

Spring 2021



Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF

Inside the Falk Mansion

By Tamara Wolski

In the Winter 2021 HSSA newsletter, I wrote a piece about Noah Falk and his Arcata mansion (the current location of Wildberries Marketplace). We were thrilled to hear from Jennifer Holmes Cilker of Los Altos, CA who read the story and reached out to the HSSA about her connection to the Falk Mansion. She recognized furniture pieces that are currently in her living room from the historical photograph of the Falk living room. “I was so excited to see the last newsletter with the photograph of the Falk living room because the piano and fringed stool that are pictured are in my living room today in the Bay Area. The piano is an 1874 Hallet, Davis & Co. square grand, made in Boston, and it was one of the items my grandmother Mildred Holmes (1919-2012) bought from the Falk family before their home was torn down.” The mansion was demolished in 1956, but we are grateful to know that some of its history lives on.

Ms. Cilker never had the opportunity to view the Falk Mansion in person because she was born in the 1960s after it was torn down for a Safeway, but she was aware of the significance. “[I] grew up hearing the name Falk because of the beautiful furniture my grandparents had in their Scotts Valley home in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Like all the original furniture in the lovely Arcata Victorian homes, the furniture was solid, decorated and built to last. The piano was already 100 years old when my grandparents moved it into their modernistic redwood home with high ceilings and tall picture windows.” The Falk furniture pieces provided much enjoyment to her family. “[The piano] set the tone for many joyful gatherings throughout the years, taking pride of place in the great room where music-minded cousins played and sang hymns and folksongs together. The spacious and sleek modern room was warmed by the plush, ornate and cozy vintage furniture.” After Ms. Cilker’s grandmother’s death in 2012, the Falk furniture was split up between family members. “Sadly the large Grandfather clock from the Falk mansion was stolen out of the home before it could be moved. This is a mystery to us all and warns of the dangers of an unoccupied home during the unsettled and precarious time between



Top: Falk Living Room: Courtesy of the Humboldt County Historical Society, Gates Collection. Below, Cilker living room today.



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Mission

Historical Sites Society of Arcata promotes recognition of the cultural heritage of Arcata and its environs, and identifies and encourages the preservation of historical and architecturally significant structures and sites within the Arcata planning area.

PO Box 4521

Arcata, CA 92218

707-822-4722

www.arcatahistory.org

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President's Message

by Alex Stillman

Spring is bound to be here by the time this newsletter is in your hand.

It is with sadness that I say good-bye to Ann McClary. Ann always poured tea at our Holiday get togethers and wore a lovely holiday sweater to enliven the event. Ann was one of our stalwart Sunday docent volunteers. She will be sorely missed. She was also an active volunteer at the Arcata Library. We have included a letter from the Arcata Librarian that shows how much they will miss her too.

Some unexpected pleasurable news; Mary McNelis, a long-time volunteer and HSSA board member, has returned from Denver and is living at Timber Ridge in McKinleyville. I spoke to her and she sounds wonderful. It was great to hear her lovely English accent again.

It's been over a year since we closed the museum on Sundays. Perhaps, come summer we can reopen for the flurry of tourists that are expected to be here. All reports are that vacation rentals are booking up.

We received a call from Jennifer Holmes Cilker about the Falk House mansion's furnishings. Tamara followed up with Jennifer and created a lovely article for us to enjoy.

The 2021 "Our Calendar" *Then and Now* was produced by Emma Scott and Isaac Wilson of Six Rivers Charter High School. Phillips House museum has this calendar on the entry hall wall. *Then and Now* keeps us informed of our losses and saves that have occurred over the years.

California Preservation Foundation's annual conference will once again be virtual. This year they are featuring snippets of distant parts of California. The North Coast will have its 40 minutes of fame. If you have favorite historic place(s) and want to make an audio/video on your device, please do and send it to me (alexnacv@gmail.com) to be added to the file.

Enjoy the newsletter. Thank you for being a member. Alex



Our museum continues to be closed due to Covid-19, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We are hopeful that it will re-open sometime this summer. Watch our website for updates and news.

owners. Last summer brought more sad news when the dining room set and many living room chairs burned with my cousin's home during the CZU Lightning Fire Complex in Boulder Creek, CA."

