

Summer 2021

Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF

Mile Marker 300

by Bob Felter

At the beginning of the Essex Ranch yard is what looks like a weathered concrete gravestone close to the old rail grade. The ranch lies a mile or so up from the beginning of the Fieldbrook Valley, and Lindsey Creek meanders through the ranch. It is privately owned, and visiting is only allowed with prior permission from the owners.

I had the privilege of doing a historic report for a College of the Redwoods historic preservation class in 2009. In Bill Hole's "Research and Documentation" class we learned about the many ways to research a property, and part of the class was to do a report on a historic structure. Bill mentioned if we owned an old house to feel free do the report on it, but if we didn't, he encouraged us to do our paper on a barn, because barns are going away so quickly.

I live near the bottom of Hunts Drive and there used to be a large barn across the road from my house. I was told it was built for an early lumber company to house oxen. The barn was built of fir and the powder post beetles had long ago found comfortable homes within the wood. The barn had become a liability, so it was taken down. Because a structure is gone doesn't mean it can't be researched however, and my first query was to Rich and Carolyn Hunt.

Carolyn started by pulling out photos of the barn and telling me stories. In the process, she mentioned "we've never found oxen shoes there. Now, Jim Timmons up the road has found piles of them". With my interest in early redwood logging, I suddenly had to know more about the Essex Ranch. Carolyn kindly said, "I'll invite Jim and Gail, and you and your wife over for dinner". That she did and after I explained my motive, Jim said I could come out and he'd show me around.

The ranch was bought by Jim's father and uncle in 1943; Glenn Timmons had been the ranch manager. The Hammond company had pulled up the tracks in 1934 after they merged with Little River Redwood and moved their rail access to the woods through Cranell, then along the beach and what is now known as the Hammond trail. Jim's son Rick, who now manages the ranch, told me both his dad and grandfather said that gravestone-looking post was mile marker 300. I wanted to verify this, so measured the mileage from there to milepost 289, which is along the tracks just beyond Bracut. Not many of the old mileposts remain, and I'm happy that one is still there. It's an interesting fragment from our local history. Indeed, it was 11 miles to the post. One other detail is that the mileposts don't measure to the end of the rail line that ends before San Francisco Bay. It supposedly measures to the Northwestern Pacific headquarters that was at 1 Market St, downtown.

The far side of the large barn seen above the mile marker held the milking stations. To the left of the barn, barely



Continued on page 4



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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.

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President's Message

by Alex Stillman

The Philips House Museum is open and thankful for the wonderful docents for giving tours on Sundays. Do stop by between 2-4.

Tamara Wolski reports that we have now over 1500 likes on Facebook. She continues to have amazing Then and Now photos which she posts on HSSA'S Facebook page.

Karole Ely reports that according to project staff, the demolition of the Trinity Hospital building, except for the facade, will begin this August/September and last approximately 18 months. The building will be open for use Spring of 2023. Please see Karole's story for details.

A gathering to remember Bob Titlow took place in June at the museum with friends and family attending. Currently, we are showcasing his family in the entry. Bob's mother's tea dishes are on the dining room table. Do enjoy the notebook his family provided to the museum. Thank you Karole Ely for arranging this tribute.

In the past, everyone had a set of tools to repair their cars and homes. I remember a surge of older men dying and their families clearing out their garages. Many of those tools ended up at the dump. They were collected by Linda Wise who made benches and animal sculptures, etc. using those cherished tools. Maybe you have seen her horse sculpture at the intersection of Highway 101 and the Samoa bridge. Recently, Andy Alm told me he has several of his grandfather's tools.

Bob Felter told me this story. "When I was first building log houses throughout the San Juan Islands my buddies and I were collecting old tools. There was a church over on the mainland with numerous social rooms and the rumor was that an old man collected tools year long, tuned them up and the church had a yearly tool sale. One room was full of carpentry tools, another gardening tools, etc. My boss had a plane we often flew to work in. He'd go over beforehand, leave a truck at the Mt Vernon airport and we'd fly over the next morning. I'll never know how the old man collected so many great tools. There were rare finds, although he'd often spray paint them some bothersome color, but that could be removed. I got my first slick (a huge chisel) and a hard-to-find #2 Stanley plane. I traded that for a chainsaw that is still my favorite go-to chainsaw for most jobs."

