



**CITY OF ARCATA
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMITTEE MEETING
AGENDA**

Thursday, April 16, 2026, 4:00 p.m.

Council Chamber

736 F Street, Arcata

Special accommodations for the disabled who attend City meetings can be made in advance by contacting the City Clerk at 822-5953. Assistive listening devices are available.

Pursuant to Government Code section 54957.5, all writings or documents relating to any item on this agenda which have been provided to a majority of the Committee, including those received after distribution of the Committee's agenda packet, will be made available for public inspection in the agenda binder located in Community Development at Arcata City Hall, 736 F Street, during normal business hours.

PLEASE NOTE: Speakers wishing to distribute materials to the Historic Landmarks Committee at the meeting are requested to provide 10 copies to the Committee's staff liaison.

1. **ROLL CALL**
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. **Approve the Minutes of the Historic Landmarks Committee Meeting of March 5, 2026**
3. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

This time is provided for people to address the Committee or submit written communications on matters not on the agenda. At the conclusion of all oral and written communications, the Committee may respond to statements. Any request that requires Committee action will be set by the Committee for a future agenda or referred to staff.
4. **OLD BUSINESS**
 - a. **Consider Approving the National Register Application for the Arcata Plaza**
5. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - a. **Elect Vice-Chair**
 - b. **Provide Direction on Historic Preservation Month Planning**
6. **COMMITTEE/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**
7. **ADJOURNMENT**



CITY OF ARCATA
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

March 5, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Council Chamber
736 F Street, Arcata

Present: Committee Member Perry, Chair Rich, Committee Member Keefe,
Vice-Chair Macdonald

Absent: Committee Member Cooper

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

4. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Approve the Minutes of the Historic Landmarks Committee Meeting of February 19, 2026

On motion by Vice-Chair Macdonald and second by Committee Member Perry, the Committee approved the minutes by majority vote.

Ayes: Keefe, Macdonald, Perry, Rich

Noes: None

Abstentions: None

Absent: Cooper

Moved by: Vice-Chair Macdonald

Seconded by: Committee Member Perry

PASSED

**b. Field Trip - Old Post Office Site Visit at 725 and 735 8th St., Arcata CA -
Adjournment of Meeting Will Occur at Old Post Office Location**

c. Consider Recommending Approval of the Improvements of The Old Post Office Building and Adjacent Structure Located at 735 and 725 8th Street

Planner Fletterick presented a staff report.

No public comment was received.

On motion by Chair Rich and second by Vice-Chair Macdonald, the Committee recommended approval of the project to the Planning Commission with the conditions that inadvertent discovery is added and the recessed entryway is preserved.

Ayes: Keefe, Perry, Macdonald, Rich

Noes: None

Abstentions: None

Absent: Cooper

Moved by: Chair Rich

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Macdonald

PASSED

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by order of the Chair at 725 and 735 8th St., Arcata CA at 4:51 p.m.



STAFF REPORT – HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMITTEE MEETING

TO: Honorable Chair and Committee Members

FROM: David Loya, Director of Community Development

PREPARER: Delores Freitas, Senior Planner

DATE: April 16, 2026

TITLE: **Consider Approving the National Register Application for the Arcata Plaza**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Committee review a report from staff and the application preparer and provide feedback as appropriate, and recommend the application to the City Council.

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Arcata is interested in exploring a national historic register designation for the Arcata Plaza. The Historic Landmarks Committee is being asked to review the updated draft application responding to the edits the committee made in January, and provide feedback to staff and the cultural resources facility staff involved in preparing the application.

DISCUSSION:

The Arcata Plaza has long been recognized as a cultural center of the Arcata community and local is locally designated as an historic resource through General Plan policy outlined in the Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan 2045. As early as 2016, staff and the Historic Landmarks Committee have discussed the potential of pursuing a national landmark designation for the plaza, with the intent of supporting plaza businesses and encouraging historic education through designation of the plaza as a recognized historic resource.

In the past, an application was prepared and reviewed by the committee, but the consensus at the time was that the application was not complete, and not ready to be submitted. In 2025, an informal subcommittee was formed to revisit the application, consisting of one member of the Historic Landmarks Committee (Jeanette Cooper), one member of the Planning Commission (Dan Tangney), and one member of the City Council (Alex Stillman). As a result of this process, an updated application for National Register listing has been prepared by staff at the Cultural Resources Facility at Cal Poly Humboldt, facilitated by Jeanette Cooper.

A member of the Cultural Resources facility team, Patrick O'Rourke, has updated the application based on committee feedback (Attachment A). However, he voiced concerns regarding the direction to omit mention of contributing vs. noncontributing elements, noting he believes this to be a requirement of the process as outlined in relevant National Register Bulletins. He has requested the committee discuss this topic again before moving forward. If the committee wants to move forward

as directed previously, staff can ensure the edits are completed without coming back to the committee, if desired.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. National Register Application Form
- B. Application Exhibits

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Arcata Plaza

Other names/site number: Plaza, The Plaza, The Commons, HALS-CA-30

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 844 H Street

City or town: Arcata State: California County: Humboldt

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

LANDSCAPE/Plaza, Park, Outdoor Recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions

LANDSCAPE/Plaza, Park, Outdoor Recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

N/A

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: EARTH, CONCRETE

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Arcata Plaza is one square block bound by Arcata's 8th and 9th Streets to the South and North of the property, and G and H Streets to the East and West. It is situated in the heart of Downtown Arcata. It is predominantly covered with grass along with eight concrete walkways with exposed aggregate that radiate from each corner and the mid-points to connect at a circle in the middle of the Plaza (contributing). Each walkway measures 5'11" by 60'10". The two palm trees in the northeast corner were planted in 1906 (contributing). The stone 1912 Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) fountain is located at the mid-point of the walkway on the west side of the Plaza (contributing). At the midpoint of the northern walkway is the Arcata Chapter of the American Legion's Veteran's Memorial placed in 1957 (non-contributing because it is commemorative). The memorial is associated with a flagpole on the same walkway, which was added between 1961 and 1966 (non-contributing because it is commemorative). The California Registered Historical Landmark plaque for the Jacoby Building (non-contributing because it is commemorative) on the southwest corner of the Plaza was placed in 1963. The plaque was removed in 2018 and the text of the plaque was updated in 2025 to reflect additional cooperation from the Wiyot Tribe, Blue Lake Rancheria, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, and the California Office of Historic Preservation. The City of Arcata recognizes and respects the indigenous Wiyot people are the ancestral inhabitants of all lands within the City of Arcata and that the lands on which the Arcata Plaza is located are included in the unceded ancestral lands of the Wiyot tribe. Several modern additions to the Plaza have been made, including masonry, several electrical outlets, four mosaic recycling bins designed by local artist Laurel Skye, 16 lampposts, a bronze bas relief rain catcher sculpture titled the Earth Eye, and several benches and undecorated recycling bins. While the Plaza has experienced physical changes, the property has maintained its historic integrity, reflecting the historic location, setting, feeling, and association of the property between 1850-present therefore meeting integrity standards.

