

Spring 2022

# Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF



## *Preservation Month 2022* *People Saving Places*

May is Preservation Month across the country. This year's Preservation Month theme of

*People Saving Places* is a national high-five to everyone doing the great work of saving places in ways big and small and inspiring others to do the same! This newsletter is devoted to some of our own place-savers.

*People Saving Places* is how the Phillips House Museum came to be. After a Park Bond was passed in the early 1980s to purchase the property now housing Health Sport, the Arcata Community Center, children's playgrounds, soccer fields and wetlands, the Historical Sites Society of Arcata asked if the Phillips House could be rented for use as a museum. By this time, HSSA had acquired furnishings from the Ruth Horel Caskey estate and felt a living museum could be created. The City applied for and received a CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) grant to help pay for repairs and restoration. Many repairs were made, including bringing the building into ADA compliance, while keeping the defining characteristics of this Gothic Revival house. The restored Phillips House Museum has welcomed visitors for over 25 years.



*Recognizing May 2022 as*

### **NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH**

**WHEREAS**, National Historic Preservation Month is sponsored by the National Trust to celebrate Historic Preservation through-out our nation and is celebrated by the City's Historic Landmarks Committee and the Historical Sites Society of Arcata; and

**WHEREAS**, historic preservation is an effective tool for revitalizing neighborhoods and buildings, fostering local pride and maintaining community character while enhancing livability; and

**WHEREAS**, the Historic Landmarks Committee will celebrate Preservation Month by focusing on the National Trust's theme of *This Place Matters*, featuring places, infrastructure and buildings as well as natural landscapes around Humboldt Bay with a particular emphasis on the Plaza; and

**WHEREAS**, the Historical Sites Society of Arcata preserves the Phillips House Museum and maintains a website featuring walking tours, preservation articles, and archives, which is used by the local schools to discuss the evolution of a community; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Arcata's Historic Landmarks Committee continues to work on fostering education and incentivizing strategies, including its Mills Act Program, to help property owners rehabilitate and maintain their historic properties

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED** that the City Council of the City of Arcata hereby recognizes **May 2022** as **NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH** and calls upon the people of Arcata to recognize and observe National Historic Preservation Month by walking the Arcata Plaza and Arcata's historic neighborhoods and accessing historical site information by using City-generated QR codes posted at local businesses; visiting the Historical Sites Society of Arcata website; following @arcatahistory on Instagram; or following the Historical Sites Society of Arcata Facebook Page featuring *Then and Now* and feature articles in the Mad River Union.

*Dated: May 4, 2022*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stacy Atkins-Salazar  
Mayor



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## Newsletter

Shelley Mitchell

Carolyn Otis

Claire Hashem-Hanlon

## 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

When I saw that the National Trust for Historic Places changed their theme for Preservation Week from *This Place Matters* to *People Saving Places*, I asked a few of our members to tell their stories or those of others who "saved a place" in Arcata. We wanted to honor the many Arcata residents who bought properties and got to work saving them.



This theme has been in my heart from the early 1970s when the Historical Sites Society of Arcata supported the City of Arcata's goal to survey Arcata's rich architectural history. After the survey was completed, a book was published, and 200 copies were printed and sold. Susie Van Kirk, a stellar researcher, did the first survey. For many years, Susie read one *Arcata Union* after another to bring more history to light. She was later known for researching and providing historic information for local environmental documents. Her passing has left a huge void.

My first project was the Salvage House, built in 1875, on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and J Streets. This Settlement Era home had all the defining characteristics: sidelights, a transom, multi paneled door offset to the side and 6 over 6 windows. It had stood empty for years. Ben Fairless, my husband at the time, and I purchased it in 1976 with the goal of restoring it. This restoration provided me with an incredible hands-on learning experience. It was just the beginning.

My next project was a boarded-up house at 634 G Street which had been moved to build a gas station on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and G Streets. In San Francisco, this building would have been called Flats and it still had the wire screen cupboards to keep food cold. My restoration story goes next to the Schorlig House at 1050 12<sup>th</sup> Street.



Drawing by Phoebe Storey for  
note cards for HSSA in the  
1970's

I was involved in a bidding war with a man that wanted to build apartments in the front yard. In 1979, I bought the Schorlig House, an Italianate Victorian built in 1889. As a result of my restoration efforts, I am proud to say that the Schorlig House has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The "Hell House" (a name coined by the Arcata Police Department) is at 1166 I Street. My son, Kelly Carlin and I purchased it in the 1990's. He restored this sweet Settlement era home and added two additional living units. Restoration is not just about saving buildings, but also



making livable housing available.



My next project was The Parsonage at 1166 H Street. The porch had been removed to house a florist shop and yarn store called the Knitter's Nook. Its façade was somewhat hidden because the storefront had been

built to the sidewalk. During the Parsonage's rehabilitation the front porch was replaced and two additional housing units were added. This restoration revealed the magnificence of The Parsonage.



Alex Fairless, the mayor of Arcata, is shown here in front of her latest restoration project at 1050-12th Street in Arcata. "I think that if you level these old homes," she remarked, "you are doing a disservice. There would be something missing in our community."

