

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: Kleiser, James, House **DRAFT**

Other names/site number: Nixon House

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 1022 10<sup>th</sup> 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Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

---

**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**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register           

---

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Dwelling

---

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Gothic Revival

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Pier & Post

Construction: Redwood Balloon

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### **Summary Paragraph**

The James Kleiser House is a Gothic Revival style residence built in 1858 for Arcata merchant James A. Kleiser. Built on a pier & post foundation, the walls are balloon-framed redwood, consisting of 1 ½ inch overlapping redwood planks extended vertically from the foundation to the roof line, varying in width from 1 to 3 feet, and finished with 1 inch thick horizontal plank siding, resulting in exterior walls of solid wood four inches thick. The building is one-and-a-half stories and side-gabled, with a steep roof pitch and unboxed eaves. Two rectangular red brick chimneys pierce the ridge line, flanking a centered, forward-projecting gable over the building's primary entrance. The principal construction material is locally sourced old growth redwood. Architectural details applied to the building interior and exterior were ordered from New York and shipped around Cape Horn. While symmetrical in form, the house was styled after an "Asymmetrical Cottage" architectural pattern from A.J. Downing's *Cottage Residences*, published in 1842.

### **Narrative Description**

The primary façade, facing south, has a central cross-gabled dormer above the building's primary entrance, a nine panel wooden door beneath a flat roofed entry porch, supported by flattened basket-handle arches and topped by a diagonal cross balustrade. Beneath the gable is a diamond-paned French door, matching the style and width of the windows on primary and secondary facades, topped by a Gothic arch and flanked by louvered shutters. On either side of the primary entrance are diamond-paned double casement windows topped by steeply pitched hoods and bordered by louvered shutters. Wooden bargeboards with a quatrefoil pattern are located beneath the front gable with a centered pendant finial. On either side of the projecting gable are single diamond-paned casement windows.

The eastern façade features a centered bay window with diamond paned casement windows, beneath a double casement window with diamond panes; both have louvered wooden shutters. The western secondary façade has a diamond-paned double casement window on each floor, with the lower window topped by a steeply pitched hood identical to those on the primary façade, and the upper window flanked by wooden louvered shutters.

The building rear includes several subsequent extensions and additions. The most prominent is a one-story front-gabled extension featuring a large dining room and pantry, with a large shed roofed porch facing J Street. Behind the dining room is a smaller, square side-gabled addition containing a kitchen and laundry room. Viewed from above, the main house, dining room and

Kleiser, James, House

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

kitchen additions create a small central courtyard open to the west. Two small shed roofed additions within the courtyard contain a bathroom, added to the main house, and a pumphouse, added to the kitchen. The construction date of these additions is unknown, but match the exterior materials of the main house. The windows on the dining room addition are six over six double hung wooden sash,

The roof has modern composition shingles.

### **Building Interior:**

The dining room was part of the original construction. The kitchen was originally a separate structure. Underneath the hallway to the kitchen there are still the outlines of steps down to the back yard. Also, there were remnants of a "cooler" (screen bottomed shelves) located in the pump house and accessible from that hallway. Along with a doorway from the kitchen hall there is also a pass through into the dining room. From the construction underneath, it appears that the separate kitchen was raised up and attached to the main house. The current owner's estimate is that this was done sometime between 1875 and 1890.

A bathroom was also added behind the parlor, off the main hallway. Construction date for the bathroom is approximately 1870-1880, based on the availability of indoor plumbing fixtures.

The house was styled after an Asymmetrical Cottage taken from the architectural pattern book by A.J. Downing, *Cottage Residences* from 1842. The one-and-a-half story, center gable house features distinct diamond-paned casement windows covered by steeply-pitched hoods and bordered by louvered shutter. The Kleiser House is built in the Gothic style, the only house in Arcata featuring this style, and one of the only remaining homes from the 1860's period. The house is solid old growth redwood balloon construction (meaning layers of 1 ½ inch overlapping redwood planks extended vertically from the foundation all the way to the roofline, ranging from one to three feet in width, and finished with 1-inch-thick exterior plank horizontal siding) with exterior walls of solid wood 4-inches-thick. The windows, marble fireplace, and oak banister were imported, traveling around Cape Horn on sailing ships. The property originally included the entire block as well as the block to the north across Eleventh Street.