Narrative Description

The Plaza has undergone significant physical changes in its history, but none of these alterations have detracted from the integrity of its location, setting, feeling, and association. Rather than detracting from integrity, the ongoing modifications of the Plaza are instead reflective of the

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continued use and association as a public gathering space for Humboldt County's residents and visitors. Archaeologist Thomas C. Patterson has referred to this phenomenon as a "materialization of worldview" where landscapes can be understood as works in progress that were never fully completed.¹ In turn, this site has gained meaning and significance with changes over time as the community around it continues to use it for recreational, social, and community engagement activities.

The Plaza's integrity of setting and location are intact as noted by its boundaries established by bordering streets, which have been present since its construction. These boundaries are visible in the 1851 Map of Union drawn by its architect, Lewis Keysor Wood.² This intersection of G and 9th, G and 8th, H and 8th, and H and 9th streets has also been key to the Plaza's significance as a hub for political engagement, recreation and social activities, and community engagement activities, as it is in the center of Arcata's downtown area. At the time of settlement, the Plaza was designated a public park, and the surrounding downtown area was a key supply point for those traveling from the interior mining camps on the Klamath, Trinity, and Salmon Rivers.³

The layout and uses of the Plaza since 1850 reflect a New England-style commons or village green. A common is a rectilinear layout of paths or square beds with edging. Famous examples include the Commons of Boston and Cambridge.⁴ New England influences were abundant during the settlement period of Humboldt County (c.1850-1885). The architecture of the first thirty years of settlement inherited many of New England's Greek Revival forms.⁵ The open grass spaces have historically been associated with recreation, community engagement, and grazing for cattle and other animals. Many other developing Californian towns during this era created similar community spaces during their settlement periods. Another prominent example is the Watsonville City Plaza, established in 1860 and on the National Register of Historic Places (*National Register* #83001244).⁶ While there are other cities in California counties which have plazas featured as part of their original layout, Union (later renamed Arcata) was the only settlement in Humboldt County that featured a plaza in its original construction.

From 1850 to 1895, the Plaza's internal design was in flux due to varying uses and an evolving community. An 1878 photo of the Plaza displays a rectilinear grass field without fencing but with four dirt walkways extending from each corner to meet at a short rectangular walkway in

¹ Thomas C. Patterson, "The History of Landscape Archaeology in the Americas," in *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology* (Milton Park, England: Routledge, 2008), 79.

² Lewis Keysor Wood, "Map of Union," Map, The Union Company, 1851.

³ Susie Van Kirk, *Reflections of Arcata's History: Eighty Years of Architecture* (Arcata, California: Bug Press, 1979), 4; California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation. *Historic Resources Inventory The Plaza*, 12-5527-7, edited by Susie Van Kirk (Sacramento, 1-2).

⁴ Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 248-249.

⁵ Susie Van Kirk, *Touring Arcata's Architecture: Arcata, California* (Arcata, California: White City Publishing, 1988), 3.

⁶ United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form for Watsonville City Plaza* (Sacramento, 2).

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the middle of the Plaza.⁷ The centerpiece of the Plaza in this photo is the Liberty Pole, erected in 1876 and standing until strong winds took it down in 1897.⁸ Sometime between this photo and 1888, a white rail fence and a wooden sidewalk were constructed around the perimeter of the Plaza.⁹ None of the workmanship of the settlement period is still visible, but the design, setting, location, feeling, and association defined by the perimeter of the Plaza established in the settlement period still remain.

At the turn of the century, the Plaza would experience a formal beautification at the hands of the Plaza Improvement Committee, a group of local civic boosters. Initial design plans were made by City of Eureka engineer Frank E. Herrick with contributions from the Vance Mill and Lumber Company.¹⁰ The Committee's first construction was a bandstand in the middle of the Plaza supplemented by a 115-foot tall flagpole in 1901. That same year, the Committee replaced the old white rail fence with a white picket fence, and animal grazing was formally banned from the Plaza.¹¹ However, according to a 1901 photograph, there was a brief period during 1901 when animal grazing and the bandstand overlapped.¹² The new fence came down on June 28th, 1902 when cattle were finally banished from the streets. An axial layout of walkways was completed in 1902 as graveled paths, but they were later paved in 1910 along with additional walking paths.¹³ Eight of these intersecting paths and a circular middle point are still present today. However, this design also featured a circular walkway that is no longer present. In 1903, community member Louis Scholrliig planted three dozen rose bushes, twelve dozen boxwood plants on the outer walks, and the first palm trees on the circular walkway.¹⁴ The two palm trees that are still present today were planted in 1906. The other six palm trees, that were planted at the same time as the two-remaining, died from being waterlogged due to excessive rain. All six were removed from the Plaza sometime between 1916 and 1947.¹⁵

The bandstand was removed in 1906 to make room for a statue of President William McKinley following his assassination. The statue was commissioned by Arcata resident George Zehnder and sculpted by San Francisco-based artist Haig Patigian. Patigian was a prolific sculptor whose works include a monument to the Volunteer Firemen of the 1850s in Washington Square, San Francisco; General John Pershing in Golden Gate Park; and a bust of Herbert Hoover in the White House. Delivery of the McKinley statue to Arcata was temporarily halted because of the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco. Workmen saved the completed statue from the

⁷ Palmquist Photograph Collection. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California.

⁸ "Local Items," *Ferndale Enterprise*, October 26, 1897.

⁹ Humboldt County Collection Photographs. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California.

¹⁰ "News from Our Neighbors," *Humboldt Times*, October 20, 1901.

¹¹ Van Kirk, Susie. *The Plaza, Arcata, California* (Arcata, California: White City Pub., 1986), 4.

¹² Palmquist Photograph Collection.

¹³ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁵ Palmquist Photograph Collection; Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California.

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burning foundry.¹⁶ However, the statue was removed in 2019 after a ballot initiative passed that cited the injustices that took place towards Native Americans during Mckinley's presidency.¹⁷

In 1912, a drinking fountain designed by stonemason James Davidson and commissioned by the Women's Christian Temperance Union was installed at the mid-point on the west side of the Plaza.¹⁸ The fountain originally had a spherical top, but a 1970 photo displays it with an oval shaped top. The top ornamentation of the fountain is presently missing. Light posts with five bulbs each were installed on each corner of the Plaza by 1915, but these were replaced by single-bulb light posts sometime after 1947.¹⁹ However, these replacements were removed sometime prior to 1965.²⁰

While the beautification introduced new vegetation and objects to the Plaza, it retained its grass fields and physical boundaries, which have been key to its location, setting, feeling, and association with community engagement and recreation. However, the beautification did alter the Plaza's use because it stopped being associated with livestock. This change is significant because it marks a newly visible divide between the city and the countryside of the Arcata area. This trend was the case for many major American cities at the turn of the twentieth century.²¹

While the Plaza Improvement Committee was responsible for the most formative features of the Plaza, there would continue to be alterations. Four circular concrete planters were added to the western side of the Plaza after 1952 but prior to 1961 and were removed sometime after 1970. A series of aerial images between 1947 and 1961 depict the circular walkway becoming gradually fainter until it is no longer visible. Photographs from 1947 to 1953 depict a flagpole on the east side of the Plaza. However, 1961 and 1966 photographs depict the flagpole in its present location on the north side of the Plaza.²² Additionally, the Plaza received multiple educational markers over the postwar era. In 1957, the Arcata Post No. 274 of the American Legion placed a Veteran's Memorial plaque on the midpoint of the northern walkway. The Arcata Post No. 274 was founded in 1930 to assist local Veterans in reintegrating and reestablishing themselves in the civilian world. The Arcata Post as well as neighboring Posts in Eureka and Ferndale earned a reputation for community outreach, education, and mentoring.²³ Their selection of the Plaza for their marker is indicative of the site's symbolic value to the community. The California Registered Historical Landmark plaque for the Jacoby Building was placed on the southwest corner of the Plaza in 1963. It commemorates one of Arcata's oldest standing buildings that has

¹⁶ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Historic American Landmarks Survey Arcata Plaza*, HALS-CA-30 (Washington, DC, 2).

