

Fall
2025

Arcata

HISTORICAL SITES SOCIETY OF

Do You Have a Favorite Tree in Arcata?

by Alex Stillman and Shelley Mitchell

Most of us do. A recent brief, non-scientific study revealed that the most popular tree is the one that engulfs the front yard of the Hauser/Nixon home on Tenth and J. (Photo at right) Other contenders include the spectacular monkey tree on Eleventh Street and a majestic weeping willow nearby on Villa Way. Redwoods are universally loved by Arcatans, but there are so many of them, most people find it difficult to identify a favorite. Full Disclosure: The survey consisted of me interviewing everyone I ran across during two weeks in August and asking them the title question.



Only one survey participant revealed that they liked the palm trees on the plaza. Several people mentioned that “palm trees really do not seem to belong in Arcata”, and several people admitted that they don’t like them. So, why are there palm trees in Arcata?



Mayor Alex Stillman decided that it was her civic duty to do a little research. According to Alex, “From the day I arrived, I was told those palm trees meant prosperity.” They represent fertility, prosperity, beauty, spirituality and resilience in many cultures. In ancient Egypt, people associated palm trees with fertility, abundance, and resurrection. In Roman times, the Palm branch was a symbol of triumph and victory, and its fronds were awarded to champions and war heroes. It was even an ancient Roman unit of measurement. Palm trees traveled far beyond their native regions, carried by explorers, settlers, and dreamers who wished to bring a touch of the exotic to new landscapes. Palms arrived in California as symbols of ambition and optimism, planted in cities and towns to evoke visions of paradise and a flourishing future. Arcata is no exception. (continued on page 3)

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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 are so lucky to have helping hands from some of our members who fix the toilet, paint the building, cut the grass or want to do a photographic digital project. We thank them all.

The Fiber Faire September 6 and 7 was an indicator that summer has come to an end. Rug hookers and Mahjong players continue to attract new members to the museum.

Emails or visits from long-ago tenants who lived in the Philips House are always of interest. They share stories about where they slept, what they did, etc. What an interesting life for those students. The property was purchased by the City of Arcata in the early 1980s through a bond which required some of the Arcata Forest to be logged. The bond is paid off, which makes the Arcata Forestry Committee very happy. The Committee did a tremendous job in forestry planning. Thank you for being responsible caretakers.

Jeanette Cooper is carefully acquiring collectibles for this year's sale on Saturday, October 18 & 19. If you have something(s), please let her know through emailing her at jeanette.cooper@humboldt.edu

Sprinkled throughout this newsletter are a few ads that Tamara Wolski found from the *Humboldt Times* March 7, 1857 edition. Fun to see what was going on then in Arcata.

Have you ever wondered where those two remaining palms on the Plaza came from? Now you know.

Alex Stillman, President

Drug Store!

North Side Plaza—Union.

THE Subscriber would respectfully inform the public in this vicinity that he has removed into his new building, where he will continue to carry on his old business, and he hopes that by constant and close attention he may merit a continuance of the public confidence and patronage. He proposes to sell cheaper continually as the demand increases—to sell cheap at all times for cash—by wholesale at reduced prices. In addition to a large and well selected stock of Drugs and Medicines, he has Fresh Garden Seeds, Books and Stationery, Fancy Toilet Articles, Paints, Oils, &c., &c.,

F. DAMOUR,
Druggist & Apothecary.

Union, Jan. 10th, 1857.

A. JACOBY & CO.

KEEPS constantly on hand, and continually receiving, a full assorted stock of

Provisions, Groceries

HAVANA CIGARS,

French Wines and Liquors, of the best quality,

Of the choicest flavor and brands.

Also—AMERICAN LIQUORS AND CIGARS.

Also, Clothing, Boots, Shoes, Hardware, Crockery-Stationery, and other articles too tedious to mention

Traders, Packers, and the public generally, will do well to call and examine his stock before purchasing elsewhere.

Local historian Gisela Rohde said many of the palms around the county were planted around 100 years ago. "They were really popular in the Victorian era," Rohde said. "If you look in historic photographs, you'll see they used a lot of palm trees because they were en vogue." Rohde added that the palms planted in front of many of the area's Victorian homes were once coveted status symbols that publicly displayed the homeowners' wealth."

