

Winter 2023

Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF

Memories of the Big 4 Inn

Tamara Wolski

The Phillips House Museum's current exhibit includes matchbooks and dishes from the Big 4 Inn, a restaurant that many of you fondly remember. The Arcata location was built in 1934 and was demolished in 1972 to make room for the freeway. The restaurant was located on the northern outskirts of Arcata (near the end of L K Wood Blvd) and was popular for its tasty Italian dinners and dancing. We shared a few photographs of the Big 4 Inn on the HSSA Facebook page which engendered some wonderful memories from our followers. Many of you recalled with great delight the delicious ravioli (with the option to take to-go) and apple fritters. "Oh, the chicken cacciatore! And the unending apple fritters dusted with powdered sugar! And the draped booths that were really enclaves for a big table where everyone could sit. The food just kept coming. And the dance floor in the center. Seeing this picture brings back extraordinary memories," recollected one commenter on the post. Others reminisced about the countless family dinners they enjoyed there, catching live music ("My papa played gigs there"), and the meaningful life events that occurred at the establishment. "The Big 4 restaurant was the place where my husband and I were in the same room, before we met. He was at a Christian Business Men's monthly luncheon, and I was the "entertainment." He remembers me as brave,

as it was a cappella. I remember him as having piercing blue eyes and I wondered why there was a young guy there with a bunch of old men." Another commenter enjoyed a first date with her now-husband at the restaurant in 1964, the year of the big flood. The Big 4 was "The only place my grandmother would go. I remember Italian being spoken in the lobby, the ravioli, the fritters, the family-sized eating rooms around the perimeter of the dining room with swinging bar doors," recalls another. It appears that many of you still dream about the homemade ravioli that Maria, the owner, perfected and served. Maria was born in an Italian village in



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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.

PO Box 4521

Arcata, CA 92218

707-822-4722

www.arcatahistory.org

President's letter

Debi Cooper has jumped right into rearranging and updating various rooms in the museum. Debi and I have reworked two of the upstairs bedrooms; one is outfitted for World War II, and the other for a Suffragist advocating for women's right to vote. The living room also has seen a few changes. When you visit, see if you can find them. The exhibit room now has a person sitting at a spinning wheel making yarn. Jaffa Wahlberg put tags on all the spinning tools to identify their uses.

As of March 12, on the second Sunday of each month, from 2-4, Karole Ely and I will be at the museum rug hooking. We are hoping other fiber enthusiasts will join us. At the Fiber Arts Fair, a few people signed up to learn how to rug hook. We look forward to introducing them to the museum and teaching them this historic craft. We welcome anyone to bring a craft project and share tea and time together.

The Valentine's tea was beautiful again this year. We had a special treat of two groups of ArMack Valentines musicians who then joined us for tea and a tour. This was gifted to us by Jeanette Cooper and Andy Alm. We thank you both for bringing us a tune filled afternoon.

We now have three signers on the Umpqua Bank account, Carolyn Otis, our esteemed treasurer, Jeanette Cooper, and me. We thank you all for paying your dues. Dues monies pay for electricity, water, cleaning help and regular maintenance like painting the exterior of the museum and keeping the fence in repair. So, a very BIG thank you.

Recently the board realized that we have more beautiful and useful items than the museum can use. They will be available purchase during our Vintage Sale next fall. We look forward to sharing them with the community.

We are very fond of the large display case made by Bruce Smith. It has dominated the entry way for over 40 years, but its size limits the use of our space. We fondly remember the many wonderful exhibits it has housed over the years, but as much as we love the case, we realize it needs to have a new home where it can be used and appreciated. Please contact the museum if you are interested.

Its just February and we at HSSA are off to a great start for 2023. Do come and visit us.

Alex Stillman, President

northern Tuscany and moved to the United States just before her 17th birthday in 1911. She was interviewed by The Humboldt Historian in 1981 where she joked, "I suppose I have made enough raviolis in my lifetime to pave the highway all the way from Humboldt County to New York-- well-- maybe to Italy if that's possible!" Grazie mille for sharing your memories with us. We wish we could enjoy a tasty meal there today!

Photo 1: From the collection of James Lundberg, courtesy of the Humboldt County Historical Society

Photo 2: Big 4 Inn from above, 1947 (Cal Poly Humboldt Library, Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection)

The Grotzmans

Dr. Jeanette Cooper

The history of the Grotzman family in Humboldt County spans over 130 years. The first was Charles Grotzman, born in Germany, who married Lena, born in Norway. They both immigrated to the USA in the mid 1880s. The first evidence of Charles in Humboldt County was his purchase of a house in Arcata located at 1226 B Street with a partner in 1890. Charles and Lena likely lived there after they were married in about 1895. Charles was a farmer, rancher and land speculator. In 1901, Charles purchased over 1100 acres from John Harpst. There was at least one house, possibly more on the acreage. The couple probably moved into the historic family home in Bayside on Grotzman Road sometime shortly after the purchase. They subsequently sold the house on B Street. The Bayside house had been previously lived in by another family who likely rented it from John Harpst, the previous landowner. Clues to the identity of this other family were found in the walls of the house. Charles and Lena had three children, William Eugene, Violet Ethel, and Henry Alvin. The current owners of the house, Larry and Susie Matson have kindly loaned the HSSA some artifacts found in the historical family home. We are currently installing a new exhibit of these artifacts, which we plan to have ready by the end of the month. Come by! Visit! Check it out!



Left to right: William, Charles, Henry, Lena, and Violet Grotzman



Mystery at the Phillips Housse

At the Phillips House Museum we have a mystery. We have noticed that a chair that looks like the one in the photo has gone missing. Also a Golden State milk bottle is no longer on display above the bathroom door in the exhibit room. If you have any information please let us know.

On the other hand we are often asked "Does the museum have a ghost?" Could a ghost have taken the chair because it doesn't match our decor? Could the ghost be disappointed in us because we didn't secure the milk bottle with earthquake glue? Help us solve these mysteries and a special reward will be yours.

Karole Ely (Ghost friendly person)



The Historical Sites Society of Arcata hosted a Valentine's Tea at the Phillips House Museum on Sunday, February 12. The event was free and open to the public, and visitors of all ages enjoyed tasty refreshments while touring the museum. The event also featured two groups of Valentunes performers from the ArMack Orchestra and Choir. A fun time was had by all!





The Bair-Stokes House, built in 1888, is a prime example of the Queen Anne style. The same architects were responsible for the Carson Mansion, and the detailed ornamentation still captivates us today (photos by Tamara Wolski).



This photo was sent to us by Harold Hyles (standing). Taken in 1971, it shows HSU students who were then living in the Philips House.

Learn to Make a Beautiful Rug



We are excited to announce that on the second Sunday of each month from 2-4 p.m. at the Phillips House Museum we will teach rug hooking. If you enjoy other crafts such as knitting, crocheting, quilting etc., bring your projects and join us. It's also an opportunity to see our wonderful Museum and the exhibits it houses. Dates are as follows: March 12, April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, August 13 etc.

Karole Ely (a happy hooker and teacher)





**P.O. Box 4521
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