As I reread this; I didn't mention all the hard work it takes to save a building. That effort involves asbestos removal, window restoration, restructuring interiors, fixing the foundations, the dump runs, roofs, siding repairs, new porches, railings, stairs, sheetrock, plumbing, rewiring, painting, and talented trades workers who make these homes shine brightly for all to enjoy.

***People Saving Places* is so appropriate. Saving places is worth the effort.**



**Photos courtesy of Alex Stillman. Clockwise from top right (Parsonage before, Parsonage After, "Hell" House before, "Hell" House after, Schorlig House before, Schorlig House after.**



**Delvin House on K Street, an example of apartments built in the front yard masking the beautiful facades.**

## Preserving History

by Jaffa Wahlberg

In December of 1973 my husband Jake and I joined forces with Alex Stillman and Ben Fairless to save an old house from being razed by the expansion of Hwy 101. Originally located at 11<sup>th</sup> and D streets, we moved it a few blocks away in February of 1974 to 12<sup>th</sup> Street near B. It was in sad condition and needed upgrades and lots of TLC! Another house from the same area was moved next door and was restored by Edith Stokes.



Jake was the de facto “foreman” since he did not have another job at that time. The rest of us worked on it whenever our other jobs permitted. It was an arduous task and we learned as we went. Alex would dash over from City Hall, throw on overalls to work for an hour or two, change back to her street clothes, and dash back to her real job just like a super hero! After nine months of work and planning, we had our final inspection in November of 1974. We are happy and proud to see that it is still in such nice condition after all these years!



*A rendering of the Trinity Annex project looking west. | HSU*

## A Big Thank You To Cal Poly Humboldt

by Karole Ely

I live in the Bayview district of Arcata and across the street from the Annex and what was also at one time Arcata’s hospital. Mad River Hospital Corporation owned the building and sold it to HSU Cal Poly. Meanwhile the building was abandoned and slowly became derelict and a blight in our neighborhood. There were several rumors from neighbors and statements from the University that the building might be demolished and replaced by a parking lot. Then one fine day out of the blue the University officially announced that the

building would not only be saved, preserving the old growth redwood frame, but remodeled to be a day care center for children of faculty and students. Bayview is a neighborhood mainly composed of one story cottages. Having a one story building that has some architectural significance and houses children during the day and has classrooms for University students to be instructed in child development is a win win for us and the University. So as one of the future day care center’s closest neighbors I again say thank you and welcome to the neighborhood!

The Mills Act is a program that financially incentivizes the care of historic buildings by freezing property tax over a ten year period while repairs are completed. The program may be renewed for an additional ten years following a plan for each year submitted by the property owner. Arcata adopted the program to help protect historic buildings. The Chapman House is the first property to receive approval and funding under the Mills Act. The Jacobys Storehouse is in the throes of applying for the Mills Act to improve the building. When the Jacobys Storehouse changed from a department store into restaurants, offices, and shops, the architect duplicated the front façade onto the rear of the building. After nearly 50 years of southern exposure, the rear facade needs a great deal of attention.





## The Nixon House

by Dan Hauser

Just over 50 years ago Donna and I were fortunate to purchase the Nixon House at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and J Streets in Arcata. Although the home had been in the Nixon family for 110 years had been rented and not maintained for almost 10 years at that time. Beth Nixon Lubin was the last of the family and had moved to Sacramento. A fire had severely damaged the living room which was the reason that I, as an insurance adjuster was called to inspect and meet with Beth. In addition to the fire damage, it appeared that the living room was used for rummage sales with wires hanging from opposite corners.

Beth explained that she had been trying to sell the property for a number of years with no real interest. At that point she was considering building apartments in front of the house or tearing it down to build an apartment house. At that time a number of historic homes were being demolished or having apartments added. During the inspection of the fire damage I expressed admiration for the home, and Beth asked me what I would do with it if it were mine. I said that I had two little kids and that it would make a great family home. She liked my response, and we were able to buy the house. We have been restoring the house and yards ever since.

My favorite example of the early restoration involves the dining room ceiling and wallpaper. The only heater in the house is a gas space heater in the dining room. The ceiling paper had dried, cracked and pulled away from the cheesecloth tacked to the rough boards. I originally stapled the paper back to the ceiling. Because of the condition, the dining room became the first room to be fully restored. We peeled off seven layers of wallpaper, put up ¼" sheetrock for fire safety and to create a smooth surface, then wallpapered close to period style as possible. Now, 50 years later, we still have three small rooms that need the same treatment.

During the first 20 years we couldn't afford to have the work done by a contractor. The first few times the house was painted it was me on a ladder. When we first moved in, the house was on a water well that often ran out and was of sketchy quality. Soon after I was elected to the City Council in 1974, we had to raise the water rates. Mayor Alex turned to me and wanted to know how I could vote on the rates without being hooked up to City water. That Labor Day weekend I dug the trench, laid the pipe, installed the check valves and hooked up!

All the work we have done has been with the idea of restoring to the original period style. It is still a work in progress. The top photo was taken in 1934 and the one below is a recent photo of the house.



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## Membership and Renewal Form

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\_\_\_\_ (\$25) Individual \_\_\_\_\_ (\$35) Family \_\_\_\_\_ (\$100) Preservation Partner

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My gift is ( ) in honor of \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) in memory

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Please provide contact information so we can notify honorees.

Mail form to: Historical Sites Society of Arcata  
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