

Fall
2024

Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF



Unlocking the Past: One Postcard at a Time

by India Unwin

Humboldt County Historical Society former Past President Steve Lazar has collected over 10,000 postcards pertaining to Humboldt County and adjacent regions. His end goal for the project is to create a searchable public database. Steve created a detailed spreadsheet with his desired categories such as publisher, photographer, and caption. Since February 2023, I and other student assistants at Cal Poly Humboldt's Cultural Resources Facility (CRF) have extracted metadata for over 1700 postcards.



Entering the mailing information is my favorite part of the cataloging process because it makes the history feel tangible and personal. Deciphering the notes scrawled on the back is sometimes a test of my cursive-reading abilities. Message details are not currently part of the database, but they often provide a lot of information about the people who wrote and read these cards before us. Many senders mention receiving letters from the addressee, or promising to write a letter themselves in short order. For the brief, informal purpose they often serve, I sometimes liken historic postcards to the modern-day text message – not always a long, in-depth message, but rather a short memo to notify of future communications.



Arcata & Mad River Railroad Depot.

(Real photo)

Steve has placed part of his collection under the care of the Cultural Resource Facility at Cal Poly Humboldt. After working from scans for over a year I have been fortunate to get to work with the physical cards. When I hold an old card in its numbered plastic sleeve, I love to imagine the thoughtfulness of the sender composing their message and the subsequent joy of the recipient retrieving the card from their mailbox.

With a collection as large as Steve's, which is still growing, the potential research avenues are abundant. These include genealogy, geographical distributions, and of course local architectural history. Ultimately, the big-picture question is what people consider "noteworthy" across time: what people considered to be worth their while (and postage) to mail, and what they thought their friends might

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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 finally had an annual meeting this year since our last one was in March 2020. It was so nice to have Jerry Rohde back and telling us about his most recent research on the local Indian tribes. We honored Claudia Israel for her years of curating the Phillips House Museum and Jaffa Wahlberg for her years of recruiting and supervising docents for the museum and managing the exterior building needs.



Welcome to Bridget Dory, the most recent addition to the board. She brings many skills with her as she was past City Clerk of the City of Arcata. We are very fortunate to have a board of dedicated members and docents. I appreciate and thank each of you.

Peggy Falk presented the Falk family history last spring, and her schedule permitted her to do it again in November. Thank you to Peggy and Karole Ely who organized the Falk display and arranged for Peggy's presentations. The Falk display will be coming down in late December. Do come by to see it and immerse yourself in times past. Sundays, 2-4.

Kaaren Beaver Buffington was a long-time member of the Historical Sites Society of Arcata before she decided to return to her birthplace, Portland, Oregon. Kaaren passed away this past November. HSSA has received a grant from her family trust to be used for educational purposes. We are very thankful to receive it.

Here are a few of my thoughts about Kaaren. I think Karole Ely came up with the idea that we should have the museum come alive when the local history elementary students visited. We all had our places and Kaaren's was in the kitchen. She was playing forties music the radio, making cookies, breaking eggs into a bowl over and over for the children to see. As the time wore on, she had flour on her face, arms and floor and was pulling pre-baked cookies out of the non-functioning oven. What a day that was...so much fun and craziness in the roles we played. Kaaren was computer literate long before any of us touched a key. She pulled together the blue and yellow books of Arcata's history. We still have the Blue Books of three walking tours in Arcata. The Yellow Book of the Plaza sold out.

Several years ago when the CoOp wanted to expand their store, two houses stood in the way. Kaaren owned and lived in the Vaissade House at the corner of 9th and J across the street. She moved the other house to the corner of the lot. Dozens of Arcatans spent the day watching this big operation. She then remodeled the house she'd moved and lived in it for several years. If you look at it today, it looks like it's always been there. She had an extensive collection of fiber related books and owned and published a Fiber newsletter that was sought after by those in the International Fiber community. Later she sold it to the Fashion Institute of Technology. Kay Sennott can tell stories about this venture. Karen owned the Humboldt Bay Sheep and Wool Co. She washed, dried and carded wool for people all over the country. There are more stories, but these are some of my Kaaren memories. As Carolyn Otis has said, "Kaaren could always make the impossible happen."