Perhaps these great tools would be a good future display at the Phillips House.

It's summertime, a season to enjoy.

Museum Update

by Jaffa Dugan

Since the Philips House has been closed for so long, there isn't much to report regarding maintenance. Our ever faithful house painter, Brian Ingram, did spruce up the front doorway and has plans to paint the interior windows of the upstairs bedrooms on the South side.

Our downstairs dehumidifier failed and a new one was installed by our esteemed Restoration Specialist, Bob Felter. Both dehumidifiers are plumbed to drain outside, so we no longer have to tote buckets of water. Another small item was replacing the pull shades in the south bedrooms. It made my day when I finally found the right shades at Pierson's and they were very reasonable.

Sadly, we have lost some from our docent pool. As mentioned in the last newsletter, our very faithful Ann McClary passed away in January. I don't think she and Mac ever missed a function at the Museum. After he died, she kept up the tradition, as well as continuing as a longtime docent.

Welcome Kathleen Kalodny as a new Board member and docent volunteer. She will be shadowing existing docents while she learns how we do things.

We are always in need of additional docents. It is an enjoyable learning experience for anyone who has two hours to spare on a Sunday afternoon...any takers???



Humboldt State University Neighborhood Project

by Karole Ely

I live in the Bayview area of Arcata. Across the street from me on 13th street sits the old Trinity Hospital which later became the HSU Annex used for classrooms and offices. It has been abandoned for some time and consequently in disrepair. Over the years there has been a lot of speculation by me and my neighbors as to what HSU would eventually do with this property. So I was very surprised and overjoyed when HSU announced that it would become the campus childcare center and a place for child development instruction.

Because HSU has so little land to build on, my neighbors and I were afraid that it could become a much needed three to four story building for classrooms, a dormitory, or a parking lot. The proposed project, a one story building that fits into our neighborhood of mostly small one-story cottages, will preserve the original facade that architecturally matches our neighborhood and the mission style buildings on campus.

Historical Sites Society of Arcata is dedicated to preserving historical buildings. We are delighted with HSU's plans for the old hospital/annex. Alex Stillman and I were given a tour of the building about 10 years ago where they pointed out lots of mold and asbestos and said the building could not be saved. We were very distressed about their decision, but tried to understand their dilemma. HSSA board members are delighted with HSU's current decision to make the building shine again. We look forward to hearing children's and HSU students' voices in its rooms and playgrounds!

(Mile Marker 300, continued)

seen through the fence is the milk shed. Concrete basins line one side in there, and cold spring water was used to pipe in to cool the cans of milk. To the left of the milk shed is the warehouse. A small rail line used to run from the milking parlor of the barn to the creamery, then on to the warehouse. The cans of milk would be set on the trolley, offloaded at the creamery, and finished products then moved along to the warehouse where the empty train would stop and pick up supplies for the lumber camps. On the run back to Samoa the train with log flats loaded, would stop again to get supplies for the town.

Along with sheep, beef and dairy, the ranch provided fruit and vegetables. If you drove toward Fieldbrook on the Fieldbrook road in the spring and looked to the left, where you get a glimpse of open pasture sprinkled with large redwood stumps, you may have seen a few decrepit flowering fruit trees. Those are the final remains from Vance's orchards. The Oct. 9, 1897, Arcata Union recorded "The Vance orchard has borne a large crop of fruit this season, the largest in many years. The prune crop was also very large and there is now stored in the dryer about 6 1/2 tons".

Down the line close to 299 and maybe visible from the highway is the slaughterhouse barn. The train might stop again there for meat products. The swampy area alongside of there, and more visible from near the beginning of the road to Fieldbrook was once the log pond for Vance's second mill called the Big Bonanza. Jim told me part of that mill was basically under the Essex interchange. It's been 15 years since I did my report so my memory is getting vague, but I've recently had the privilege of going back out there and I thought y'all would enjoy this bit of history.

