

Summer 2023

# Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF



Safeway at 9th and G in the early 1930s. It is the store on the left, now Arcata Liquors

## Shopping in Arcata

by Shelley Mitchell

We all eat, which for most of us involves buying food. We have options that range from the Co-op, certified as an organic source for food, the Farmer's Market, which is as local as you can get, to big stores like Costco and Target that sell groceries along with everything else. You can choose your groceries online and have them delivered, or you can park in front of your favorite store and have your selections brought to you. What was it like before the advent of all of these?

My mother did not drive when I was a child in southern California, and I remember milkmen and bakery trucks. In the mid 1950s, Mom got a station wagon, and our weekly trips to the local supermarket were important occasions. When I moved to Arcata in 1970, the choices I remember were Safeway, which was located where Wildberries Marketplace is now, Purity Market, on I Street, SunnyBrae Market, currently ACE Hardware, and Westwood Market. In the mid 1970s a new Safeway was built at Sixth and F Streets, and Larry's Market opened in the old location.

My favorite was Purity Market. I loved the building with its big round roof. The Purity Grocery chain started in San Francisco around 1929. Nearly all Purity stores in Northern California shared this unique Quonset hut style. In the 1940s architect Harry Weese was hired to design a modern grocery store. The company wanted something simple yet stylish to show the customer that the business was not constructing an expensively ornate building and passing the cost on to the consumer. At the same time, the building needed to function as a grocery store and entice the consumer to shop. The interior form of the building is vaulted, allowing for easy circulation and maximization of usable space. The concrete construction made it easy to heat and cool, a draw for customers.

The stores were some of the first with everything under one roof, including meat, canned goods, fruit, vegetables, and other household items. The stores also incorporated new practices such as pricing every item in the store, and having multiple checkout stands. (<https://www.groceteria.com/store/regional-chains/purity-stores>)

The Purity Stores apparently went out of business around 1973-74, but many of the buildings remain in use throughout northern California. After sitting empty for a few years, the Arcata Store at 8<sup>th</sup> and I was purchased and remodeled by the Arcata Co-op.

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## Board Members

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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:

We had a marvelous day of cleaning drawers, cupboards, and closets at the museum in June. Items purged will be in the collectibles sale on Saturday, September 23 from 10-3. Cataloging of items remains and will require another workday. The teams of HSSA volunteers were terrific. Thank you everyone.

Don Wentz painted the interior of the Phillips House fireplace *dusty black* and now the electric fireplace heater from the living room resides in the fireplace. He also cleaned the exterior signs. If you have a smart phone, you can experience the museum through the QR code on the signpost by the walkway entrance.

Rug hooking and crafts on the first Sunday of the month still draws crafters. It's fun chatting about this and that and seeing what everyone has been working on.

American Association of University Women (AAUW)'s new members were welcomed with a tea at the museum. Members had an opportunity to explore the Phillips House. It was lovely to welcome these guests and see them enjoying the museum.

We are waiting to hear from Carly Marino of the Cal Poly Humboldt's Special Collections Department to determine the final location of the remainder of the Ruth Horel Caskey Collection. Meanwhile, several of Ruth's diaries were taken by board members to read. Tamara Wolski has promised an article for the fall newsletter with excerpts from Ruth's diaries describing the life of a physician's daughter in her day.

If you haven't had a chance to see the display, *Items Found in the Walls* do stop by on any Sunday from 2-4. Jeanette Cooper has curated an amazing exhibit with clue sheets. It is great entertainment for kids and adults.

A Halloween event is still coming to the museum on October 28 and 29. If you have ideas, Debi Cooper is looking for committee members. Leave her a message at the museum.

Summer is here with some sunny days and higher temperatures. A delight.

Alex Stillman, President



Thank you to the City of Arcata for making it safer and easier for visitors to enter the museum by repairing our front steps



The photos at left show the interior of the Arcata Purity about 1954 and the exterior of the Eureka Purity on Sixth Street (photos courtesy Clarke Museum). Right is the Arcata Purity Building in its current life as the Arcata Co-Op.