Please join us for the Valentine's Day Tea on Sunday, February 16, 2025, from 2-4 p.m. It's always a fun time to catch up with one another and have amazing treats and a cup of afternoon tea.

Alex Stillman, President

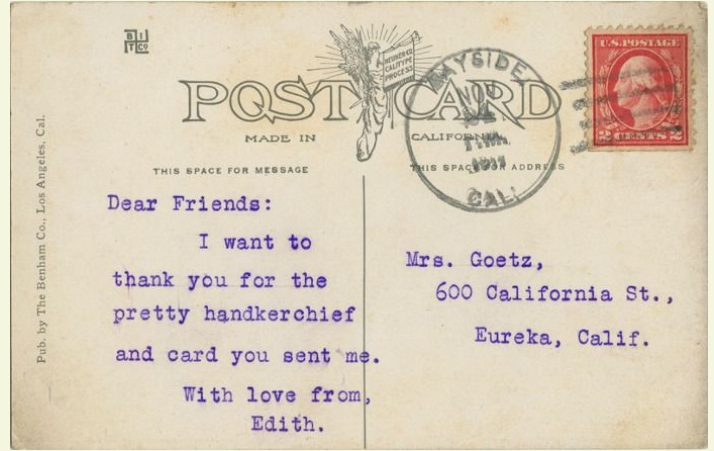
like to receive.

Everyone seems to notice something different when they look at the postcards in this collection. Once the database is up and running for the public to access, more great questions and research ideas will surely crop up. Until then, Steve currently shares samples from the collection online as “The Humboldt Project”.

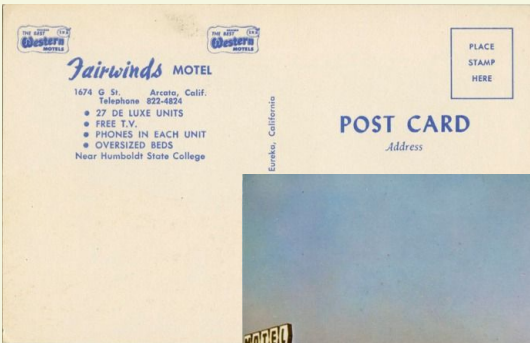
Brizard Inc. building, Arcata Plaza. (Lithograph) Front



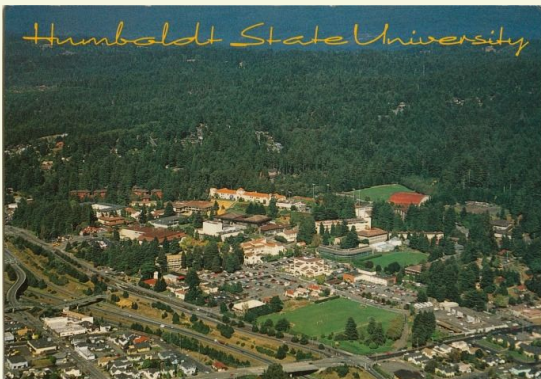
Caption:
 “A.
 BRIZARD,
 INC.
 ARCATA,
 CAL.”
 Message:
 “Dear
 Friends: I
 want to



thank you for the pretty handkerchief and card you sent me. With love from, Edith.” mailed from Bayside 11/24/1914 to Mrs. Goetz 600 California St., Eureka, Calif.