### **Integrity and Additions:**

Added to the Kleiser House since the original construction are, of course, electrical wiring and plumbing. A bathroom was added with a shed roof in the interior courtyard area. The kitchen was originally a separate structure that was raised and attached to the house.

The interior has retained the original layout. Repairs and remodeling of the interior have continued since 1971 with period restoration as the objective. Originally most interior walls were decorated with wallpaper over cheesecloth tacked to rough wood. For fire safety and to create a smooth surface, the wallpaper has been removed and ¼ inch sheetrock installed. They were then repapered in older style patterns. A crown molding was installed in the parlor identical to that in the living room. Bookshelves were installed in the living room and parlor to match the one bookshelf existing in the living room.

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

**Garage:**

It appears that the garage was added 1910-1920. It still has a dirt floor, but unlike most of the structure, was of frame construction. The framing material is clear heart old growth redwood and full dimension lumber. (modern 2"x4" lumber is less than 2"x4") I was told that the original stable was located at the northeast corner of the block. While the garage is not a contributing resource due to its construction date, its style and scale do not diminish the historic integrity of the property.

**Landscape:**

The exterior landscaping is dominated by a very large Black Walnut tree that was planted about 1870 and is a noted local landmark. The landscaping also includes large iliac bushes, snowball, flowering quince and roses. The landscaping is predominately Eastern United States variety plants and trees, a common practice of northern California cities following the Gold Rush, as they were principally inhabited by migrants from the northeastern United States, who brought their gardening and landscaping practices with them, along with Northeastern architectural styles. These styles of landscaping were also considered complementary to Gothic Revival architecture, in line with its promoters' intent for use of the style for rural cottages in naturalistic settings.

The property retains a high degree of historic integrity in all aspects.

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- 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

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1858-1870

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Kleiser, James

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The James Kleiser House is significant under National Register Criterion C as a locally significant example of Gothic Revival architecture, the only extant example in Arcata, California. The house was built by James Kleiser, based on a pattern-book design by Andrew Jackson Downing. The property's period of significance is 1858-1870, from first construction until planting of a pepper tree in the yard that constitutes a major feature of the building's landscape design. This period also included construction of the rear wings of the building, to facilitate its use by the Nixon family, subsequent purchasers of the house.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion C: Architecture**

Designed in the Gothic Revival style during the early settlement period of the city of Arcata, the James Kleiser House is the only remaining such example. Its Redwood Balloon Construction is also unique in the City of Arcata. The house embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Gothic Revival style, and possesses high artistic values.

Although the Wiyot People have been living in the Humboldt Bay region for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans in California, the Gold Rush was the major impetus for rapid



Kleiser, James, House

Name of Property

Humboldt, CA

County and State

colonization of California. Gold-seekers extended their search to Humboldt County by 1850, establishing the town of Union, later renamed Arcata, on the northern end of Arcata Bay. While searchers for gold found little pay dirt, they realized that the trees of the region were a seemingly inexhaustible resource for construction materials in a growing state. As with much vernacular architecture in California during the Gold Rush, the earliest buildings were simple and utilitarian, and the handful of surviving contemporary 1850s-60s homes in Arcata reflect that architectural simplicity. But even frontier communities quickly strove to express their arrival through architectural expression, transitioning from simple folk Victorian homes to the popular styles of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Kleiser House was built in 1858 at a cost of \$5,000 by James Kleiser, a Dutch carpenter and trader in Arcata and Hoopa. The Kleiser House is significant because it is one of the only remaining houses from this early settlement period, the earliest and oldest surviving home representing this shift from architecturally simple frontier houses to contemporary styles, and is the only remaining example of its style, Gothic Revival, found in the city of Arcata, and may also be the only example of its style in Humboldt County. Other surviving Arcata homes from the settlement period were built in a simplified Greek Revival style, or folk Victorian buildings with no particular architectural style.