In addition to the supermarkets, there were a few smaller grocery stores, including Hutchins Market in Northtown (now The Hutch) and Fourth Street Market. In the 70s both were owned by Nelo and Lena Dal Porto. There was also small market on Zehndner Avenue and S Street and Alliance Store.



Alliance Store was located out on the corner of Alliance and Spear Avenue. In the 1970s it did not carry much in the way of groceries, but they had frozen food lockers. We did not have a freezer at home, so when we were "gifted" with a large amount of venison and later purchased "half a cow", a new thing for "kids" from the city, we booked a locker. For a monthly rental fee, they gave you a key and you went through the store to a back room which was dark and cold. You used a rolling ladder to reach your "unit" and could keep anything you wanted in there. I had never heard of or thought of having a locker but now that I was in a rural area where we were growing our food and had friends who hunted and raised animals for meat, we needed one. I have talked to many others who did the same thing.

The Alliance Store changed uses several times over the years. Once it was a little art and food spot, later a residence. It was destroyed in a fire at least 15 years ago. It is currently an empty lot where trucks are stored. Another piece of history and its stories lost.



The photo at right is the Alliance Store in its prime. At left is a photo of what the site looks like now.

I would like to hear from readers who have "shopping memories" from Arcata. Please send your stories to [shelleydmitchell@gmail.com](mailto:shelleydmitchell@gmail.com)



