

— 1870 to 2011 —

Best of times,  
 worst of times  
 in the Clark

District

**B**EAUTY, ENDURANCE



Eureka's first residential addition, the Clark District, was named after Dr. Jonathan Clark, a discouraged gold-seeker. The Indiana native's luck changed after arriving in town in June 1850. He quickly began buying land while continuing to work as a physician and surgeon. His patients included Ulysses S. Grant at Fort Humboldt.

By 1866, Clark was platting his land between Broadway, Eighth, Cedar and C streets. By the 1870s, he was selling parcels — offering better prices to home-seekers and settlers than to speculators.



**A fanciful door element on B Street**

People liked Clark. Grant mentions him favorably in his memoirs. Eureka elected him mayor, supervisor, then state assemblyman — a natural choice for a descendent of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The doctor died at age 58 during a visit to San Francisco in 1884. When his body was brought back to Eureka, a large, solemn crowd gathered on the wharf to escort it back home — to the Clark District.



**A Queen Anne at 1003 B St. was built in 1871. Jefferson School (top photo) is seen through a small bay window at B and Clark.**

# O PIONEER: A home for Lizzie

On Nov. 6, 1869, the Humboldt Times reported “unmistakable evidence” that newcomers were being attracted to the Clark District, and they were building “handsome residences.” By 1872, 80 of the original 196 lots had been sold and 26 dwellings erected.

The earliest houses here represent Eureka’s settlement era. The popular styles of the time were the simpler Greek and Gothic revivals, but the fancier Italianate look was gaining attention — and Elizabeth Marks favored it. In 1885, she bought the simple house at 1015 B St., which had been built 10 years earlier. Lizzie, as she was known, remodeled it and finally found a lasting home.

A Philadelphia native, Lizzie was 4 months old when her parents set out for the West, first by boat, then crossing Panama to reach the Pacific. Lizzie’s mother road mule-back, carrying her baby on a pillow. The family arrived in Eureka in the mid-1850s. Soon they sailed to Trinidad and took pack trains to the Elk Camp settlement in the Bald Hills, establishing a ranch that was eventually burned by Native Americans.

In 1872, Lizzie married Harry Marks, a lumberman from New Brunswick, Canada. After several moves, they settled into 1015 B St., and lived there until Harry’s death in 1916. Two years later Lizzie finally did move to another part of town. She died in 1939 at age 86.

“She was a true pioneer and a devoted helpmate to her husband in the trying times,” the Standard reported on July 6, 1939. “She was possessed of an exceptionally keen mind and kept abreast of all progressive movements in the community.”

Lizzie’s former home was a natural choice for current owner Lorene Dunaway, who fell in love with Victorians in San Fran-



**In the 1880s, pioneer Lizzie Marks (left) bought the house at 1015 B St. and remodeled it into the symmetrical Italianate beauty it remains in the 21st century.**

“She was a true pioneer ... possessed of an exceptionally keen mind.”

**Humboldt Standard**  
July 6, 1939

cisco. Moving to Eureka, she and her husband settled into 1015 B St. in 1979. In the early years, the house served as both residence and daycare center as Lorene worked on her master’s degree. The couple’s two major house projects — on the chimney and kitchen — occurred after two big earthquakes.

As with other neighbors, Lorene reports life in the Clark District is a mixed blessing. The latter half of the 20th century brought grim changes: the old homes became unpopular and began to deteriorate, crime increased, and ill-fitting apartments were built. The 1980s, she said, were the

worst; her house was burglarized often. In the ‘90s, a rejuvenation began as preservation-minded folk began moving in and fixing up the old houses. The closing of Jefferson School in 2006 has slowed down that progress, she added.

“People just don’t appreciate this part of town,” says Lorene, who is part of a grassroots effort to find a new purpose for the school, an impressive Streamline Moderne structure. It has, she says, become a prime example of “urban blight,” and it casts a shadow on the future of the Clark District.

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From 1912, third-graders pose on a giant seesaw at the first Jefferson School, which was torn down in 1938.



Historical photos courtesy Humboldt County Historical Society



The 1890 grocery store at Clark and B was modernized in the 1980s. The firehouse was torn down in 1941 to make way for a new Jefferson School.