The architectural construction method, balloon framed redwood plank, is another uniquely remaining example of this period; no other surviving Arcata homes from this period appear to have used this method of framing. Plank siding was practical where rough lumber was abundant but access to precision machinery to create dimensional lumber for traditional balloon frame construction was limited, such as the early mills of Union. These initial settlement buildings differ from later Italianate and Queen Anne styles, whose more elaborate architectural elements were created after local mills could produce higher-quality turned and sawn architectural details. While the Kleiser House includes architectural embellishments, its relative simplicity compared to later examples demonstrates how early European settlers in this part of California interpreted popular architectural styles using principally local materials, with imported architectural details, to present a sophisticated and elegant architectural appearance to a community that had been a frontier settlement only a few years earlier. It still maintains its original distinct diamond-paned casement windows cover by steeply pitched hoods and bordered by louvered shutters. The original carved redwood bargeboard is also a rare surviving example of that type of work.

James Kleiser purchased two blocks of land in the town of Union (later renamed Arcata) in 1858. Kleiser owned a grist mill in the nearby Hoopa Valley and a business in Union. Because the house was offered for sale within a year of its construction, it is possible that the Kleiser family never occupied the house, despite the level of care and detail applied to its construction, including marble fireplaces, newel post and banister for the entrance hall staircase, and other details shipped from New York and applied to a frame of local redwood. The following advertisement appeared in the *Northern Californian* newspaper on September 14, 1859:

*For Sale—A Bargain*

*The new and superior dwelling house of James A. Kleiser in the town of Union with two blocks of ground, well stocked with fruit trees, convenient out buildings. In all respects a most desirable family residence. Terms low if applied for soon. For particulars apply to the subscriber.*

*H.W. Havens, Union*

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Within the week, the house was sold to Klamath County packer J.A.B. Faulkner, who sold the house to Union merchants A. Jacoby and James Michael to resolve unpaid tax debt. In 1861, William Nixon purchased the house from Jacoby and Michael in return for 500 sacks of potatoes grown on Nixon's nearby farm, but title was not transferred to Nixon until 1865. The Nixon family inhabited the building until 1971.

### The Gothic Revival Style

The Gothic Revival style is part of the mid-19th century Picturesque and Romantic movement in architecture, reflecting the taste for buildings inspired by medieval design. Introduced by architect Alexander Jackson Davis in his 1837 book *Rural Residences* and popularized far more successfully by Davis' friend Andrew Jackson Downing in his books *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), the Gothic Revival style was inspired by medieval architecture, as reintroduced by Sir Horace Walpole in 1749. Downing's promotion of the style gave it national recognition, but the style's popularity was frequently limited to small towns and rural settings, as emphasized by Downing, who stressed its suitability as a rural style. Most examples of the style in the United States were built between 1840 and 1870. The most prominent features of Gothic Revival homes are a steeply pitched roof, usually with steep cross gables, decorated vergeboards under the gables, pointed-arch windows, and a one-story porch commonly supported by Gothic arches. The Kleiser House is an example of the "centered gable" subtype of Gothic Revival architecture, the most common subtype.

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

- Christie, Mable E. "Arcata Rich in Pioneer Tradition", Humboldt Standard June 15, 1939
- Dowling, A.J. "The Architecture of Country Houses", 1850 pp 104ff
- Fountain, Susie Baker "Undated letter to Mrs. Freeman" Historic Houses-Arcata, Pamphlet, Humboldt State University Library
- Fountain, Susie Baker *Notebooks, Vol 7*, Humboldt State University Library
- Guinn, James Miller, "History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Coast Counties, California" Chapman Publishing 1904 1500 pages James A. Kleiser (page 577)
- William Nixon (Page 1403)
- Karshner, Gayle "Guild Given Sneak Preview of Nixon Home". Historic Houses-Arcata, Pamphlet, Humboldt State University Library
- Historical Sites Society of Arcata Newsletter, Vol. 1 No. 1 1979
- Historical Sites Society of Arcata Newsletter Vol. 4 No. 2, 1979
- Markland, Pat "Victorians Stand Tall Proud, Historic Houses-Arcata", Pamphlet, Humboldt State University Library
- McAlester, Virginia, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.
- Nixon, Harry C., "Early History of Arcata Told by Harry C. Nixon". Arcata Union April 5, 1940
- Stanton, Katie "Historical Research and Architectural Analysis for LHP Designation", Historic Houses-Arcata, October 18, 1988 Humboldt State University Library

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Van Kirk, Susie "Reflections of Arcata's History: eighty years of architecture", Page 8, Bug Press, January 1979

Van Kirk, Susie "Arcata A Briefest of Histories" Historical Sites Society of Arcata Newsletter, Vol 7 No 2 2008

---

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acree of Property** Less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 40.870386 Longitude: -124.088659

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Starting from the Northeast corner of J & 10<sup>th</sup> Street, for 100 feet to the West to the property boundary, extending 170 feet to the North, 100 feet to the East to the sidewalk, and 170 feet South to the origin.

