

Spring 2023

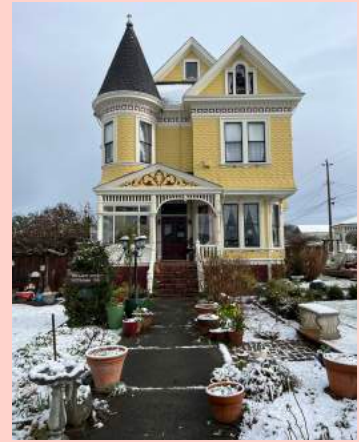
Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF

Queen Ann Victorians: Timeless and Enduring

by Sharon K. Ferrett

I first visited San Francisco in the late 1960s during urban renewal when Victorian houses were unappreciated, undervalued and under attack. I thought of the architectural heritage that would be lost by developers who wanted to tear down beautiful, historic mansions and replace them with cold, sterile modern buildings. It never occurred to me that I would someday own a Victorian and be committed to holding onto and restoring these treasures.



Stone House

When I moved to Arcata in 1976, I was pleased to see that Victorians were an integral part of Arcata's style and identity. Later I learned that Arcata's Victorians had also been under attack before Alex Stillman led a movement to save and restore these elegant and historic vintage houses. I have always loved the elegance of Victorians, but the few that were available to buy needed a lot of work and, as a young single woman with a demanding job at the university, I bought a modern house off of California Street. When I married Sam, he put his carpentry skills to work in remodeling our mid-century house. We weren't looking for a new house, but sometimes serendipitous events occur that seem almost surreal.

On an early morning New Year's Day walk in 1984, with two babies (1 and 3- year-old) on our backs, Sam and I talked about our goals for the year. We explored ideas for starting our own business. Inexplicably, I said, "Why don't we open a Bed and Breakfast?" Sam stopped, looked at me as if I had lost my mind and reminded me that we just remodeled our house and it wasn't suitable for an inn. In addition, we had never stayed in a B & B, never dreamed of running one and had no skills in hospitality. Again, this voice from another dimension said, "Remember when we walked through the Stone House? It would make a wonderful B & B." Sam reminded me that it wasn't for sale. Undeterred, I called Greg Anderson, wished him a Happy New Year and told him we wanted to buy the Stone House. He assured me that it wasn't for sale and wouldn't be on the market. I pressed him to call the owner. He took a deep breath and responded slowly with practiced patience one would use on a stubborn 2-year old. "Sharon, trust me, it's not for sale and if it were there would be a hundred people in line before you." My confidence and bullheadedness was undiminished as I insisted that he make the call. I could see us in this Victorian. Greg didn't call because he thought it was a waste of time, but as this whirlwind of

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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.

HSSA is aware that Arcata
stands on Wiyot lands. We
acknowledge the original
preservers of our community.

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President's Message

How swiftly the winter passed with so many rainy and cold days. Spring has sprung with summer just around the corner. May is Preservation Month. When we look at Arcata's older buildings which have been preserved for future generations, HSSA is thrilled. Yet we know we have many buildings awaiting rehabilitation. We are more than willing to offer suggestions and assistance. Please contact us.

Jeanette Cooper's display at the Philips House Museum, *If the Walls Could Talk*, features items found in the walls of the Grotzman House. It was presented at a lively Sunday reception. The display is a must see. Do drop by on Sundays from 2-4 p.m..

Haunted Phillips House is coming for a Halloween adventure. It will be October 28 and 29. Debi Cooper is the chair of this first-time event for the younger members of our community. What fun! She may be asking you to volunteer and join the fun, do say yes. We need you.

The fall sale will be on Saturday, September 23 from 10-3 at the Philips House museum. Recently we found some interesting vintage items in a dresser drawer. A group of members is working diligently on sorting these items and selecting some for the sale. These newfound items promise to make our sale interesting.

Member Leslie Scopes-Anderson, graphic designer, kindly designed a brochure for the museum. When complete, it will soon be places tourists and visitors can find it, including the airport brochure rack. We hope it will bring more visitors every Sunday.

Enjoy reading the article about the matching houses, one on the corner of 14th and I and the other on the corner of 14th and J. The author is Sharon Ferrett who lives in the Stone House. Her daughter's family lives in the Mathews' House.