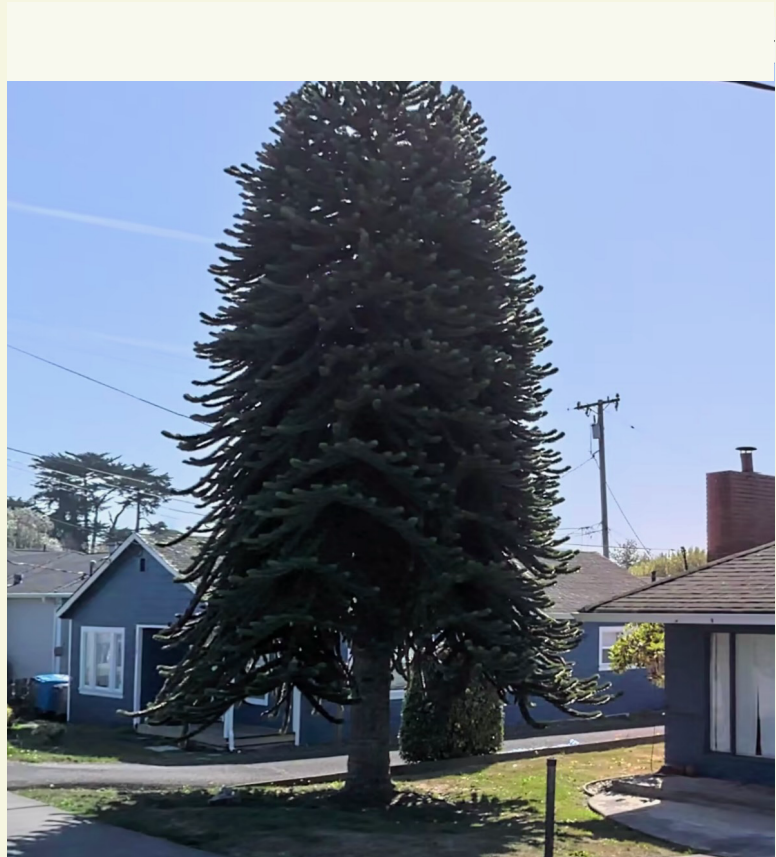
The palms on the Plaza, installed as one of the Arcata Plaza Improvement Committee's first projects, were planted between 1903 and 1906, narrowly predating the statue of President

William McKinley are not just decorative. They are living emblems of hope, endurance, and the region's connection to a broader story of human migration and aspiration. Their presence is a nod to the desire for growth, for community, and for a sense of belonging that transcends geography and time. The young palm trees are pictured above.



Palm trees are spotted around Arcata, yet those on the Plaza suffered due to water flowing south from Arcata Heights through the Plaza to the Bay. Three sets must have become waterlogged and perished leaving two on the northeast slope of the Plaza to continue Arcata's desire for a flourishing future of prosperity. The remaining two are pictured on page 1, and the monkey tree is below

SINSHEIMER & FLEISHMAN.
CLOTHING AND DRY GOODS
EMPORIUM,
 South Side of the Plaza—Union.
 WOULD call the attention of buyers to their well selected stock of
CLOTHING,
 consisting of
 Plain and Fancy Cassimere Pants;
 Plain and Fancy Satinet Pants;
 Black Doekskin and Cassimere Pants.
FINE VELVET AND OTHER VESTS.
 Fancy Cassimere Business Suits;
 Sack, Surtouts, and Overcoats;
 Black frock Cloth Coats;
 Jumpers and Overalls;
DAVIS & JONES' FINE LINEN Bosom SHIRTS
MERINO SHIRTS,
BLANKETS,
FINE BOOTS,
GLOVES,
 and a well selected assortment of Goods in this line
DRY GOODS, Consisting of
 Bl'k and Col'd Dress Silks, Plaids, DeLaines, Ginghams, Calicoes, and other Dress Goods.
 ALSO—A large assortment of Embroideries, and a general assortment of Fancy Goods too numerous to mention.
 ALSO—A large assortment of **BOOTS AND SHOES.**
 16-1f.