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Although the property originally included the entire block that the house now sits on, the only extant structure with significance and integrity are located with this property boundary.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Dan Hauser  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 1022 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
city or town: Arcata state: CA zip code: 95521  
e-mail: dhauser@suddenlink.net  
telephone: 707 822-5732  
date: 02/26/2022

---

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photograph #1**

**Dan Hauser photograph 2005. Looking slightly west of north including Black Walnut tree.**

**Photograph #2**

**Dan Hauser photograph April 2, 2018. Looking slightly east of north including new railings on front porch steps.**

**Photograph #3**

**Dan Hauser photograph August 4, 2021. Looking north at front of house.**

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

**Photograph #4**

**Dan Hauser photograph August 4, 2021. East side of house.**

**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

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

## Figure Log

Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

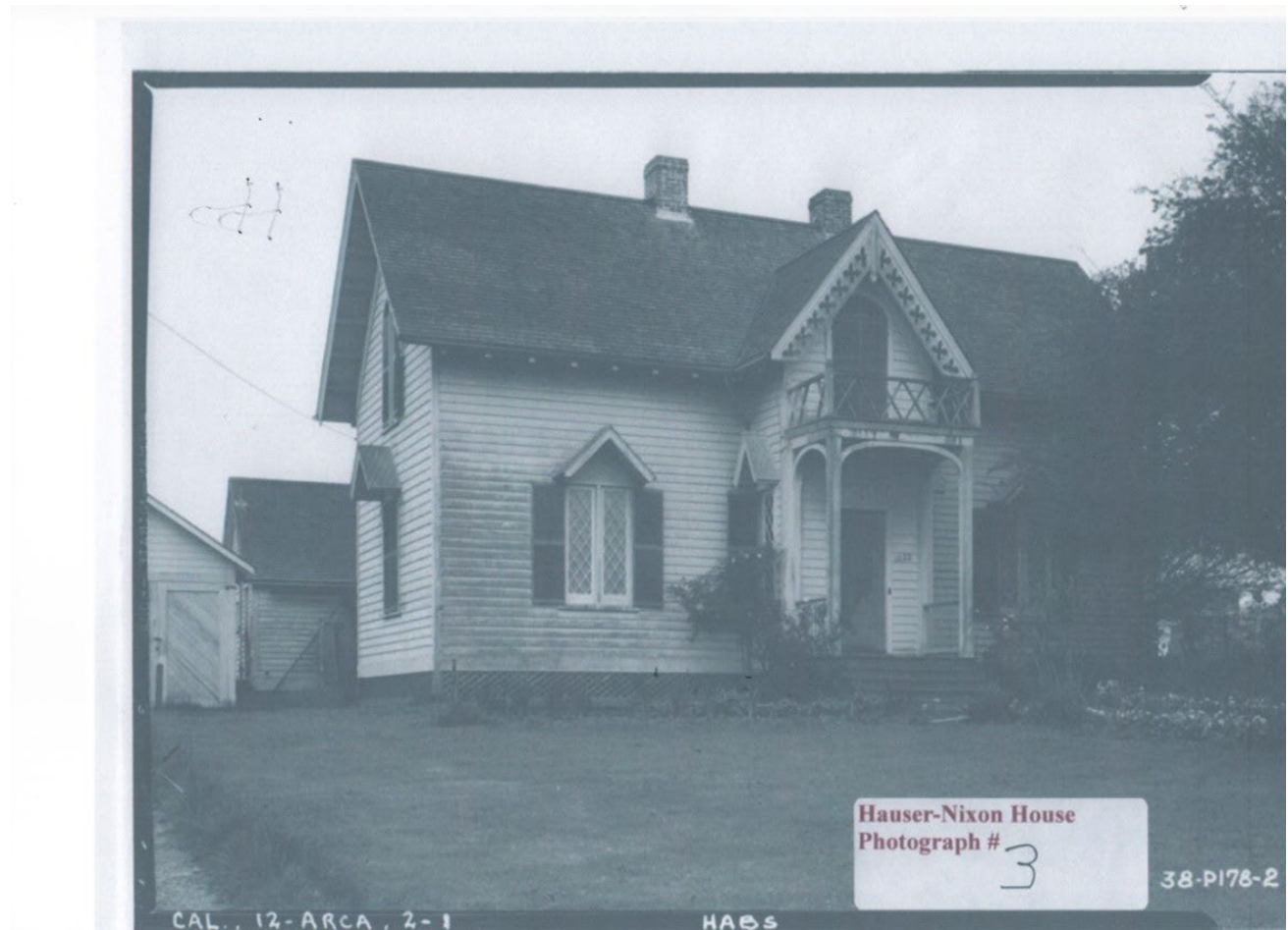
Figure 1: Kleiser House circa 1970-1980, from stereoscope view, Elizabeth Nixon-Lubin family collection