Watch for the south side of the museum being painted this summer. Your memberships and donations pay for keeping the museum looking beautiful. Thank you. The Rug Hookers will continue to hook in the exhibit room the first Sunday of each month. Join us.

Edie Butler and I recently met with a representative of Cal Poly to discuss the possible donation of materials to their historical library archives.

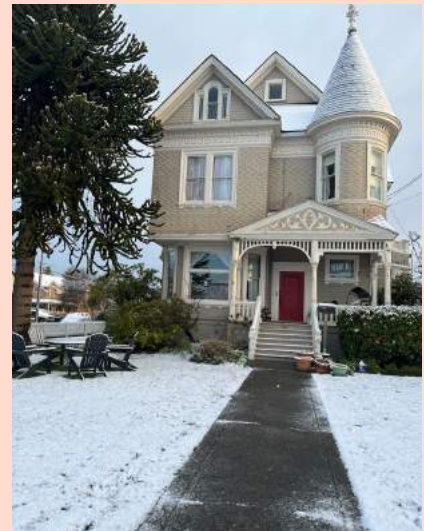
Enjoy the changing seasons.

Alex Stillman, President

coincidences continued, he ran into the owner in Safeway on Wednesday. After chatting about this and that, he said, "Oh by the way, I got this crazy call from Sharon Ferrett who wants to buy your house." The owner, Pete, got very quiet and said that this may be a good time to sell and explained his situation. Over the frozen peas, he said, "If they want to buy it, they need to come up with \$50,000 by this weekend and the price of \$185, 000 is firm. We made the deadline and by Saturday we owned the Stone House. A week ago, it had been an impossible dream.

We had often walked by and admired the Victorians on the hill. The Stone House is situated on the corner of Fourteenth and I Streets on an elevation which offers a splendid view of the town and the bay. The Stone House has elaborate Eastlake Queen Anne architecture with roof gables, corner tower or turret, bay windows, two kinds of patterned shingles, the handsome double front doors, the brick steps and glassed-in and the decorative features on the front porch, the white picket fence and the two palm trees which date to the turn of the century. Now we had a chance to go inside and explore what we had just bought. Stepping into the front hall is like traveling back in time. We loved the old-growth curly redwood banisters, the ornate gilded mantle over the fireplace, the glass-doored china cabinet and the stain and English leaded glass in the front hall. A cloak room (now a half-bath) still has the original marble wash stand and was plumbed with hot and cold water, the first in town. We loved the tall sliding doors leading to the music room, parlor, sitting room or library and dining room. When the sliding doors are open, the dimensions make a very large room. Behind the library is a spacious bedroom and bath (this became our bedroom). In the rear of the kitchen is a stairway leading to the second floor. We were overwhelmed with exuberance to think that we actually owned a part of Victorian heritage. It was a dream come true.

Our dream became a reality as we dove into a major restoration. All the floors had to be refinished, but first, we had to strip an old linoleum perimeter on the redwood floors. Then we began stripping layers of wallpaper. Sam used his carpentry skills and learned many new ones. We decided to open a Bed and Breakfast and name it The Lady Anne, not only for the architectural style, but also for my interest in England. I studied in London during college and loved the elegance of Victorian teas. During our breaks from backbreaking work, we shopped for antiques. The house was stripped of all furniture so we had to scour antique stores. We wanted to preserve the integrity of the time with authentic furnishings. We also needed the house to function as a family home with toddlers. The kitchen was divided into two rooms plus the porch had been glassed in to make a sunroom. A separate kitchen had been added and the back room had been turned into a rental. This space was the originally a wood house and laundry room. We took down the wall and turned it back into a large room that our young girls shared for a bedroom. The entire back of the house was now our family space, separate and distinct. The third story attic was turned into a play room for the children. The five guest rooms are all on the second floor. It all worked.



Mathews House

We wanted to find out everything about this treasure that was now ours to share with the public. A description of the Stone House, which was given in the March 12, 1889 *Humboldt Times*, became part of our historic records. We also read research completed by historical researcher, Susie Van Kirk.