Arcata Presbyterian Church, G Street. (Real photo)
 Caption: “First Presbyterian Church Arcata Cal Dedicated June 3, 1917. Seely Foto



Humboldt State University, post 1989. (Lithograph) Back caption: “The first permanent building at Humboldt State University was erected in 1913. The University is located 275-miles north of San Francisco on California's North Coast in Arcata. The University is noted for its natural resources, oceanography and wildlife management programs.” Message: “Mom & Dad - Since you haven't really seen the university before, I thought you might like this postcard. I live in the L-shaped white building with the grey roof on the left end of the picture [The Hill dormitory]. With my pen, I made a dot on another building. If you can find the dot, you are looking at Founders Hall

which is where most of my classes are held. [unsigned, no postmark] Roy & Jan Freeman 255 Blueberry Ln #D Thousand Oaks, CA 91360”

Ruth Horel Caskey's Diary

By Tamara Wolski

We continue with our transcription of Ruth Horel Caskey's diary from 1915. After graduating from Arcata High School in 1913, Ruth attended the University of California at Berkeley earning a bachelor's degree in 1917 and a master's degree in Dental Pathology in 1918.

January 12, 1915

Father takes me to Eureka to steamer. First stop at Vance- trains aren't running yet and no telling when they will either, so off to the wharf we go.

Maryesther Hamilton and Ivy Teal to-gether – they wish me

to be in their stateroom and so I change. Father leaves for Samoa on 9 o'clock boat and we said at 9

A.M. Take "sea-sick" capsule but never again! Extremely rough bar- all on hurricane deck. Finally, we gradually disperse. I to my bench where I sadly like "for want of land." Roughest trip of season steward tells us. I care for nothing and fear not, for I don't care whether that boat goes down or not. Pitch or dive and roll over. (photo above: An example of a steamer that ran between Eureka and San Francisco (The F.A. Kilburn, courtesy of Cal Poly Humboldt)

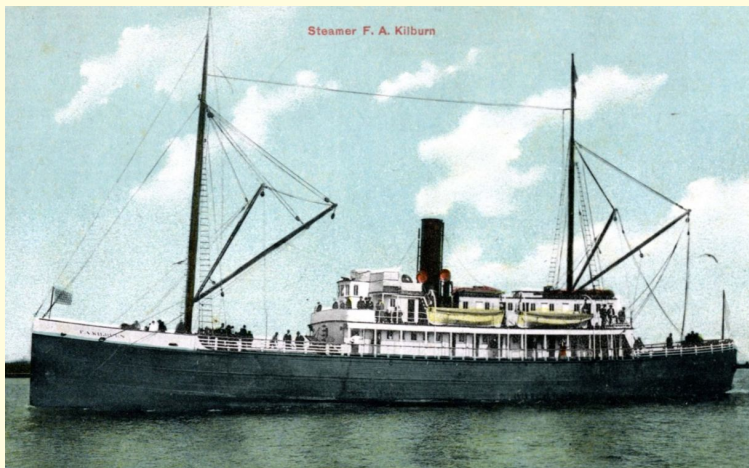


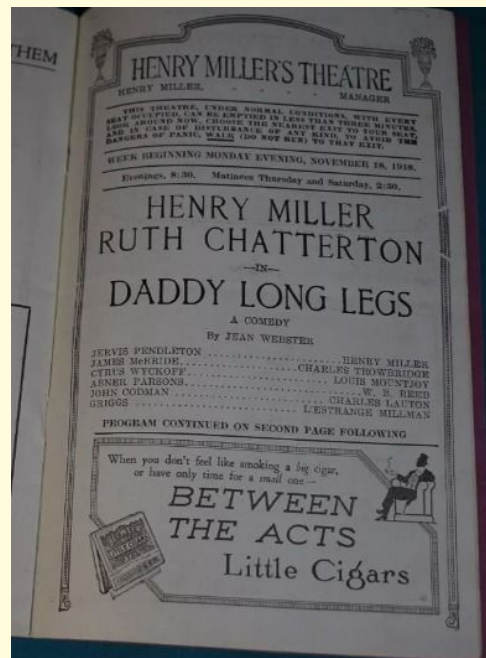
Photo at left: A postcard of the UC Berkeley Library, 1915

January 14, 1915

Thursday after registering in Econ at 9 and having a lecture I go to the Hygiene-Pathology Building where I wait for Dr. Torce (?). I look at Public Health Schedule and then he comes to talk with me. Lots of men students come in to see Ms. Beckwith, so we go out for quiet. He advises me and goes over my course with me. Hopes I'll stick to Public Health. "What do you know, Ruth, but what if you if you will be public health officer of Humboldt some day?" He was so interested and nice to me that I leave highly thrilled from my new decision for my life work.