¹⁷ Marissa Papanek, "Statue of President William McKinley Removed from Arcata Plaza, where it Stood Since 1906," *KCRTV*, February 28, 2019.

¹⁸ Van Kirk 1986, 7.

¹⁹ Humboldt County Collection Photographs; Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection.

²⁰ Palmquist Photograph Collection.

²¹ Robert D. Johnson, "The Possibilities of Democracy in America, 1877 to 1917," in *American History Now*, edited by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2011), 96.

²² Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection.

²³ "Arcata Veteran's Memorial Building," Arcata Veteran's Hall, arcataveteranshall.org, accessed April 1, 2025.

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been present to witness the development of the Plaza. The plaque was temporarily removed in 2018 and the text of the plaque was updated in 2025 to reflect additional consultations with the Wiyot Tribe, Blue Lake Rancheria, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, and the California Office of Historic Preservation.²⁴ These educational markers are the long-awaited physical adornment of the already robust history of community engagement in the Arcata Plaza.

Several modern additions have been made to the Plaza, including the current lamp posts. Walkways in cardinal directions are bordered by two sets of lamp posts, whereas walkways in diagonal directions have only one lamp post. Additionally, there are four lamp posts in the center circle of the Plaza. These current lamp posts were added sometime after 1984.²⁵ All lamp posts match except for one on the southwest corner of the Plaza, which is taller than the others.

While the walkways remain a historic resource, additional modern masonry exists. In particular, the planter bed walls surrounding the palm trees in the northeast corner, the planter bed surrounding the coniferous tree in the southeast corner, the concrete walls surrounding the beds in the circle in the middle, and the walls surrounding the beds on all four corners are all modern. The short, raised wall that borders the Veteran's Memorial on the north side of the Plaza is also modern. These were all constructed sometime after 1984.²⁶ Other recent additions to the Plaza include four mosaic recycling bins designed by local artist Laurel Skye between 2003 and 2007, a drinking fountain at the center of the Plaza, and several electrical outlets.²⁷ There is also a bronze bas relief rain catcher sculpture titled the Earth Eye installed in 2008 on a concrete slab which also serves as the base for an electrical box in a planter box at the center of the Plaza²⁸

It should also be noted that while one nonhistorical boxwood plant and two historic palm trees remain in the Plaza, the ecology of the Plaza has also continued to evolve. There are two large coniferous trees on the west side of the Plaza and one small coniferous tree on the southeast corner. While there are no longer the abundant roses of the beautification period, there are several flowering plants including irises, daffodils, and cherry trees. There is a noted symmetry of rhododendrons and lilies in the middle of the Plaza.

Modifications such as modern masonry and electrical outlets reflect adapting the Plaza's historic aesthetics to continue to serve a modern community. The current physical environment retains the original location, setting, and many associations of the Arcata Plaza throughout its period of significance (1850-Present). The original physical boundaries and many of the Plaza

²⁴ Jeanette M. Cooper, email message to author, April 2, 2025.

²⁵ Humboldt County Collection Photographs.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Mosaic Community Comes Together to Restore Legacy of Visionary Tile Artist Laurel Skye," *Mad River Union*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.madriverunion.com/articles/mosaic-community-comes-together-to-restore-legacy-of-visionary-tile-artist-laurel-skye/>.

²⁸ "Student Sculptures Debut in Arcata, Humboldt Now (blog), May 15, 2008, <https://now.humboldt.edu/news/student-sculptures-debut-in-arcata>.

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Improvement Committee's alterations remain. The site's use for community engagement, recreation, and social activities remains.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1850-present

Significant Dates

1850, 1876, 1884,
1912, 1914, 1964,

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lewis Keysor Wood (1850)
Union Company (1850)
Frank E. Herrick (1901)
Vance Mill and Lumber Company (1901)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Arcata Plaza qualifies for the National Register at the local level of significance in the categories of recreation, community planning and development, and landscape architecture. The Arcata Plaza meets Criterion A because of its association with the founding, design, and planning of the City of Arcata. Additionally, the Plaza has served as a venue for events that have contributed to the broad patterns of our local history, including community celebrations, political engagement, and recreational and social activities.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The period of significance, 1850-present, is defined by the Plaza's uninterrupted use for recreation, community engagement, and social activities since its original construction. During

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the settlement period (1850-1885), the Plaza was a public park that hosted fraternal organizations, amateur baseball teams, miners, loggers, and many others as Arcata grew from 33 people to a few hundred. The Plaza has retained its setting and location marked by its physical boundaries of its bordering streets since 1850. The progressive era (1890s-1920s) saw local civic boosters band together to beautify the Plaza. Essential physical features added during this time include the eight concrete walkways with exposed aggregate, the Women's Christian Temperance Union Fountain, and the two palm trees in the northeast corner. The Plaza saw continued use for political rallies, fairs, and many other activities over the period between 1930-1975. Since 1975, the Plaza continued to host many events close to community culture including the Arcata Bay Oyster Festival, the Kinetic Grand Championship, and the annual Arcata High School Homecoming Parade. In her 1979 Historic Resources Inventory, historian Susie Van Kirk recommended the Plaza as eligible as it has been the continuous social center of Arcata since its construction.²⁹

Founded by the Union Company in 1850, Arcata (originally called "Union") was organized into a grid system, and each member of the Union Company obtained a pre-emption claim on a section of land within the city, where they developed homes, schools, and churches.³⁰ The Union Company soon laid out the Plaza (then called "the Commons"). Its bordering streets defined the Plaza's boundaries. While these were dirt at the time of construction, they have remained the dominant thoroughfares of Arcata keeping the Plaza a bustling center of the city's attention. The Plaza's boundaries have remained unchanged, as seen on the 1851 Map of Union drawn by its architect, Lewis Keysor Wood.³¹

Unlike the rest of Arcata, the Plaza was set aside as a public space over which no specific individual held legal claim. Upon settlement, it was designated as a public park.³² The core intention was to provide a space for the public's benefit. During the settlement period, the Plaza was used for recreation, community engagement, and social activities. There have been events significant to a local historical context such as a month-long celebration of July 4th, 1876 and a large political rally in 1884.³³ However, the Plaza was commonly used routinely rather than for unique events.

Between 1850 and 1885, the Plaza was regularly used as a parade ground where a citizen's military company drilled, a place where cattle and other livestock grazed, a staging area for numerous pack trains of mules for miners, a gathering site for local fraternal organizations, and as a diamond by amateur baseball teams.³⁴

²⁹ California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation.

³⁰ Van Kirk 1986, 2.

³¹ Wood.

³² California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation, 1.

³³ "Grand Centennial Celebration," Humboldt Times, June 21, 1876; "On the Plaza," Humboldt Times, October 1, 1884.