## A GOOD LIFE

From the 1880s into the 1920s, the Clark District was one of the most desirable places to live in a city that was thriving as never before. By 1898, the first Jefferson school was built on A Street, and a firehouse was erected a block away. Down the street, at B and Clark, a small commercial hub included a grocery market, a meat market, shoemaker and grain warehouse.

The most popular Victorian-era houses built here during this time were done in the flamboyant Queen Anne style. While its reign lasted nationally from 1880 to about 1900, Eureka's held on longer, building them into the 1910s.

In the early 2000s, when a group of neighbors began surveying the area in hopes of establishing a local historic district, they discovered 38 Queen Annes still existed within the district's boundaries.

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# VARIATION

## ON A THEME

A 1906 Colonial Revival combines strength, style

**W**ith the very first glimpse of their future home, Doug and Bonnie George were sold. “We instantly loved it — and its steeply pitched roof,” Bonnie remembers. “We drove by and just said ‘Wow!’”

The Georges found the interior of the home at Clark and B streets to be equally impressive, with stunning old-growth woodwork throughout, including baseboards a foot tall. They soon learned it had more than just good looks. The foundation and subfloor included additional thick cross-bracing. Perhaps, Doug speculates, it was done as a reaction to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which occurred the same year the house was built.

Another star attraction is in the foyer. “The stairwell is exceptional,” added Doug, a retired physicist. “They dedicated a lot of space for it.”

Credit for all this goes to the builder, Ambrose Foster, a native of Maine who moved to Eureka in 1867 as a boy with his family — including his carpenter/builder father, Albert. Ambrose followed in his footsteps and went on to build several notable houses, as well as the Carnegie Library, the Minor Theatre in Arcata, and Fernbridge.

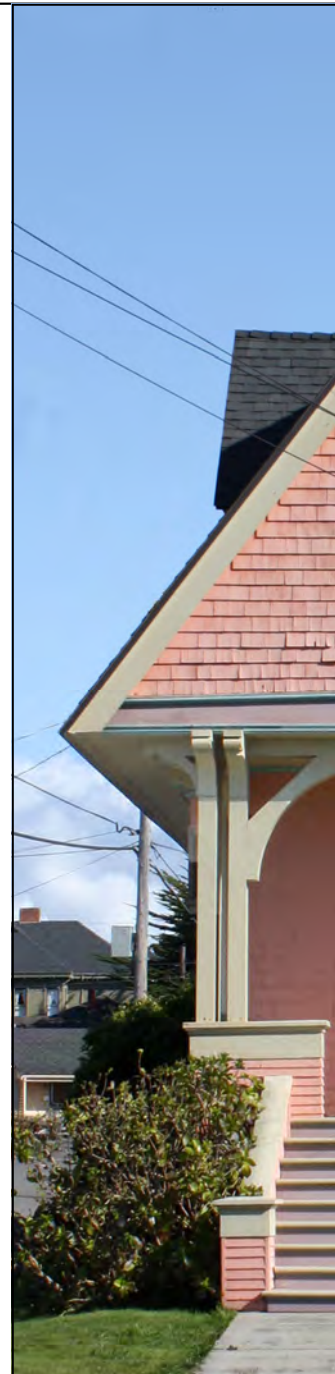
The house was constructed for William Clark, the son of Dr. Jonathan Clark, as a rental. The first renters were the Roberts family: Guy and Camille and their two sons. Guy was in banking, and by 1919 he was able to buy the house, which stayed in the family until the 1960s.

This is the first old house the Georges have lived in, and they found it reasonably intact after moving there in 2004. It did need some work, most of which they have done themselves, including redoing the kitchen and stripping some of the painted woodwork. It’s been a labor of love, they maintain.

“This is the nicest house we’ve ever lived in,” Doug said.



**Original woodwork and built-ins are found throughout the 105-year-old house.**





## Gazing out THE EYEBROW DORMER

Shaped like a sleepy half-opened eye, the eyebrow dormer peeks out from the south side of the gabled roof. It is an uncommon find in Eureka, although a virtual twin of this house a few blocks away on famed Hillsdale Street also has the same charming accent.

While the origins of these types of dormers is unknown, it is known they became popular nationwide in the late 1800s, according to the *Old House Journal* (June 2006). They are most often found on Queen Anne and Shingle style houses, which makes the George house — an unusual variant of Colonial Revival — an exception.