January 23, 1915

In P.M. leave on 1 o'clock Key (Gretchen and I) and meet Gladys W, Meg, Ruth, and Anne and a Miss Purvine. In S.F. go on car to Columbia Theater where Gret gets me a \$1.50 seat downstairs, none left in balcony. We see "Daddy Long Legs," Henry Miller playing. It was wonderful beyond description. I enjoyed it immensely because I had just read it during the holidays at home. Met some very charming ladies next to me, Mrs. Russell, a nurse, and Mrs. Smith, a milliner, who formerly worked for Hink's in Eureka. In Berkeley, Gret buys some ballet slippers and then we head home for dinner by 6:30. Gret goes with Harold S. to Achaean dance. We have a house dance- Raymond comes for me. Dandy time. Bed around 2 A.M.



California Office of Historic Preservation announces the start of the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program

[California State Parks' Office of Historic Preservation](#) (OHP) announced today it will begin accepting applications for the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program at 8 a.m. on Jan. 6, 2025. California property owners can apply for the credit to rehabilitate and maintain their historical buildings and qualified residences, retaining Californians' link to the past while keeping historic buildings and homes relevant in the present and beyond.

The tax credit program provides a 20% credit for qualified rehabilitation expenditures (or 25% credit if the structure meets specified criteria) for rehabilitation of a certified historic structure or a qualified residence, as provided, within the state to be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis by the [California Tax Credit Allocation Committee](#), in conjunction with OHP. A total of \$50 million is available for allocation. In preparation for this program, OHP is holding virtual informational sessions on eligibility qualifications, completing the application and documentation requirements, with time allotted for questions and answers. Dec. 3, 5-6 p.m. ([register here](#))

Application instructions, forms, frequently asked questions and program regulations can be found on the OHP's [State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit site](#). Potential applicants are recommended to read the program information in advance of the informational sessions. For information about the tax credit program, please contact Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Jody L. Brown at Jody.L.Brown@parks.ca.gov. The OHP administers federal and state mandated historic preservation programs to further the identification, evaluation, registration and protection of California's irreplaceable resources, and promotes the care,

Kaaren Beaver Buffington brought a lovely gift to the Phillips House and to HSSA; her Enthusiasm! A favorite Kaaren story reveals all. Kaaren called me, "The donut shop on the Plaza is selling donut holes! Glazed donut holes! We could buy a little bag full for a dollar!" I had to drive over and we could go as soon as I got there! I lived in Eureka. I picked up Kaaren, and we drove to the donut shop. The donut holes were the best and I didn't even think about the calories!

Kaaren's Enthusiasm was the same for projects, for people, for ideas, for life as it was and, for Phillips House, how it had been. Kaaren had a way of helping others see what could be, lead them to a different point of view, from no support to full support.

As, out of the corner of my eye, I watch Doug Emhoff talk about being on the campaign trail, I imagine how Beaver B. would be promoting Kamala Harris with the same Enthusiasm she brought to Phillips House. She wanted people, Phillips House, life itself to be greeted with open eyes and open arms. Upon reflection, as she made the lives of others richer, she made her own life more rich as well. I am grateful for having been part of her life. And I say it with Kaaren Enthusiasm!!

My Best to One and All!

Claudia Israel



*Join Us for the re-opening of
the Phillips House Museum
and our Valentine's Day
Tea
Sunday, February 16
2-4 p.m*





P.O. Box 4521
Arcata, CA 95518

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Then and Now...



Corner of 8th and G Streets



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).