³⁴ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2; "Crescent B.B. Cina," Humboldt Times, July 24, 1874.

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Not everyone, however, in the community was satisfied with the Plaza. Articles in the Humboldt Times showcase a long-lasting debate (since at least the late 1870s) over land use, with some community members arguing that Arcata should sell the land to the county so that the community could build either a school or a courthouse on top of it.³⁵ These proposals were continuously defeated by local community members who enjoyed the Plaza for its social and recreational benefits. In the progressive era, the Plaza was beautified to underscore its intended purpose.

In 1895, Arcata resident Charles Murdock wrote, “The Plaza should be a thing of beauty and a center of life and interest. No building should rest upon it, but a green sword, well-kept walks, a fountain, shrubs, and trees should be so attractive that it would be the pride of every citizen.”³⁶ His proclamation led to the formation of the Plaza Improvement Committee, an organization of local civic boosters that pooled money to renovate and beautify the Plaza to create the ideal neighborhood community space. The Committee was comprised of five young men who sold subscriptions and recruited local businesses to help design the beautified Plaza.³⁷ The Committee embodied progressivism via its grassroots approach to fundraising and community organizing.

The immediate outcome of their organization was banning animal grazing on the Plaza by 1901. Cattle would be banned from the streets by June 28th, 1902.³⁸ However, the beautification did not result in any other drastic changes to the historic character, functions, setting, location, feeling or associations of the Plaza. The Plaza retained its style as a commons, its historic location in downtown Arcata, its setting at the corner of H and 9th Streets, its feeling as the center of Arcata’s community life, and its association with community engagement, recreation, and social activities.

Between 1930 and 1975, The Plaza would continue to be a centerpiece of Arcata's life. It would be a gathering place for town and national holiday celebrations, the scene of huge 4th of July bonfires, bicycle races, parades, Easter egg hunts, concerts, theatrical performances, fairs, farmer’s markets, and an annual salmon bake.³⁹ Additionally, it would host notable guests such as Hiram Johnson during his governorship and Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964.⁴⁰

In the years since 1975, the Plaza has continued to be the center of Arcata’s community life. It has hosted a weekly Farmer’s Market which includes local vendors since the mid-1980s and several annual events including the Arcata Bay Oyster Festival since 1990, the Kinetic Grand

³⁵ “Not ‘Dead’,” Humboldt Times, February 10, 1876; “School Matters,” Humboldt Times, February 3, 1883.

³⁶ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2.

³⁷ “A Good Move,” Humboldt Times, November 26, 1903.

³⁸ Van Kirk 1986, 4.

³⁹ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2.

⁴⁰ Palmquist-Yale Photograph Collections. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California; Palmquist Photograph Collection.

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Championship since 1969, and the annual homecoming parade for Arcata High School.⁴¹ All of these events exhibit the characteristics of Humboldt County's love for its industry, its artists, and its residents. These are major attractions for visitors looking to learn about our community. In addition to these important community events, an observer will find the area inhabited daily with buskers, students, professionals, and visitors, all enjoying the the Plaza's atmosphere and location. Since 1850, the Arcata Plaza has retained integrity in terms of location and setting in the heart of Arcata's downtown, feeling as the center of Arcata's community life, and association with community engagement, recreation, and social activities. A place on the National Register of Historic Places would underscore the indispensable role The Plaza plays in the life of residents and visitors of Humboldt County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

"Local Items," *Ferndale Enterprise*, October 26, 1897

"Mosaic Community Comes Together to Restore Legacy of Visionary Tile Artist Laurel Skye," *Mad River Union*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.madriverunion.com/articles/mosaic-community-comes-together-to-restore-legacy-of-visionary-tile-artist-laurel-skye/>.

"Student Sculptures Debut in Arcata, Humboldt Now (blog), May 15, 2008, <https://now.humboldt.edu/news/student-sculptures-debut-in-arcata>.

California State Parks, Department of Parks and Recreation. *Historic Resources Inventory The Plaza February 1979* by Susie Van Kirk.

Humboldt County Collection Photographs. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California. <https://cdm16166.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/hccphotos/search>

Humboldt Times, various issues 1874-1925. University of California, Riverside Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research, Riverside, California. <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=HTS&e=-----188-en--20-HTS-1--txt-txIN-%22the+plaza%22----->

Karshner, Gayle. *A Bell Rang in Uniontown: the First Hundred Years of Arcata and Its Methodist Church, 1850-1950*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: The Donning Company Publishers, 1994.

⁴¹ "About the Arcata Plaza Farmer's Market," North Coast Grower's Association. <https://www.northcoastgrowersassociation.org/arcataplaza.html>; "What is Kinetic Sculpture Racing?" Kinetic Grand Championship. <https://kineticgrandchampionship.com/>; "The History of the Arcata Bay Oyster Festival," The Annual Arcata Bay Oyster Festival. <https://www.arcatabayoysterfestival.com/about>

Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Palmquist Photograph Collection. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California. <https://cdm16166.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/palmquist/search>

Palmquist-Yale Photograph Collections. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California. <https://cdm16166.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/palmquistyale/search>

Papanek, Marissa. "Statue of President William McKinley Removed from Arcata Plaza, where it Stood Since 1906." *KCRTV*, February 28, 2019. <https://krctv.com/north-coast-news/eureka-local-news/city-of-arcata-removes-mckinley-statue-from-the-plaza-early-thursday-morning>

Patterson, Thomas C. "The History of Landscape Archaeology in the Americas." In *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*, pp. 77-84. Routledge, 2016.

Shuster Aerial Photograph Collection. Cal Poly Humboldt Special Collections and Archives, Arcata, California. <https://cdm16166.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/shuster/search>

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Historic American Landmarks Survey Arcata Plaza*. Edited by Chris Pattillo. HALS-CA-30, May 2009.

Van Kirk, Susie. *Reflections of Arcata's History: Eighty Years of Architecture*. Arcata, California: Bug Press, 1979.

Van Kirk, Susie. *The Plaza, Arcata, California*. Arcata, California: White City Pub., 1986.

Van Kirk, Susie. *Touring Arcata's Architecture*. Arcata, California. Arcata, California: White City Publishing, 1988.

Wood, Lewis Keyser. "Map of Union," Map, The Union Company, 1851.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # CA-30

Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Cal Poly Humboldt Library Special Collections and Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.032

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 10 T | Easting: 408445 | Northing: 4524730 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description

The Arcata Plaza is one-square city block. It is bound by G Street to the East and H Street to the West. It is bound by 8th Street to the South and 9th Street to the North.

Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Boundary Justification

These boundaries have remained constant and clear as the Plaza was laid out at the same time as the bordering streets. Its borders have maintained their constructed borders since its inception and throughout its period of significance until today

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Patrick O'Rourke, MA, Historian and Lab Director, and Jeanette Cooper, PhD, Co-Director
organization: Cal Poly Humboldt Cultural Resources Facility
street & number: 1 Harpst St.
city or town: Arcata state: CA zip code: 95502
e-mail: pdo3@humboldt.edu
telephone: (310)-606-0089
date: 03/27/2025

Additional Documentation

Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

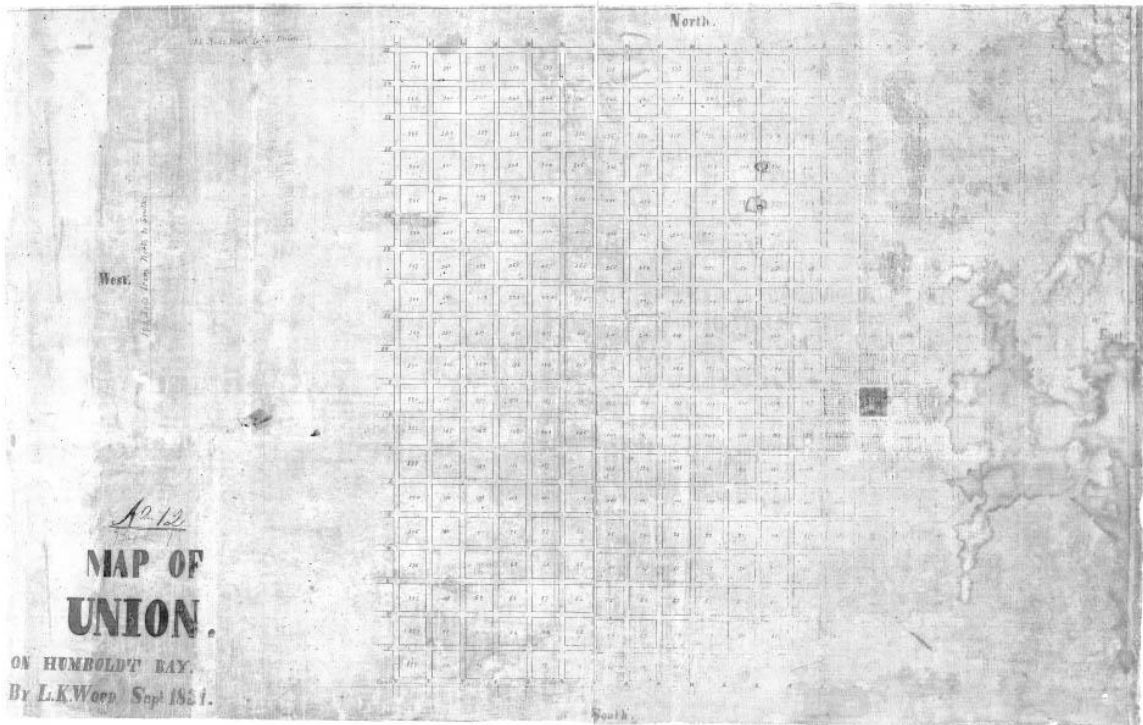
State: California

Artist: Lewis Keysor Wood

Date Drawn: 1851

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Map of Union

1 of 14.



12

Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1878

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Photograph of the Arcata Plaza, taken 1878. Displays Liberty Pole, present 1876-1897.

2 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

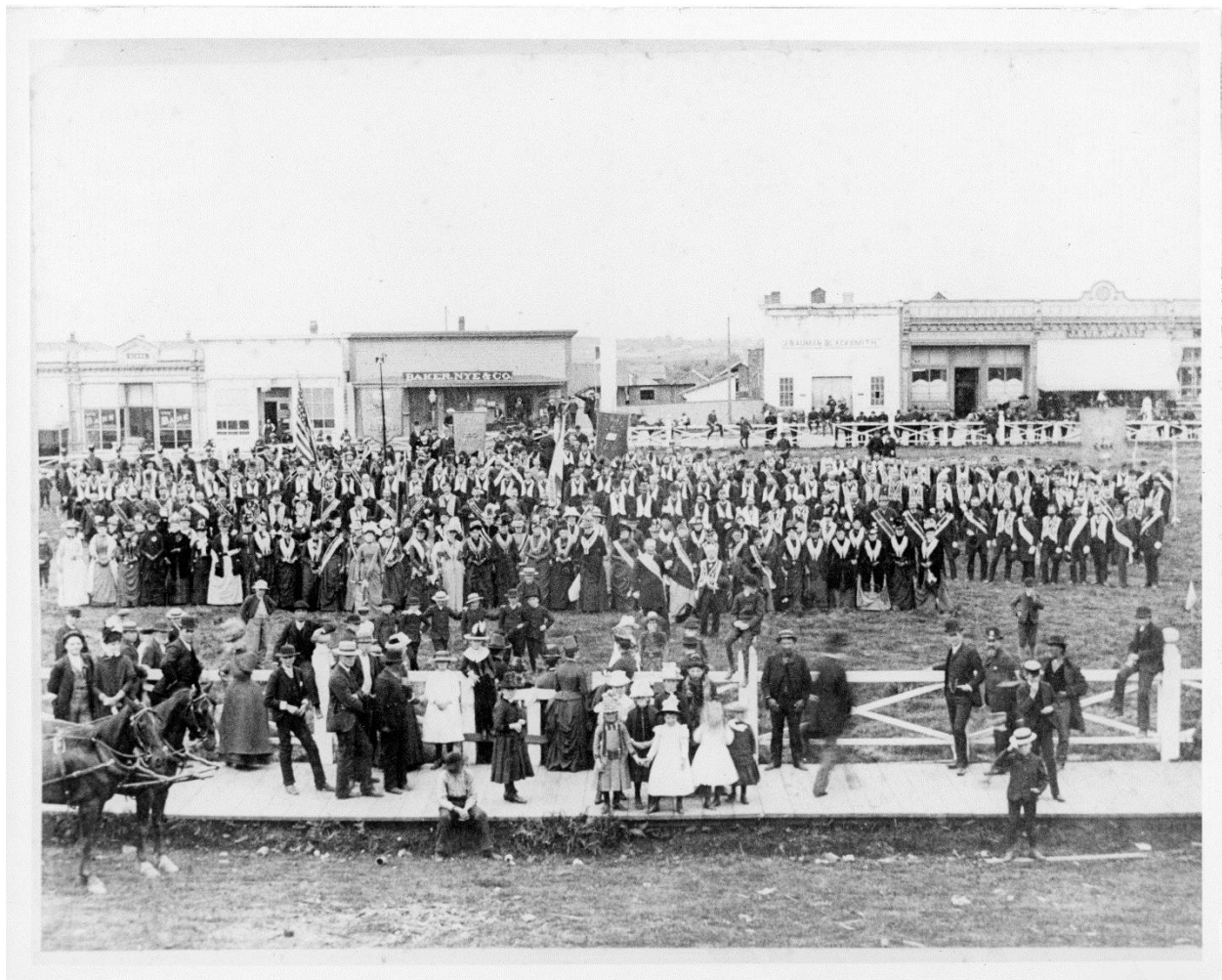
State: California

Photographer: M.H. Grant

Date Photographed: 1888

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Gathering of the International Order of Odd Fellows in the Arcata Plaza, 1888. Displays no longer present white rail fence and wooden sidewalk.

3 of 14.



Arcata Plaza

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1888

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Photograph of the Plaza. Displays bandstand and graveled walkways.

4 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Seely Brothers

Date Photographed: October 23, 1914

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Arcata residents gather on the Plaza to celebrate the completion of the Northwest Pacific Railroad linking Arcata to San Francisco. The Hotel Arcata is under construction.