The house was built in 1888 by Theodore Dean for Wesley Whipple Stone, who bought the large lot for five dollars and constructed the house for about \$6,500. Mr. W.W. Stone was born in Ohio in 1848 and served with the Union forces during the Civil War. In 1886, he came to Arcata to establish Arcata's first

bank. He served as cashier for Bank of Arcata for 25 years and became president upon the death of Thomas Bair in 1916. He continued his association with the bank until it became the Bank of Italy about 1925. Upon his death in 1927, he was survived by his widow, Celia Crippen Stone, and his children Charles B. Stone, Albert K. Stone, and Mrs. Celia Long.

Over the years, the Stone House has come full circle in its hundred plus years from single-family to renting out rooms to college students and small apartments, back again to single-family dwelling and now a family home plus a B & B. Today, people come from all over the world to hike in the redwoods, visit the Arcata Marsh, and enjoy our arts and restaurants and discover and celebrate the beauty of the North Coast. People are fascinated with the history and architecture of Victorians and appreciate being able to stay in one of our five guest rooms. We have been operating our B & B for 40 years and consider it a privilege to share it with others in our local community and in the wider national and international communities.

Six months after the Stone House was built, its mirror image counterpart was built on the west corner of the block by the Mathews family. These two houses have long been recognized for their fine architecture and contributions to the historic qualities of the late 1800's. They are an important link to the lumber-boom era of Arcata's history and an outstanding example of Queen Anne architecture.

In another series of serendipitous events, our daughter, Jennifer and her husband, Bryn Coriell, bought the mirror- image house from Lois Mathews Arkley and Robin Arkley. They have raised their children there for the last twelve years. They share our love of Victorians and commitment to preserve and honor these historic, architectural gems as an integral part of Arcata's style and identity. We are grateful to be part of a gathering wave of appreciation for the treasures that are unique to our city. For over one hundred years, these Victorians have withstood earthquakes, developers, and cultural and societal changes. It is our hope that these elegant, splendid survivors thrive and will be passed down to future generations.



Marsh House

This house, located at 899 Sixth Street, shown in an undated photo. The inscription on the back of this undated photo

(above) states "Marsh, Scott, Logan, Adams home, 899 Sixth St., Arcata, CA." It has been beautifully restored and was recently purchased by a family as a place for their son and roommates to live while attending Cal Poly.



State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

The State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program provides a 20% California tax credit to property owners that rehabilitate their historical buildings. When property owners improve buildings by complying with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, California's historic buildings maintain their historical significance and better interpret our State's history. The tax credit encourages repair and sensitive replacement of historical elements on building(s) instead of replacement with modern materials.

If the Walls Could Talk!

by Tamara Wolski

A reception was held on Sunday, April 30 at the Phillips House Museum to celebrate the opening of a new exhibit curated by Dr. Jeanette Cooper. The exhibit features artifacts found inside the walls of the Grotzman House in Arcata. Larry and Susie Matson came across a collection of items while renovating their home and kindly lent the artifacts to the Historical Sites Society of Arcata. Recently, while making preparations for a deck to be installed adjacent to the west side of the home, Larry and Susie Matson came across a curious assemblage of "things". Larry and Susie Matson have kindly allowed the Historical Sites Society of Arcata to exhibit the items found in the NW wall of Larry's ancestral home.

During the late 19th century, the land where the house is situated was owned by John Harpst. The Harpsts, however, did not live in this house. It was likely a rental and perhaps rented by one of Harpst's employees? In 1901, the land was purchased by Charles Grotzman, and the Grotzman family moved into the house.

The Grotzman House dates from about the 1880s. Late 19th century wooden houses did not come with insulation in the walls. They were cold and drafty. As a result families intentionally filled the walls with discarded items such as paper products, old clothing, odds and ends, actually anything that wasn't edible as they did not want to attract rodents

From various artifacts found amongst this cache and in other parts of the same wall, we know that there was a family with the last name of Farlon who lived in the house in 1885, probably shortly after the house was built. The Grotzman House dates to the 1880s, and artifacts include a hat, Halloween mask, smoking pipe, school notebooks, clothing, and much more. The exhibit is free and open to the public on Sundays from 2- 4 p.m. We hope to see you there!





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Your Dues are due now! Membership and Renewal Form

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