

Fall 2015

newsletter Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF



The Hotel Arcata

(shown here on its opening day in 1915 recently celebrated its 100th Anniversary. According to Donald Forest, who spoke at the celebration, the corner of 9th and H has long been the home of a

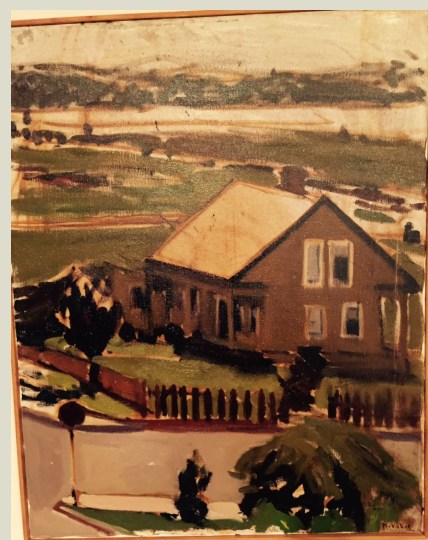
hotel. It was the Eagle Hotel from 1852-1858, when it burned to the ground. Following the fire, the lot was rented to peddlers who sold their wares from tents pitched on the corner. Later, Brizard had his first store, with rooms to let, on that corner. The Arcata Hotel, a "state of the art" three-story building, was deemed fireproof. It opened in April 1915 as the Sportsmen's Headquarters. Seventy-five guests paid one dollar for a room with a sink or two dollars for a room with a bath and a toilet. Guests were met by auto at the train station and stage stop and delivered to the hotel. The building was so grand that it had electric lights and steam heat. There was a pistol range in the basement and "the finest collection of mounted game heads in California" in the lobby. The lobby was the entire first floor and offered fine dining and a lounge as well as showrooms for the wares of traveling salesmen, conventions, and civic meetings. Today, there are only 32 rooms, and the pistol range is gone. The clean lines of the craftsman exterior remain, as do the Beaux Arts detailing in the furnishing and woodwork of the interior. The Hotel Arcata was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in January 1984. More information can be found in *The Plaza, A History of Its Buildings*, by Susie VanKirk (1986).

The photo above is the hotel in 1915. At right in 2015.



The annual HSSA Christmas Tea will be held on Sunday, December 6 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the Phillips House Museum.

Come and join friends for tea and holiday cheer and celebrate at the beautiful Phillips House Museum. The museum will be closed for remainder of December and the month of January. It will reopen on Sunday, February 14, 2016. On this special Sunday we will celebrate with the annual **Valentine's Tea from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.** Bring your sweetheart and friends for a lovely afternoon at the Phillips House. The Phillips House loves celebrations and looks forward to greeting you!



Painting of the Phillips House by Jim McVicker



The Historical Sites Society of Arcata promotes recognition of the cultural heritage of Arcata, California and its environs, identifies historically and architecturally significant structures and sites within Arcata and encourages their preservation.

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HSSA President's Message

I was thinking about the Phillips House Museum, what our mission is, what we do and how we do it.

HSSA was formed in 1974 to promote historic preservation and save Arcata houses. Caltrans was buying houses to tear down in order put in a bigger and better highway through our community. The City of Arcata applied for a grant to the Office of Historic Preservation to do a survey of Arcata's significant structures. Susie Van Kirk was hired to complete the survey. In 1980 the survey was completed and published in a document titled *Reflections of Arcata's History: Eighty Years of Architecture*. This became the record of important Arcata buildings. After the book was published, 70 building owners put properties on the Landmark list. "It feels good to have a building that was listed and recognized as one of Arcata's jewels", Edith Stokes said. Edith and John Stokes previously owned the Baer House at the corner of 13th and I Streets.

Susie has a wealth of knowledge about Arcata's buildings and history and is the "go to" person for information. She has read all of the microfiche in the library and keeps records of what occurred to Arcata's built environment. Susie is more than appreciated for all she has done to protect Arcata's natural environment and its historic resources. From her research two books were published. One concerns the history of the plaza buildings. The other describes three walking tours of historic homes. Maps of the tour can be found on the HSSA website.

The Phillips House was part of the property the City of Arcata purchased from the Brizard/Appleton family. The farmhouse is at the top of the hill at Union and 7th Streets. The City was interested in using it for office space. HSSA proposed a museum. HSSA had inherited a collection of furnishings from Ruth Horel Caskey and a collection of clothing from Henrietta Chizzola. These collections were used to establish the museum.

The Phillips House is considered the oldest house in Arcata and Arcata's best example of Greek revival architecture and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. HSSA's goal is to preserve the atmosphere of a typical farmhouse found in Arcata in the 1850's and to show interiors of a residence in Arcata between 1854 and 1932. Docents interpret the house and its furnishings.