5 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

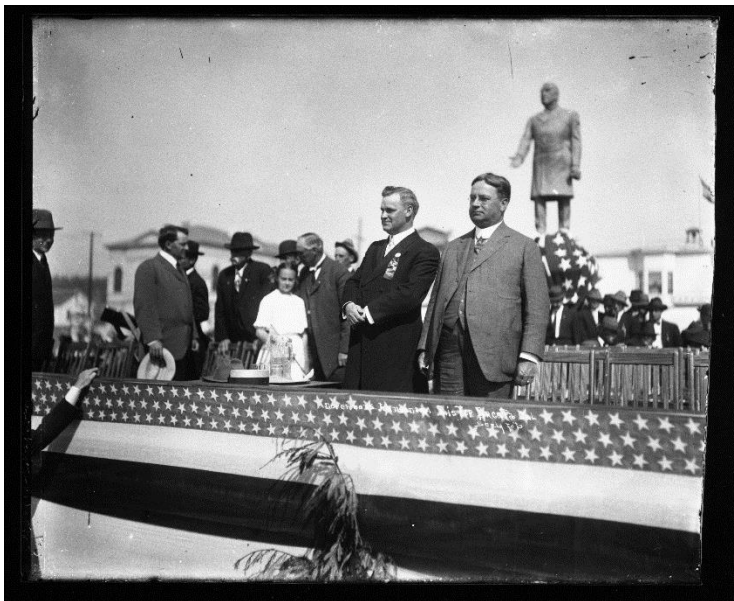
State: California

Photographer: Seely Brothers

Date Photographed: c.1911-1917

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Then-California Governor Hiram Johnson visits the Arcata Plaza with the McKinley statue in the background.

6 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1916

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: The Plaza facing northeast, displaying original lampposts and palm trees. 1916

7 of 14.



Arcata Plaza

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1921

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: West side of the Plaza, facing north. Displays WCTU fountain with original round decorative top.

8 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Merle Shuster

Date Photographed: 1947

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Aerial photograph depicting a flagpole on the eastern side of the Plaza and an apparent deterioration of the circular walkway.

9 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: David Swanlund

Date Photographed: 1961

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Aerial photograph. Circular walkway is no longer visible, and the flagpole has moved from the east to the north side

10 of 14.



Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA
County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1966

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Aerial photograph. Flagpole is now visible on the north side of the Plaza.

11 of 14.



Arcata Plaza

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Neil Hulbert

Date Photographed: 1964

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Then-Republican Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater addresses a crowd assembled in the Arcata Plaza to hear him speak on his campaign for the Presidency.

12 of 14.



Arcata Plaza

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1970

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: The Plaza facing northeast, displaying the WCTU Fountain with a replacement oval shaped top.

13 of 14.



Arcata Plaza

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

Name of Property: The Plaza

City or Vicinity: Arcata

County: Humboldt

State: California

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: Unknown

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: The Plaza during the Kinetic Sculpture Race, facing northeast. Showcasing that the Plaza has continued its recreational, social, and community engagement uses to present day.

14 of 14



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

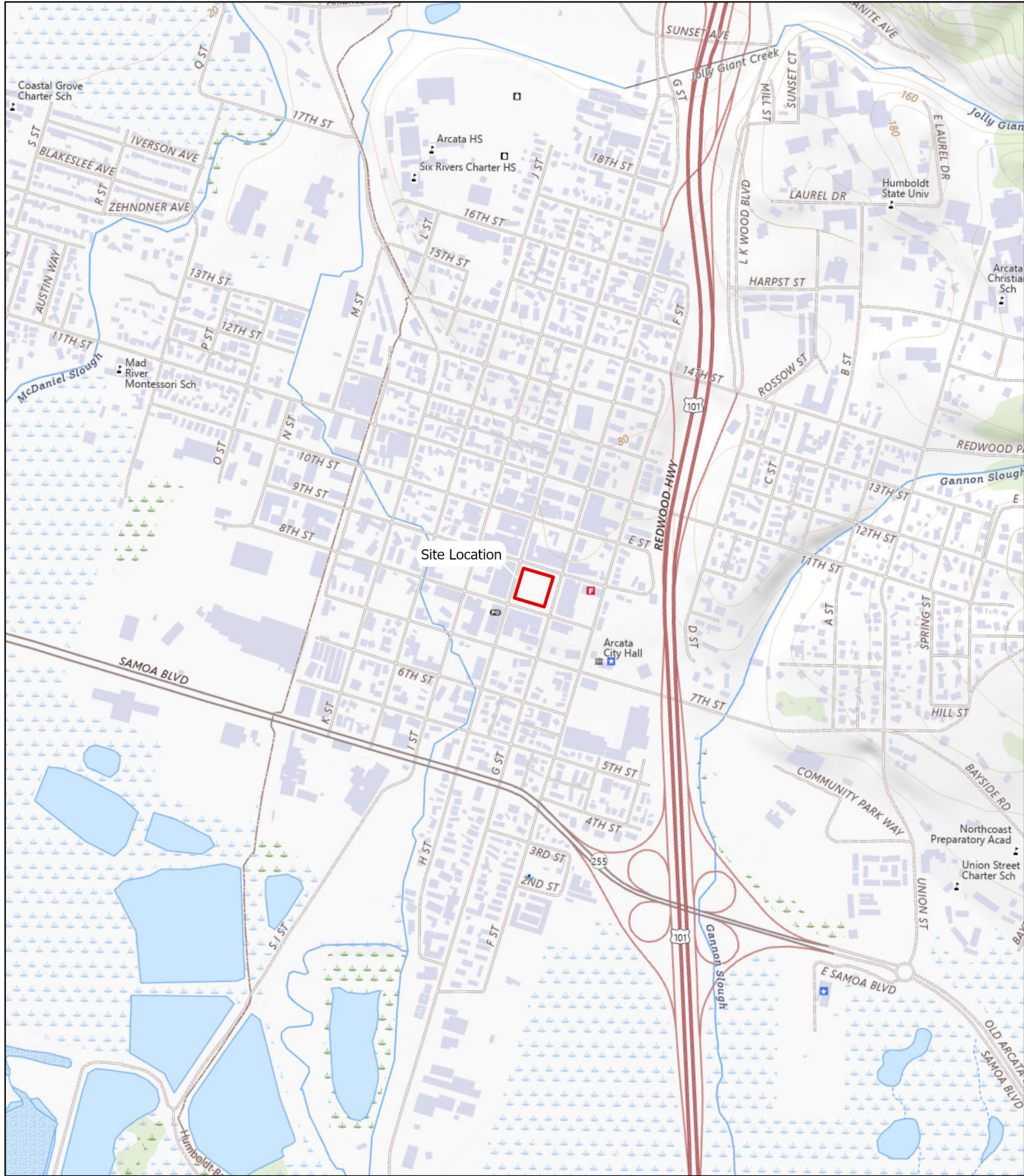
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