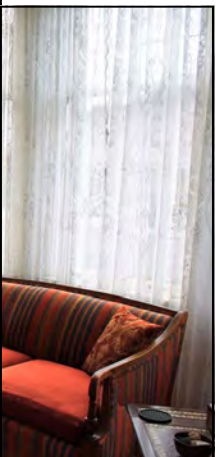
The function of an eyebrow dormer, the *Journal* states, is to admit light and air to an unfinished attic. In the George house, however, it is a charming accent for an upstairs office.



**The eyebrow blends into the roofline seamlessly.**

## Roots in Colonial America

According to Eureka Heritage Society survey files, this house is “an unusual interpretation” of a Colonial Revival. The style gained popularity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and its most familiar look — which is most reflective of early American homes — is horizontal and symmetrical, often with round columns. In the late 1800s, the style was often blended with Queen Anne lines.



# EVOLVING STYLES

One of Eureka's most remarkable Queen Annes is the one-of-a-kind Brosnan House at Clark and A streets.

It's got the works: an elaborate projecting porch flanked by curved bay windows, half-balustrade panels below the windows, and curved elements over the porch and in the eaves that, according to Hal Jackson and Ted Loring Jr., authors of "Eureka: A Guide to the Architecture and Landscape," lend a Moorish feel to the dwelling.

The masterpiece was designed by architect George Costerisan in 1884 for Timothy and



**The Brosnan House is a unique Queen Anne with Moorish flair.**

Katherine Brosnan. An Irish emigrant, Brosnan had done well in the lumber industry, and his new home reflected his success and good name within the community — but not his inner turmoil. After a suicide attempt in 1905, the couple moved to another part of town. Three years later, while sailing with his wife to San Francisco for medical treatment, Brosnan was lost overboard.

**IN THE EARLY 20th century, architectural trends were** changing dramatically, and the Craftsman was fast becoming one of America's most popular styles.

The Craftsman ideal was one of "simple, directly revealed craftsmanship," preservationist Leslie Heald states in a paper titled the "Preservation Commission Draft of the Historic Clark District." It reflected the rise of the middle class and a growing interest in the natural world.

The antithesis of Victoriana, Craftsman homes have proven curiously compatible with their older, more elaborate neighbors. A prime example is a block away from the Brosnan House. The historical Quill House was built for John and Mary Quill in 1912, and it remained in the family until 1991, when Lu Brenman purchased it. Lu often visited former owner Mary Quill, who by then was a centenarian living in a nursing home

"I just wanted her to know I was taking good care of it," Lu said. "She seemed to understand."



**A block away from the Brosnan House at 24 W. Clark is the Quill House, a 1912 Craftsman.**

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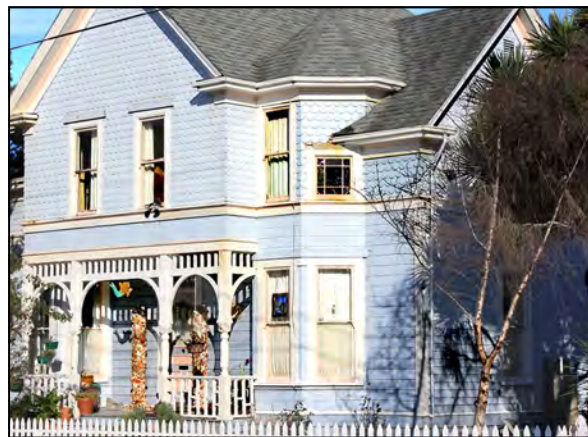
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**Liz Garrett's artwork — shell columns and a mermaid — adorn 1003 B St.**



# THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE OLD HOUSES

The love of old houses and of their stellar craftsmanship often brings the people who own and live in them together. Thus their efforts to save Jefferson School and establish historic district designations continue within the Clark. The future and the past, they believe, are linked. And the past drifts through these neighborhoods like a gentle fog.

One day a man paid a visit to Ann White at 935 B St., which is a 1914 Queen Anne house. It was the longtime home of the Moore family, including former Eureka mayor Fred Moore Jr. and his father, a one-time state assemblyman. The visitor — who had lived in Petrolia when no schools were available — stayed

with the family while finishing his education.

“He told me he was playing out in front one day, and a man came up to him and asked to see ‘Judge’ Moore,” Ann said. “Well, the man was Earl Warren (the late California governor and U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice).”