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Figure 2: 1934 HABS photo of Nixon House, Historic American Building Survey, primary façade (10<sup>th</sup> Street)

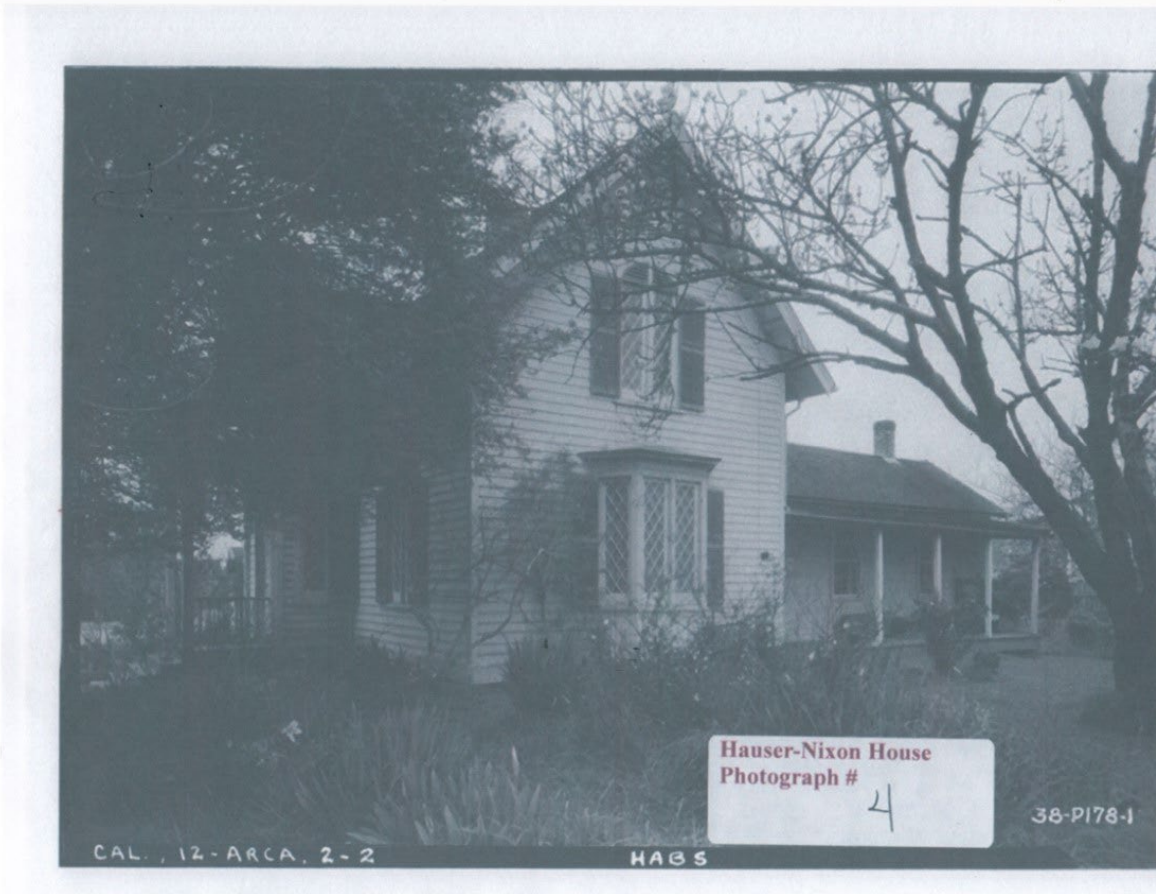




Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Figure 3: 1934 HABS photo of Nixon House, Historic American Building Survey, secondary façade (J Street)