Arcata Plaza
Name of Property

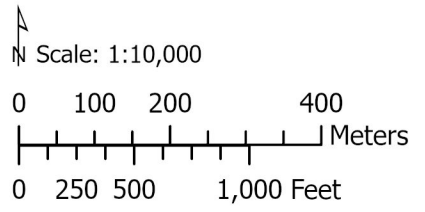
Humboldt, CA
County and State

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



Arcata Plaza: UTM 10T 408445mE 4524730mN

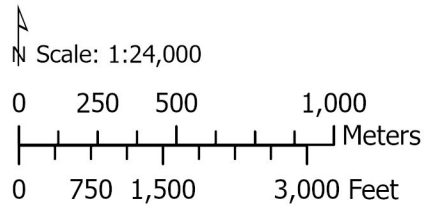
Township and Range: T06N R01E S29
 Humboldt B.M.
 USGS 7.5min Quads: Arcata South, 2012





Arcata Plaza: UTM 10T 408445mE 4524730mN

Township and Range: T06N R01E S29
 Humboldt B.M.
 USGS 7.5min Quads: Arcata South, 2012



HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

(State use only)
 Ser _____ Site _____ Mo. _____ Yr. _____
 UTM _____ Q _____ NR 3 SHL _____
 Lat _____ Lon _____ Era _____ Sig _____
 Adm _____ T2 _____ T3 _____ Cat _____ HABS _____ HAER _____ Fed _____
10TDV0855024530

IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: The Plaza 12-5521-7
2. Historic name, if known: The Plaza
3. Street or rural address Block bounded by 9th, G, 8th, and H Streets
 City: Arcata ZIP: 95521 County: Humboldt
4. Present owner, if known: City of Arcata Address: 736 F Street
 City: Arcata ZIP: 95521 Ownership is: Public Private
5. Present Use: park Original Use: pasture, park
 Other past uses: _____

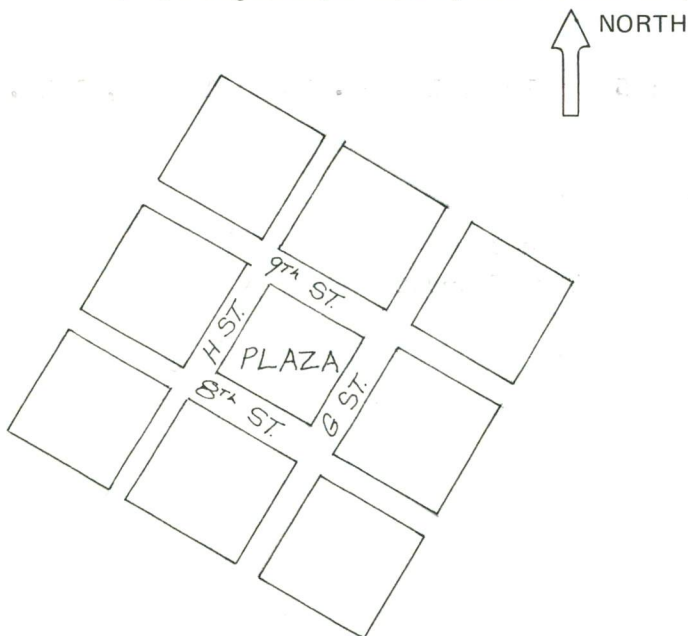
DESCRIPTION

6. Briefly describe the present physical appearance of the site or structure and describe any major alterations from its original condition:

The Plaza is a kind of "village green" covering a city block and surrounded by the downtown commercial district. Sidewalks radiate from a central paved area, where a bronze statue of William McKinley is located, to the four corners and middle of each side. Surrounding the center are benches of brick, concrete, and wood. A flagpole occupies the center of the northerly-radiating sidewalk; the W.C.T.U. drinking fountain, constructed in 1912, is located at the west edge of the block. Lawn, evergreens, two palm trees, flowering trees, and colorful flowerbeds in season add to the beauty of the Plaza.

Changes in the Plaza through the years have been made in the name of beautification. Cows were banned in 1901 and a bandstand was built in the center. At one time there was a white rail fence around the edge and various flagpoles have come and gone. Palm trees were planted in 1906, but only two tree remain. McKinley

7. Locational sketch map (draw and label site and surrounding streets, roads, and prominent landmarks):



8. Approximate property size: replaced the bandstand
 Lot size (in feet) Frontage 250 in 1906.
 Depth 250;
 or approx. acreage _____.

9. Condition: (check one)
- a. Excellent b. Good c. Fair
 d. Deteriorated e. No longer in existence

10. Is the feature a. Altered? b. Unaltered?

11. Surroundings: (Check more than one if necessary)
- a. Open land b. Scattered buildings
 c. Densely built-up d. Residential
 e. Commercial f. Industrial
 g. Other

12. Threats to site:
- a. None known b. Private development
 c. Zoning d. Public Works project
 e. Vandalism f. Other

13. Date(s) of enclosed photograph(s): 1979

NOTE: The following (Items 14-19) are for structures only.

14. Primary exterior building material: a. Stone b. Brick c. Stucco d. Adobe e. Wood
f. Other _____
15. Is the structure: a. On its original site? b. Moved? c. Unknown?
16. Year of initial construction _____ This date is: a. Factual b. Estimated
17. Architect (if known): _____
18. Builder (if known): _____
19. Related features: a. Barn b. Carriage house c. Outhouse d. Shed(s) e. Formal garden(s)
f. Windmill g. Watertower/tankhouse h. Other _____ i. None

SIGNIFICANCE

20. Briefly state historical and/or architectural importance (include dates, events, and persons associated with the site when known):

As the commercial and often social center of Arcata, the Plaza is of especial historical importance to the community. It was designated as a public park at the time of settlement in 1850. Dwellings and commercial buildings along with mule corrals ringed the Plaza during those early days when Union (Arcata) served as a supply point for the interior mining camps on the Klamath, Trinity, and Salmon rivers. Through the years the Plaza has been the site of parades and festivities as local fraternal organizations celebrated special occasions or the community went all out in the annual Fourth of July celebration. Today it is a place where people gather on sunny afternoons to eat lunch and visit. Craft fairs, sidewalk sales, high school rallies and parades, and lots of socializing take place on the Plaza--the focal point of Arcata's 128 year old history.

21. Main theme of the historic resource: (Check only one): a. Architecture b. Arts & Leisure
c. Economic/Industrial d. Exploration/Settlement e. Government f. Military
g. Religion h. Social/Education

22. Sources: List books, documents, surveys, personal interviews, and their dates:

Arcata Union, 4 May 1901; 28 June 1902; 5 May 1906; 10 Feb. 1906; 16 May, 1912.

23. Date form prepared: 2/7/79 By (name): Susie Van Kirk
Address: 736 F St. City Arcata ZIP: 95521
Phone: 822-5951 Organization: City of Arcata

(State Use Only)



iga
CA

'T County

Writing cut off on original
Plaza
CA
Humboldt County



PLAZA
LOOKING N. WEST

ARCATA PLAZA



LOOKING
N.EAST

ARCATA PLAZA
Bounded by G, H, Eighth & Ninth Streets
Arcata
Humboldt County
California

HALS CA-30
CA-30

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

ARCATA PLAZA

HALS NO. CA-30

Location: Block bounded by G and H Streets between 8th and 9th Streets, Arcata, Humboldt County, CA
Lat: 40.52104 Long: -124.05157

Significance: Arcata plaza has been continuously functioning as the center of this section of the town of Arcata since it was originally laid out in 1850. Its traditional layout reflects the design style of the time. It is associated with the founders of Arcata and played a key role in the development of the community and surrounding area by supporting mining operations.