Though some of the pieces are lost forever, Ms. Cilker has a great appreciation for the Falk items that still exist in her home. "From my grandmother I learned to surround [myself] with lovely things, even if they aren't "in fashion" and enjoy them while they last! She loved the Falk furniture and used it for decades until her death. She would occasionally buy a new sofa, but the basics of her home always stayed the same." In addition to the furniture, Ms. Cilker has other items related to Falk. "I also have a few beautiful books from the Falk Library. [One] is titled *How to Produce Plays and Pageants*. My grandmother was a true Victorian who made all of us read through every Thanksgiving Proclamation ever signed by a President before we could eat our meal and opened her doors to community groups, friends and family members alike. Also, I have a family Bible from the Falk family, in German, and dated 1767. I look forward to retiring to Humboldt County in the near future and moving these Falk memories back to the area." We look forward to having Ms. Cilker and her collection back in Humboldt County as well. In the meantime, we're appreciative that she shared her memories and pictures of the Falk pieces with the HSSA. Ms. Cilker feels "We are all privileged to live with the beautiful architecture of Arcata and it is important to learn more about the times around the founding of the town. We are grateful for the Historical Society for preserving these memories."

The following letter was sent by Susan Parsons of the Arcata Library to several of our board members. We were touched and wanted to share it with all of you.

Dear Friends of Ann,

Please know that our devoted library colleague and volunteer, Ann McClary, died of a heart attack on Saturday, January 23, 2021 at Mad River Hospital. Her neighbor, Debbie, called me today to share this news. Debbie told me that Ann had been transferred from her rehab facility in Anderson, CA, to Timber Ridge (McKinleyville?) last October, but I didn't know that. I wish I had; I would have stood outside her window and made faces to make her smile. Debbie said that last Friday, Ann told Timber Ridge staff that she was experiencing chest pain, so Ann was taken by ambulance to MRH, where she had a heart attack and coded. Medical staff brought her back, and she overnighted. Saturday, too weak to make the necessary comeback, Ann died. MRH staff told Debbie that Ann was stubborn; anyone who knew her, knew that, and loved her for it.



Ann's sons, Howard and John, will be coming to Arcata soon. There will be a memorial service for Ann, but no information about when, for example, is available at this time. Cards can be sent to her home, and her sons will receive them: 716 Patrick Court, Arcata, CA 95521

In my short years here, I watched Ann McClary create Beloved Community wherever she went, quietly and indefatigably, at Arcata Library, in her Episcopal Church, at Hospice, in Arcata's Historical Society, and in Mad River Hospital's Gift Shop. She volunteered practically everywhere and was ever vigilant. When Ann spoke, people listened. She had a sharp wit and loved children. She told me that Wednesday was her favorite day because it was Storytime. She loved seeing families thrive at the library, and she always came to the desk after Storytime to help with checkout and be a presence. Children looked up at her and somehow knew to behave. Arcata Library has had a hole in its heart ever since Ann left. We loved her. May she rest in peace, knowing that her life was a great blessing.

In Sympathy, Susan Parsons

Creating the 2021 SRCHS “Then and Now” Calendar

By Emma Scott

Every year at Six Rivers Charter High School, a group of seniors takes on the responsibility of producing and selling “Then and Now” calendars. Consisting of vintage and recreated photos from various locations in our community along with informative paragraphs, this calendar annually captures our fascinating local history. This year, Isaac Wilson and I, Emma Scott, took on the project.



The process of creating this calendar included choosing a historical photo from our community for each month of the year, going to the place of the photo and recreating it, researching what is pictured, and writing a historical paragraph about each photo.

Creating this calendar was a valuable educational experience to say the least. Isaac and I were given the opportunity to learn countless interesting things about the history of where we live that wouldn't have discovered otherwise. Additionally, we were able to make this project our own, choosing photos and topics that interested us personally. For example, as the child of someone who has been in the Coast Guard my entire life, I chose to devote a page to the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station. We were able to go inside and admire photos and newspapers depicting the station's history, gathering valuable information for our project and our personal curiosity. As for Isaac, “I chose to do a page on Blue Lake because, for one, I have lived there my entire life, and, two, it has a very rich history that I thought should be a part of our project.”

Isaac and I each had a favorite page to research, photograph, and write about. “My favorite page was on the wreck of the U.S.S. Milwaukee,” Isaac said. “I liked that high ranking government officials needed to enlist the help of a local contract company in an attempt to save the H-3 submarine involved in the wreck.” As for my favorite, I liked the page dedicated to F Street in Eureka. I enjoyed recreating the photo and capturing three local businesses still operating from the time of the original photo; The Eureka Theatre, Partrick's Candy, and the Eureka Inn. Additionally, since Isaac and I go to school in Arcata and consequently spend a good amount of time on the plaza, the history of the plaza was extra fun to explore.