The Changing View from the Phillips House Museum

by Tamara Wolski

The Phillips House is considered the oldest house in Arcata, and it dates back to the early 1850s when Arcata was still called Union. It is intriguing to think about all of the residents who have lived in the house over the years, and what changes they may have witnessed over time. Jeff Johnson reached out to the HSSA recently after he came across some photos he took from the upstairs bedroom in the house during his time as a tenant.



"I lived in what was then a single upstairs bedroom overlooking the bay from June 1979 until August 1981. We paid rent to the City of Arcata starting in the early part of 1981 after it obtained the property from the Appleton family. Four of us were evicted by the city on July 1, 1981. I was on an extended road trip from June until August and returned to unexpectedly find what was left of my belongings in various spots around the house. (One of my roommates managed to move some of my stuff to his new location.) I think that that makes me the last person to live in the Phillips House. Several years ago Claudia Israel gave a tour of the



house to a group of us who had lived there or had spent time there during our "formative" years. I appreciated the effort to include the 70's theme in what is now half of my old room. I have other pictures of that time, as well as a vivid memory of riding out the 7.0 earthquake in 1980."

Jeff's photos overlook the large dairy barn that once stood below. The Frank and Hazel Anderson barn was constructed between 1934 and 1935, and it was part of a 50-cow dairy farm and 225-acre ranch. In 1994 there was a large push to save the barn, but it was sadly demolished.



An Afternoon with a Docent

By Kel Loughmiller

Ms. Madeleine Salvay visited today, Sunday, August 24, 2025 with her mother. Both mother and daughter were most interested in our high-end fashion installation of Tamara De Lempica and Henrietta Chizola exhibit. Madeleine smiled and commented "These dresses are just beautiful! I just love historical clothes!" (So delightful!) They both genuinely admired the hankies display. "How can the stitching be so small?!" Next, they sped into the kitchen and seriously enjoyed the "adorable aprons!" Mom even asked about the "Ironrite" below the aprons: "What is it?" Answer: "A large iron to iron table cloths for entertaining." The pair were soooo fun! Super enjoyable visitors!

These two women toured very fast - Mom had a 3:00pm zoom. As they were departing, Madeleine said she was very interested in historic things-dresses in particular-and mentioned she was looking for a job right now. I did a brief: "This isn't a compensated position - volunteer only." She said weekends shouldn't be a problem. "Instantly, she had a marvelous, happy face! I told her: "We love people like you!" "You'll be a great docent! There's so much you'll enjoy learning about the museum." She happily mentioned her admiration of the clothes on the mannequins upstairs.


She signed in and asked for a newsletter after my prompt. She is a very kind young woman who is a junior at CalPoly. Like most students, she declined a paper copy of our newsletter and asked to receive it online. She can sign up on our website arcatahistory.org/

Before mom did her final dash out the front door, she asked how to get more information about our museum and Arcata in general. I suggested online for both, and in person at the Eureka Library in the Humboldt Room upstairs. People touring the museum are always encouraged to visit again and again and I invited her to return.

ARCATA SALOON.

EAST SIDE OF THE PLAZA-UNION.

THE UNDERSIGNED would respectfully inform the citizens of Union and vicinity that they have taken the above-named HOUSE, and have refitted it in superior style. The BAR is supplied with the most choice LIQUORS and CIGARS that could be obtained in San Francisco.

 THREE GOOD BOWLING ALLEYS, in good order and well lighted.

15-tf

BATES & LUDINGTON.

**Donations needed for our
Annual Collectibles Sale
October 18-19. If you have
something to donate, please
contact Jeanette Cooper
707-498-8112**



**P.O. Box 4521
Arcata, CA 95518**

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on Instagram at [arcatahistory](#)

"Alex's House."

ALEX begs leave to inform his friends and customers that he is still at his old stand, South side of the Plaza, Union, where he has been for the last five years, and that he has lost none of his skill in mixing drinks to suit everybody's taste.

His bar is all times supplied with the choicest liquors and cigars. Two good billiard tables are always in readiness for those fond of the game.
49-6m.

Boots and Shoes.

H. FLEISHMAN, has just received a full assortment of

BOOTS AND SHOES,

Most of them my own importation from New York. Purchasers would do well by calling and examining my stock and price before purchasing elsewhere.
my3-tf.

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.