Magazine and other information on the 1964 flood went to Dorie Lanni, manager of the Office of Emergency Services for Humboldt County. All of the recipients were excited to receive these historic items.

Facility Update By Jaffa Dugan

The past winter, with heavy rains and winds, has been challenging to the Phillips' House. Our existing roof is over 20 years old and leaks have been a problem.

We have asked several local roofing contactors to submit bids, both for fixing the leaks and replacing the entire roof, since we believe that much of the roof is sound. Raising money for this expenditure will be our next goal.

We are fortunate to have "Handy Helpers" whenever we have a “fix it” issue at the Museum. Bob Felter, Gene Lodes, Brian Ingram, and Don Wente have been very generous with their time and expertise over the years. We are very grateful for their commitment to preserving our beautiful Phillips House Museum.
A Fortune in Pennies?  
*by Gene Lodes*

While sorting a box from the Caskey collection, Edith Butler came across a box of pennies. Gene Lodes agreed to research the 1943 steel pennies that were minted during the WWII. Here is the story of the pennies in Gene's words:

“I received a call from HSSA asking me to determine the worth of pennies. After visiting a local coin dealer and doing my own research, I came up with some astounding information. Of the 97 steel pennies produced during WWII, their value was found to be 2 times face value for walloping $3.88! If there had been a copper penny made in that year, it would be worth thousands of dollars. Of the remaining copper pennies, a retail value was found to be $19.44. This was a fun project for me since I collect pennies for my grandchildren. Anyone of these pennies could have been very valuable, but it was not our lucky day at the Phillips House Museum.”

The BD Bio  
*by Claudia Israel*

In February, Edie Butler, our archivist, asked me to look at a box of miscellaneous ephemera from the Ruth Horel Caskey Collection and be responsible for finding an organization that might make use of these materials. The Serendipity Bookstore at the Humboldt Co. Main library agreed to accept it. Edie agreed, as did the Board at our next meeting.

Curiously, the box included a seven-page typed document, which indicated the author was a publicist at Warner Bros. Studio. The date was 1941; the topic was a publicity biography of Bette Davis, the late actress. My research confirmed this information.

I once knew a man named Leif, who worked at Warner Bros. Archive. My old Rolodex revealed Leif's full name and contact information. I tracked him down, but it was in an article about his retirement from the archive! Guessing at his home address, I sent a letter via snail mail with a description of the document and my contact information. Much to my delight I received a response from Leif within a week. He agreed to contact someone at Warner Bros. Corporate Archive and let me know if there was any interest. Within an hour, I received an email that said that the studio was interested in the “BD Bio”. I sent the document to Warner Brothers via Priority Mail and it landed as USPS had promised.

What a rewarding experience! I was so pleased that Leif was gracious enough to say he remembered me after 20 years. I found a new home for a historically significant document and learned a new lingo – “BD Bio” - now that's what I call fun!
At the HSSA Annual Meeting Luncheon at the Plaza View Room, several awards were presented (clockwise from top) Alex Stillman presented the Volunteer of the Year award to Edith Butler and Karole Ely presented Brian Ingram with an award for helping us maintain the museum. Kash Boodjeh and Alex Stillman shared the Preservationist of the Year Award for their partnership in restoring the old Sacchi building into Bittersweet, a local restaurant and a great addition to Arcata.

Remembering Our Students

Humboldt State students have always been a big part of Arcata’s history. The group shown at left is protesting the Vietnam War in downtown Arcata in 1970. In honor of our students, we are re-creating the room of a 1970’s college student for a special exhibit at the Phillips House. The following is a list of items that the exhibit curator, Claudia Israel hopes to find. The items need to look 1960s or 1970s.

Please contact Claudia at 445-3355 if you have items to donate or loan.

- 2 pillows and pillow cases, which do not have to match.
- a twin, flat sheet, which does not have to match the pillow cases or the fitted sheet I already have on the mattress.
- blanket or two.
- sleeping bag
- a couple of towels and washcloths
- bean bag chair
- lava lamp. *(not the new, they haven’t survived well.)*
- madras cloth(s)
- twin, double or king flat sheets.
- dart board & darts
- mismatched plastic and other dishware
- 1970s era or before flatware
- a wild afghan. Mostly green & gold would be perfect.
- an alarm clock, radio or clock radio.
- acoustic guitar and sheet music/play book
- slide rule
- old beer bottles, beer bottle & can openers.
- ashtrays
- 1970s record player
- woven (wicker, woven palm leaves type) laundry basket *(broken not a problem)*
- same for clean clothes
- incense holder and incense
- a telephone. 1970s or earlier
- wood end table and night stand
- a low, wood chair or stool
- a clip on shade for the ceiling light
- backpack
- used shoes: hiking boots, converse high tops (some haven’t changed much since 1970s), used (but washed!) Socks.
- used jeans, t-shirts, levi or other jean’s jacket
- vintage lumber jack t-shirts, jackets.
- a 60s or 70s (or one that would pass) lamp w/shade, mismatched ok, and/or a floor lamp
- beaded, glass or plastic, curtain
- covered matches
The David Wood house at 1318 H Street, has been well preserved as it transitioned from a home to an office. A notable change is the height of the porch enclosure on the right. A wheelchair ramp is hidden behind the enclosure requiring it to be higher than the original due code requirements. To the left is a photo taken in 1915 and the notation on the back of it. Below is the house as it looks today.

A Photographic History of Arcata’s Creamery District

Humboldt State University, Special Collections, A.W. Ericson, no date

Join us at the Arcata Playhouse on Sunday, May 21, 2017 at 1:00 p.m. for a public presentation on the history and development of Arcata’s Creamery District.

Fran Beatty’s talk will feature historic photographs from local archives to illustrate the district’s transitions from a busy industrial area to a thriving art and business enclave. This event celebrates preservation month and the Creamery Building’s 100th anniversary.
Membership Form: Historical Sites Society of Arcata

Name:______________________________________________________________
Address:_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
City: __________________________________ State: ______________________ Zip Code: ______________________________
Phone: ___________________________ email______________________________________________________________

____($25) Individual  ____($35) Family  ____($100) Preservation Partner
____( ) Additional contribution

My gift is ( ) in honor of________________________ ( )in memory of_______________________________

Please provide contact information so we can notify honorees.

To join HSSA send your dues to:
Historical Sites Society of Arcata
PO Box 4521
Arcata, CA 95518