Overall, this project was very interesting and informative and we loved learning all about our community's history. “I thought it was a very nice learning experience. I like that I was able to research and write about a lot of local history that I am interested in that will probably stick with me for the rest of my life,” Isaac reflected.





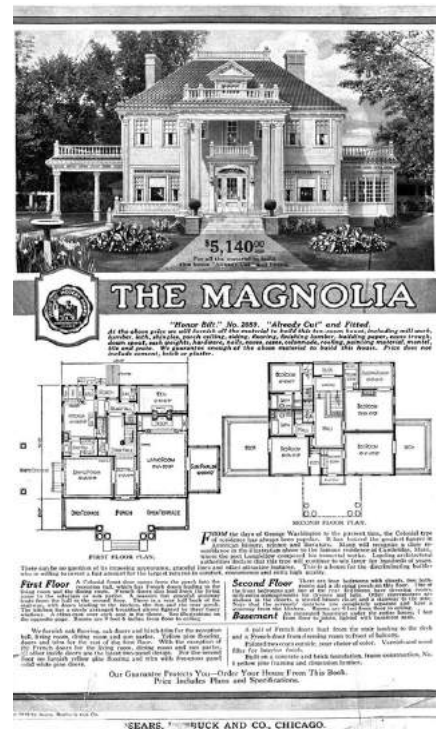
Did you know that Sears Sold over 75,000 DIY Homes between 1908 and 1939?

The *Book of Modern Homes and Building* first appeared in 1908. Sears sold complete houses, including the plans and instructions for construction of 22 different styles, announcing that the featured homes were “complete, ready for occupancy.” By 1911, Modern Homes catalogs included illustrations of house interiors, which provided homeowners with blueprints for furnishing the houses with Sears appliances and fixtures.

Over that time Sears designed 447 different housing styles, from the elaborate multistory Ivanhoe, with its elegant French doors and art glass windows, to the simpler Goldenrod, which served as a quaint, three-room and no-bath cottage for summer vacationers. (An outhouse could be purchased separately for Goldenrod and similar cottage dwellers.) Customers could choose a house to suit their individual tastes and budgets. Photos of the styles can be viewed at the Sears archive <http://www.searsarchives.com/homes/1908-1914.htm>

Modern Home customers had the freedom to build their own dream houses, and Sears helped realize these dreams through quality custom design and favorable financing. Buyers could reverse a floor plan, add a dormer, or even chose brick instead of wood siding. All of this and more are possible, because the Modern Homes program encouraged custom designing houses down to the color of the cabinetry hardware.

Modern Home designs offered distinct advantages over other construction methods. The ability to mass-produce the materials used in Sears homes lessened manufacturing costs, which lowered purchase costs for customers. Not only did precut and fitted materials shrink construction time up to 40% but Sears’s use of “balloon style” framing, drywall, and asphalt shingles greatly eased construction for homebuyers. “Balloon style” framing did not require a team of skilled carpenters, as previous methods did. Balloon frames were built faster and generally only required one carpenter. This system uses precut timber of mostly standard 2x4s and 2x8s for framing. Precut timber, fitted pieces, and the convenience of having everything, including the nails, shipped by railroad directly to the customer added greatly to the popularity of this framing style.



Sears helped popularize the latest technology available to modern homebuyers in the early part of the twentieth century. Central heating, indoor plumbing, and electricity were all new developments in home design that Modern Homes incorporated, although not all of the homes were designed with these conveniences. Central heating not only improved the livability of homes with little insulation but it also improved fire safety, always a worry in an era where open flames threatened houses and whole cities, in the case of the Chicago Fire. Indoor plumbing and homes wired for electricity were the first steps to modern kitchens and bathrooms.

The American landscape is dotted by Sears Modern Homes. Few of the original buyers and builders remain to tell the excitement they felt when traveling to greet their new house at the train station. The remaining homes, however, stand as testaments today to that bygone era and to the pride of home built by more than 100,000 Sears customers and fostered by the Modern Homes program.



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"If you survive long enough, you're revered-rather like an old building." Katharine Hepburn

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