Another Eureka mayor, Louis Kinsey (1892-1894), lived across the street at 1003 B St. This house started out as a simpler Greek Revival when it was built in 1871, but it was given a glorious Queen Anne remodeling at the turn of the 20th century. It is now one of the district’s many rentals, and one that stirs memories for current tenant Liz Garrett.

“I’m from Alabama, and I was raised in big old houses,” said Liz, who was living in Southern California when her son convinced her to join him in Eureka after finding a “great big Victorian” house to live in. Liz headed north, settled into the house and then opened a coastal-themed shop in Old Town.

“When I first came here, I drove up and down the streets and ‘oohed’ and ‘aaahed,’” she said, adding that she agrees with neighbor Ann that if more people outside the area knew about Eureka’s old houses, they would move here. Instead the area seems chained down in perpetual semi-slumhood. Some have given up and moved. Those who stay sing the praises of the new chief of police, Garr Neilsen, for ensuring a fast police response when called to the Clark.

“He’s fabulous,” Ann said. “There was a dramatic difference when he took over. Everybody in the area loves him.”

## Eureka Woman’s Club’s

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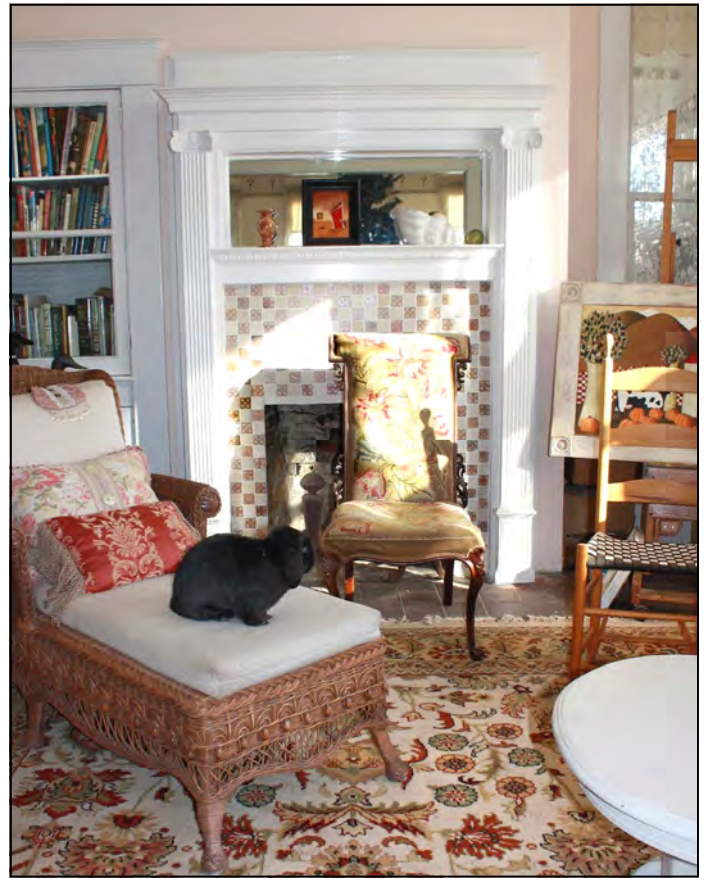
# ARTIST'S INSPIRATION

For artist Ann White, living in an old house has been the only possible choice. "I've always been drawn to old houses. I wouldn't live in a new house," she says.

Ann and husband Robert Serpa, also an artist, moved to the North Coast in the 1990s, drawn by the architecture and the sea. They chose a house in need of help, and they have been working on it ever since. They have removed asbestos shingles, replaced 1950s-era aluminum windows with appropriate wood, and secured the foundation.

Outside the home, Ann became an advocate for the restoration of the Clark, and she now believes the Internet may be the answer. It could help spread the word about Eureka's Victorians.

"You're going to have to bring people in from the outside to buy these houses, and they



**Ann White's art is seen throughout her home, including the dining room and parlor, where pet Willops the Black Rabbit makes himself at home.**

can't buy them if they don't know they're here," she said. "Eureka should be popping up next to big sites like historicalhomes.com."

Meanwhile, work in her home continues, and the results are impressive. The interior is adorned in the artist's favorite colors: red, pink, white and black. From Ann's paintings on display to the wall treatments and furnishings, the décor reflects her favorite vintage themes. The imagery of old-style checkerboards is chief among them.

"It's like the game board of life," she explains. "Where you move makes all the difference."



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