The Board of Directors of HSSA spends a good portion of our meetings discussing fund raising in order to maintain Phillips House, its contents, its collections of photographs and papers. HSSA comments to the City on building projects that affect historic structures in Arcata.

Special thanks to Mad River Union for its continued support of HSSA and our activities.

Alex Stillman, HSSA President



Sunny Brae and Westwood in the 1950s

The 1944 G. I. Bill of Rights was another federal government decision that changed the architectural landscape. Government-backed loans made home ownership affordable for many more citizens. Affordable automobiles and popular preference for single-family detached homes led to the rise of [suburbs](#). Simultaneously praised for their quality of life and condemned for architectural monotony, these have become a familiar feature of the United States landscape. The Sunny Brae and Westwood areas of Arcata were both designed on this model with shopping centers that included grocery stores, other retail and gas stations. Three typical original houses from Sunny Brae are shown above.

Sunny Brae: Sept. 19, 1950



Sunny Brae: March 12, 1954



Creamery District update: It is the 100th Anniversary of the Creamery Building in 2017. The Creamery District wants to celebrate 100 years of Art and Industry. Arcata Playhouse manager, Jacqueline Dandeneau, who heads up the Creamery District, has asked HSSA and local historians to assist with research for the centennial celebrations.

The celebration will include a theatrical event with an experimental score, *Suite Creamery District*, inspired by data gleaned from this research and from interviews with neighborhood residents and businesses. Students will also be involved in the celebration.

The WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) Drinking Fountain on the Arcata Plaza was built in 1912 and is one of the few left in the country.



At the 1874 organizing convention of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the members were urged to erect drinking fountains in their towns so that men could get a drink of water without entering saloons and staying for stronger drinks. Women who were concerned about the destructive power of alcohol and the problems it was causing their families and society organized the WCTU. They met in churches to pray and then marched to the saloons to ask the owners to close their establishments. These activities are often referred to as the "Women's Crusades" and their success was both the forerunner and impetus for the founding of the WCTU.

Or, as a former mayor of Arcata once said when interviewed by a national magazine...

"I was the first woman to run," she said. "That really surprised me."

With long brown hair and piercing eyes, she is a persuasive political leader. Like a majority of the 7,600 students, she is not native to this coast. Born in Chicago, she worked in San Francisco and then went to Humboldt State to finish college.

"Everything here used to seem closed," she said. "The old-time lumber people used to oppose any new industries coming in. A newcomer could only meet other newcomers. All that has changed."

WCTU Water Ploy Short-lived

Driving through Arcata, Mayor Fairless paused at ornate redwood homes that have been recently restored, their owners encouraged by mounting public interest in preservation and by inflated prices that have made home construction more costly. Then she led us to the central square. A dusty plaque marked a fountain erected in 1912 by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

National Geographic Magazine, September 1977

"The ladies were hoping the men would drink water," she said. "The fountain hasn't worked for years. The other day the Woman's Club asked the council to restore it. But we were afraid we might ruin it if we tried."

"They say that Ulysses S. Grant didn't start drinking until he was banished to Fort Humboldt here as a captain," Mayor Fairless continued. "Let's go in one of these bars and have a drink to him."





Is Foster Avenue Named after Ambrose Foster?

The grand opening of the Foster Avenue extension brought up questions about where it got its name. According to Don Tuttle, local historian and former president of the Humboldt Co. Historical Society, "You called the other day and asked about

Ambrose Foster and whether Foster Ave. was named after him. I believe it was." The land through which the new Foster Ave. runs was in the Foster estate in 1921.

He came to Eureka with his parents in 1876 and was educated in local schools. He learned the contracting business from his father, Albert Keene Foster. Ambrose and his father built and owned for a time the Grand Hotel in Eureka. Ambrose built the Eagles building, Carnegie Free Library, county jail, Minor Theater, Arcata Bank, and the Central Creamery building. He superintended the building of Fernbridge, Eureka Junior High School and several large buildings in San Francisco.

He died a tragic death on June 1, 1930, when the car in which he was riding ran off the wharf at the foot of Commercial Street and overturned on the rocks below. Source of above information: *Humboldt Standard*, Monday, June 2, 1930.



The Humboldt Bank Building, currently the Tin Can Mailman, housed Open Door Clinic in the 1970s



Wool Sale

Sandra Fletcher, a long time member of HSSA, was a nationally known rug-hooking artist. Locally, she taught many community members the craft of rug hooking. She had an artistic eye for color and design and helped her students create beautiful work.

HSSA inherited Sandra's magnificent supply of colored wool fabric upon her death in 2010. On October 7, 2015, HSSA held a wool sale that was well attended by many local fiber artists. The sale generated \$517.75 for the Phillips House Museum. Not bad for a two-hour sale, Sandra would have said.

You can get this newsletter in full color by email. Save some trees and contact Alex at alexnacv@gmail.com to let her know you would like to subscribe by email. The photos are great in color! See them at the HSSA website <http://www.arcatahistory.org>



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