Description: While many of the features of Arcata Plaza have been altered it retains sufficient integrity to qualify as a historic site.

Historic Features That Remain Include The Following:

The plaza occupies one full city block and is surrounded by commercial and retail businesses housed in buildings of two and three stories. These businesses include small specialty shops; not chain stores. Diagonal parking surrounds the plaza on all four sides. The plaza continues to function as the hub of a thriving retail district.

The plaza retains most of its original formal layout – walks enter the center of the plaza from each corner. There are also mid block walks on each street leading to the center of the plaza. There is a historic fountain dated 1912 at the mid block entrance on H Street. At the center of the plaza there is a circular paved plaza with a full size bronze statue of President William McKinley mounted on a pedestal at the center. Much of the plaza is planted in lawn. There are two remaining Canary Island Date Palms that match a pair visible in historic photos.

The plaza has undergone several renovations. Non-historic changes include:

The circular walk that had been added by 1914 has been removed. Raised concrete planters have been added at the corner entry points and surrounding the central plaza. A raised planter now surrounds the bronze sculpture and a portion of the base has been buried. The paving for the corner and midblock walks has been replaced at the same locations with exposed aggregate paving with wood joints, and on some concrete pads with benches have been appended to the walk. New period style light posts and period style benches and other site furniture have been added.

History: Arcata Plaza was laid out by the Union Company in 1850 along with the surrounding blocks of commercial buildings. The plaza was known as the

Commons. Arcata was known as Union or Uniontown for the first ten years of its existence. The Plaza became a parade ground where a citizen's military company drilled. The plaza was also used for grazing cows by citizens until May 6, 1901 when cows were banned from the Plaza. By city ordinance the Plaza was the only place in town where bars and liquor stores could be located and accordingly women were not allowed in the Plaza until 1870. The Plaza was the staging area for numerous pack trains of mules for miners. The Plaza and surrounding area was the site of corrals and livery stables.

Through the years, the Plaza served as the nucleus of community events. It was used as a ball park, a gathering place for town and national celebrations of holidays, the scene of huge 4th of July bonfires, of bicycle races, parades, Easter egg hunts, concerts, theatrical performances, fairs and an annual salmon bake.

By 1855 a railroad brought supplies to the southwest corner of the plaza from a deep water wharf that had been constructed on the shore. Supplies were brought to the plaza to construct the businesses located around the plaza and to support mining camps in the vicinity. A 1897 photograph shows the plaza with a similar configuration – mostly lawn, the diagonal paths, and wood plank sidewalk on all four sides.

In 1895 Arcata resident Charles Murdock thought the plaza should be improved. He wrote, "The Plaza should be a thing of beauty and a center of life and interest. No building should rest upon it, but green sword, and well kept walks, a fountain, shrubs, and trees should be so attractive that it would be the pride of every citizen." This led to the establishment of the Plaza Improvement Committee. A center bandstand was completed in 1901 and later removed in 1906 when the McKinley statue was installed. By 1903 roses, boxwood and the original palms were planted. Murdock suggested the radiating sidewalks which were completed in 1910. The WCTU drinking fountain, built by stonemason James Davidson, was installed in 1912.

Haig Patigian is the sculpture commissioned by George Zehnder to create the McKinley statue. This was Patigian's first major commission. Patigian was a prolific sculpture whose works includes a stature of Abraham Lincoln in front of San Francisco's City Hall, a monument to the Volunteer Firemen of the 1850s in Washington Square, San Francisco, General John Pershing in Golden Gate Park, and in Washington D.C. a statue of Thomas Starr King in the Hall of Fame at the Capitol and a bust of Herbert Hoover in the White House. Delivery of the McKinley statue to Arcata was delayed because of the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco. Workman removed the completed statue from the burning foundry – saving it.

Most of the buildings that surround the plaza were constructed before 1900, three were built in the 1950s, one is quite new, and the remainder were built by 1915. The Jacoby Building at 8th & H Streets built in 1857 is California Registered

Historical Landmark No. 783. The Hotel Arcata at 9th & G was built in 1915 by W.H. Weeks of San Francisco.

Sources: Historic photographs and captions from a display inside the Hotel Arcata, 9th & G Streets, 708 9th Street, Arcata, CA 95521 (800) 344-1221 or (707) 826-0217. Photos taken by A.W. Ericson.

City of Arcata website, www.cityofarcata.com

Historical Sites Society, Arcata History, www.arcatahistory.org/arcata_plaza.htm

Arcata History Timeline, www.google.com/search: Arcata plaza history

Arcata Eye Newspaper, www.viamagazine.com/weekenders/arcata00.asp

“Leave McKinley and the Plaza as they are” by Monica Hadley, Uprooting the McKinley sculpture means tearing up Arcata’s history.
www.arcataeye.com/old/opinion/000404opinion01.shtml

Site visit in May 2009.

Historian: Chris Pattillo, Landscape Architect, July 7, 2009
PGAdesign
444 17th Street
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 550-8855
pattillo@PGAdesign.com



H Street mid-block walk with the 1912 drinking fountain (Chris Pattillo, May 2009).



Current photo of the plaza showing one of the diagonal walks, the central plaza area, the McKinley statue and pedestal, lawn, and two date palms (Chris Pattillo, May 2009).



STAFF REPORT – HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMITTEE MEETING

TO: Honorable Chair and Committee Members

FROM: David Loya, Director of Community Development

PREPARER: Delores Freitas, Senior Planner

DATE: April 16, 2026

TITLE: **Provide Direction on Historic Preservation Month Planning**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the committee receive report and provide direction to staff.

DISCUSSION:

Preservation Month, observed annually in May, provides an opportunity for the City of Arcata to promote public awareness of local history, highlight designated historic resources, and encourage community engagement in historic preservation efforts. This annual observance supports broader goals of recognizing and preserving the City's cultural and architectural heritage.

In prior years, the Committee has focused on public education through participation in community events and collaboration with local schools, historical organizations, and other stakeholders. These efforts have contributed to increased awareness and appreciation of Arcata's historic resources. The April meeting will serve as an opportunity for committee members and the public to discuss potential ideas for Preservation Month activities and associated roles and responsibilities.

Staff has attached a Preservation Month proposal submitted by Councilmember Alex Stillman. The proposal includes the installation of a photographic display featuring Arcata's National Register-listed landmark properties in City Hall during the month of May, with the potential for an extended display period. This installation would provide an accessible and visible means of recognizing the City's historic resources.

Due to current staff capacity constraints, staff is not proposing additional Preservation Month activities at this time. However, staff would like to provide an opportunity for the Committee to offer input and recommendations and will support feasible activities as resources allow.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Preservation Month Display Proposal

Proposal from Alex Stillman: Nine framed photos to be placed in the City Hall Lobby Corridor between April 23 and June 23 in honor of May's Historic Preservation Month. Tom Bethune (local photographer) is getting them ready. Photos will also have his bio and QR Code.

Buildings in Arcata on the National Registry of Historic Places

1. Phillips House Museum c.1850's
2. Jacoby Storehouse 1857, expanded 1907
3. Nixon House 1861
4. Chapman House 1876
5. Schorlig House 1885
6. Whaley House 1850's moved in 1903
7. Minor Theater 1914
8. Hotel Arcata 1914
9. Stewart School 1925