## Ericson House

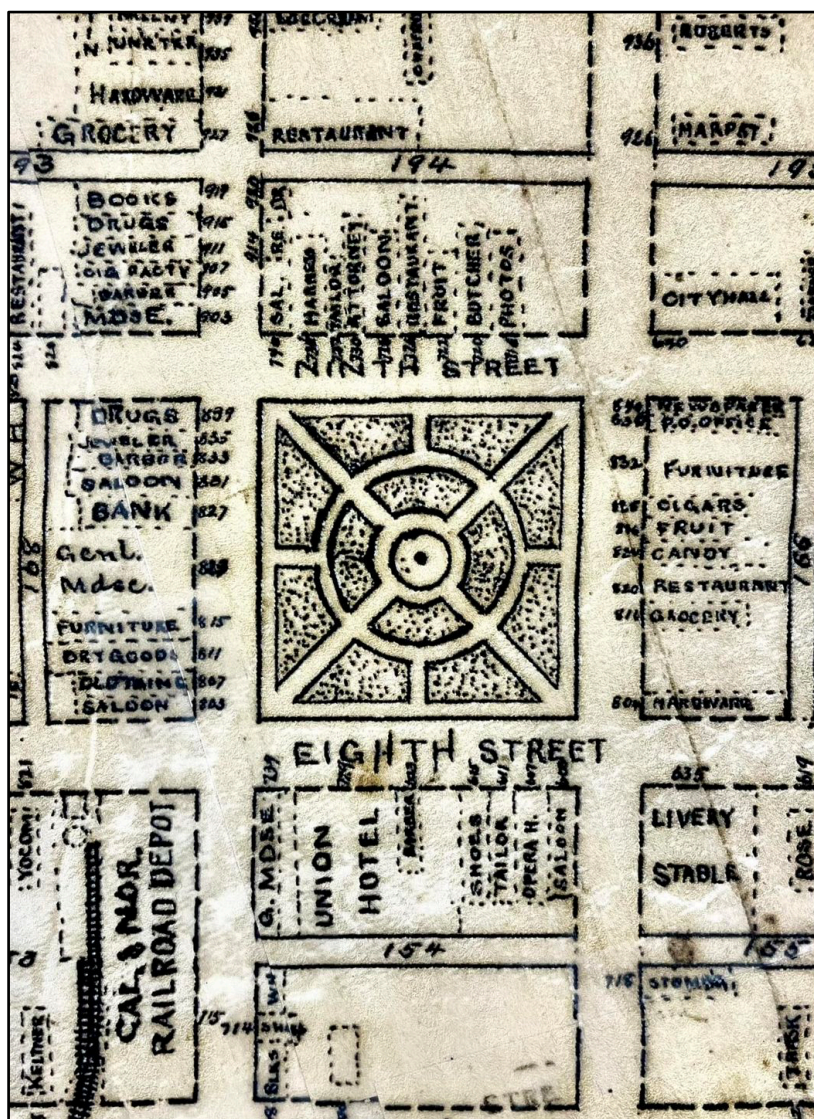
Taylor Conrad

The Ericson House at 1376 H Street, owned by Sam Pennisi and Sharon Ferrett, is the first home my boyfriend and I have shared together. We had a lot of things we wanted in a rental home and the Ericson house didn't have a lot of them. It ended up being our best and only option at the time. After we moved in I began to learn of the historic relevance of the home and A.W. Ericson, an esteemed local photographer, and became deeply interested. I remember the moment I realized what a unique situation we had. I was reading the history of the house in Susie Van Kirk's book *Reflection of Arcata's History*. I read the line "the house was in family ownership for ninety-eight years. Historic in the truest sense of the word, this old house has witnessed the laughter and tears of one family's entire life." I read that line and it just hit me that this is such a special house. I have become so grateful for this home and the opportunity to live in it.



Three Ericson children pose in front of their home on a wooden sidewalk, c. 1900 and today .

Top photo courtesy of the Cal Poly Humboldt Library, bottom photo courtesy of Tamara Wolski)



## Climate Change Policy Adopted by the ACHP

"The impacts of climate change on historic properties are so wide-ranging and potentially severe that collaboration among federal, Tribal, state, and local government agencies is essential," ACHP Chair Sara C. Bronin said. "Federal agencies can take a leadership role through their own collaborative work and by encouraging such work through funding and technical assistance."

Registration is now open for the annual PastForward Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This year's conference takes place November 8-10, 2023, in Washington, D.C. This year's theme and focus is *Preserving Place, Empowering Community*. You can contact Alex for information on how to sign up.

at left is a Map of Arcata produced by the Sanborn Map Company probably circa 1890. Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlases are highly detailed historical maps that allowed insurance companies to assess fire risk for individual structures in urban and commercial areas throughout North America.

## Summer at the Phillips House Museum



Three mannequin forms wearing Henrietta Chizzola's clothes are now in the display room. Henrietta had a fashionable and exciting life and her clothes give us clues to this life.



New members of AAUW Humboldt enjoy an orientation tea at the museum



Our new fireplace insert is in the living room and operates with a remote control. After seeing it on a house tour of the east coast, Karole Ely located one for the museum. New candles with an artificial flame are on the mantle. The heater produces a little warmth, perfect for winter Sundays. On the mantle in the living room is an example of a wooden block once used to make wallpaper.

### Docent Notes from a recent Sunday at the Museum

by Kel Loughmiller

Today two groups came through

#1. FIRST GROUP was two young college students. They said they'd never seen this house open!! They only asked a few questions on their self-guided tour.

1. How old is this house?
2. How many neighbors way back then? (as they looked at gorgeous barn-to-bay view... and one young student said: "How nice NOT to have neighbors!")
3. Could we look upstairs?

#2. SECOND GROUP was a young couple enjoying the self-guided tour. They looked for items mentioned on the 'Welcome to the Phillip's House' laminated guide. ("Where's the cheesecloth?")

Alex happened to stop by as their tour circled to the dining toom. Alex met the young woman, Madeleine, whose name rhymes with Chatelaine, and her friend. I told Alex that they were just admiring the wallpaper. During the tour, this couple texted their friend to come on over. Rita did come and caught up with them.

This trio spent much time in the dining room looking at all of the historic photos. ("Look at all these photos!") As we were talking, Madeleine mentioned she grew up in Michigan in a house built in 1903. She gained her historical appreciation from that very dwelling. She mentioned she just graduated with an art and museum science degree. She would like to volunteer at this museum!! We know we will be seeing more of her.





**P.O. Box 4521  
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Please provide contact information so we can notify honorees.

Mail form to: Historical Sites Society of Arcata