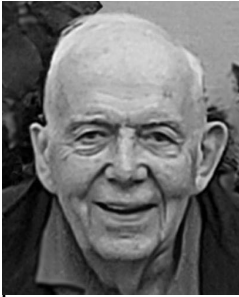
One other tidbit it that I've been restoring some of the windows on the ranch. The sash is made of pine, so it's likely they were shipped in from elsewhere. They seem identical to those in the 1874/76 Chapman House that I worked on, and I wonder when sash production began in Humboldt County. Perhaps the area was growing so quickly that sash was produced but demand exceeded local output? Pine would have been plentiful east of San Francisco.

After I had finished my Essex ranch project for Bill's 2009 Research and Documentation class and given a copy to Jim Timmons, I mentioned a report I'd read in an old Arcata Union or somewhere that said John Vance had brought carloads of coral to the ranch. It had come back as ballast for the sailing ships that delivered redwood lumber to South Sea ports, and he'd hoped to grind it up for soil amendment. It proved too hard for his grinding device, however.

Jim confirmed about the coral and said they'd used it for fill on bends where Lindsey Creek was eating away and also in roads. In fact, there was a pile close to where we were standing, and he handed me a chunk. He also gave me a couple oxen shoes, which were the reason I'd gotten interested in his ranch to begin with. I had told him things he'd never known about the place, and he'd lived there all his life. He said as he handed me the shoes, "you might as well have some souvenirs, you earned them". See Bob's souvenirs at right.



***It's time to renew your HSSA Membership.
Please use the form on page 6***



A Celebration of Bob Titlow's Life

by Karole Ely

I recently received a call and e-mails from friends of Bob Titlow. Bob had willed furniture and other family objects to the Phillips House Museum. The family wanted to set a date with me to receive these items. They also informed me that they were bringing Bob's ashes to Arcata to be buried with his parents in the family plot at the Greenwood Cemetery. In years past, Bob and his mother Berneice had given the museum other family furniture and artifacts, including their cattle brand. As many of you know, the Titlow family is an old Arcata family that for many years, owned a farm/hardware store in downtown Arcata called Seely and Titlow. If you travel east on Highway 299 you encounter Titlow Road, named for the family. At one time, they had a ranch there.

When I contacted the Historical Sites Society of Arcata board members of these donations to the museum and the date of internment of Bob's ashes, we decided to offered to have a reception for Bob at the museum. His friends and family members gladly accepted our offer. Approximately thirty out-of-town and local people attended the reception. As they entered the museum, they encountered a display of the donated items that included a brief history of Bob's life. He was born and raised as an only child by Robert and Berneice Titlow in Arcata. Bob graduated from HSU with a degree in Theater Arts. While in Arcata as an adult, he formed a theater group that performed plays at the Minor Theater. After he graduated from HSU, his father convinced Bob to operate the store for two years, but it wasn't his passion. Bob moved to San Francisco. He completed an advanced degree from Stanford in Theatre Arts. He taught Theater Arts in the Bay Area until he retired.

The celebration of Bob's life at the cemetery and the museum was a memorable affair. His friends presented a slide show of his life, the HSSA board members provided tasty tea food and champagne. His family and friends commented that it was a perfect day of celebrating Bob and his Arcata family history that he valued and loved. Please come by the museum on Sundays from 2 to 4 to view these Titlow family items. You can read the letters that Bob's father wrote to Bob while he was in the Army, chronicling early family and Humboldt County history.



The HSSA Board of Directors of HSSA voted to accept the donation of the Falk mansion mantel from Pauline Blanks. It will be installed in the Phillips House Museum exhibit room on the wall that currently houses the clothing exhibit panels. Tamara notified Pauline that we would be happy to accept her donation, as long as it could be delivered to the Phillips House Museum free of charge. Below is her response:

Oh, I'm so excited!!! Best news I have had in a very very long time. I will be contacting my cousin, Gary Costa, to make another crate to haul it back home. He made the one to haul it down here. Then I will have my son, Robin Blanks, U Haul it back to Arcata. It will take some time but hopefully I can get this done within the next 6-8 months. Seems I may have to make these arrangements sooner rather than later. The pic can go with the mantel. I will get a copy made also...My Cousin lost his and wants another one...Least I can do since he gave me the original in the first place Thanks again so much. My Dad, Jim Vanoncini, would be so proud to know the mantel ended up back with its family. He was quite a historian himself. Again, thank you,

Sincerely, Pauline Vanoncini Blanks



H Street looking north in 1940 and today. by Tamara Wolski



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