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Figure 4: 1934 HABS photo of Kleiser House, Historic American Building Survey, neighborhood view facing northeast, corner of 10<sup>th</sup> & K Street in foreground, house on middle right



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Figure 5: Kleiser House, 1971, photo by Susie Van Kirk



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

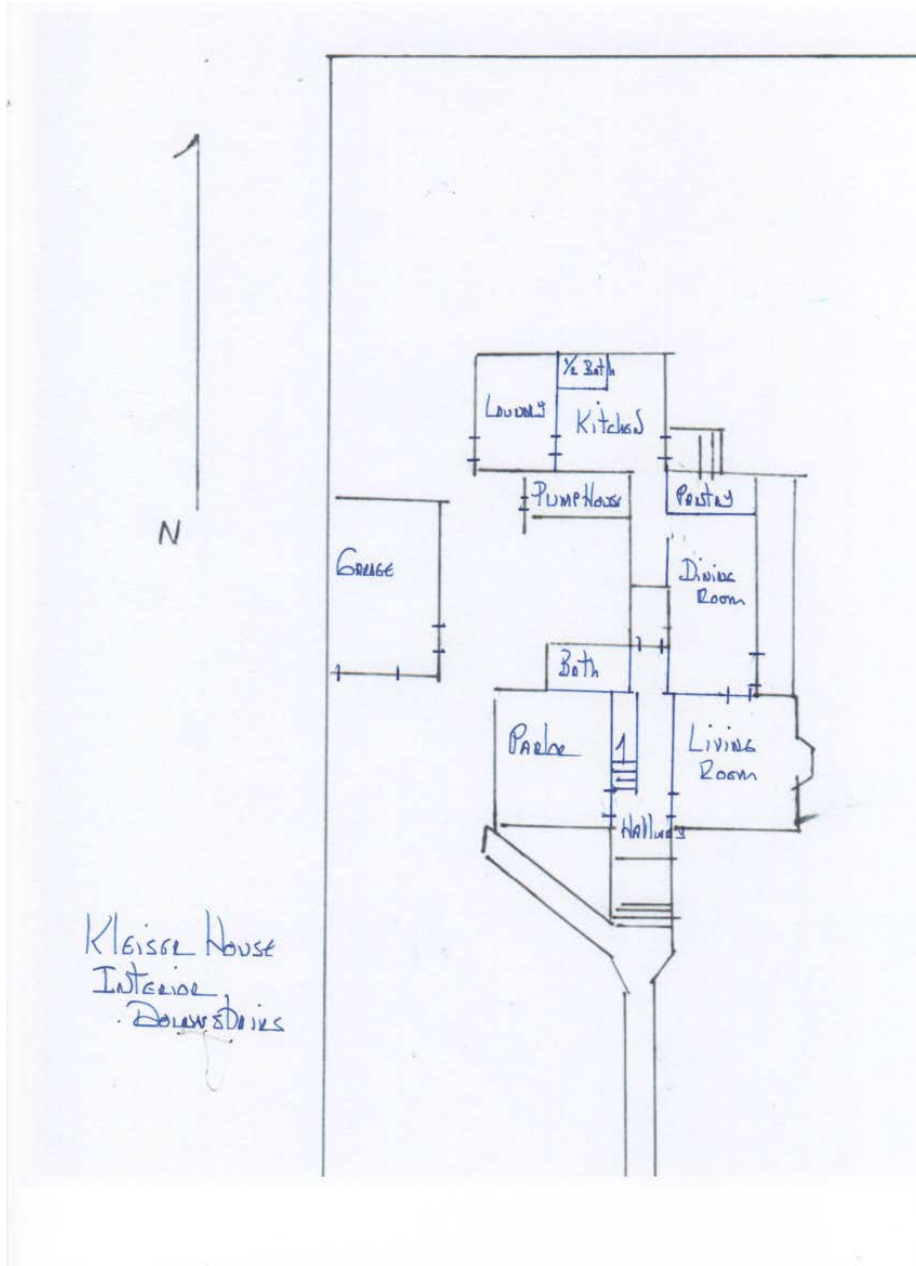
Figure 6: Kleiser House Photo Diagram



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

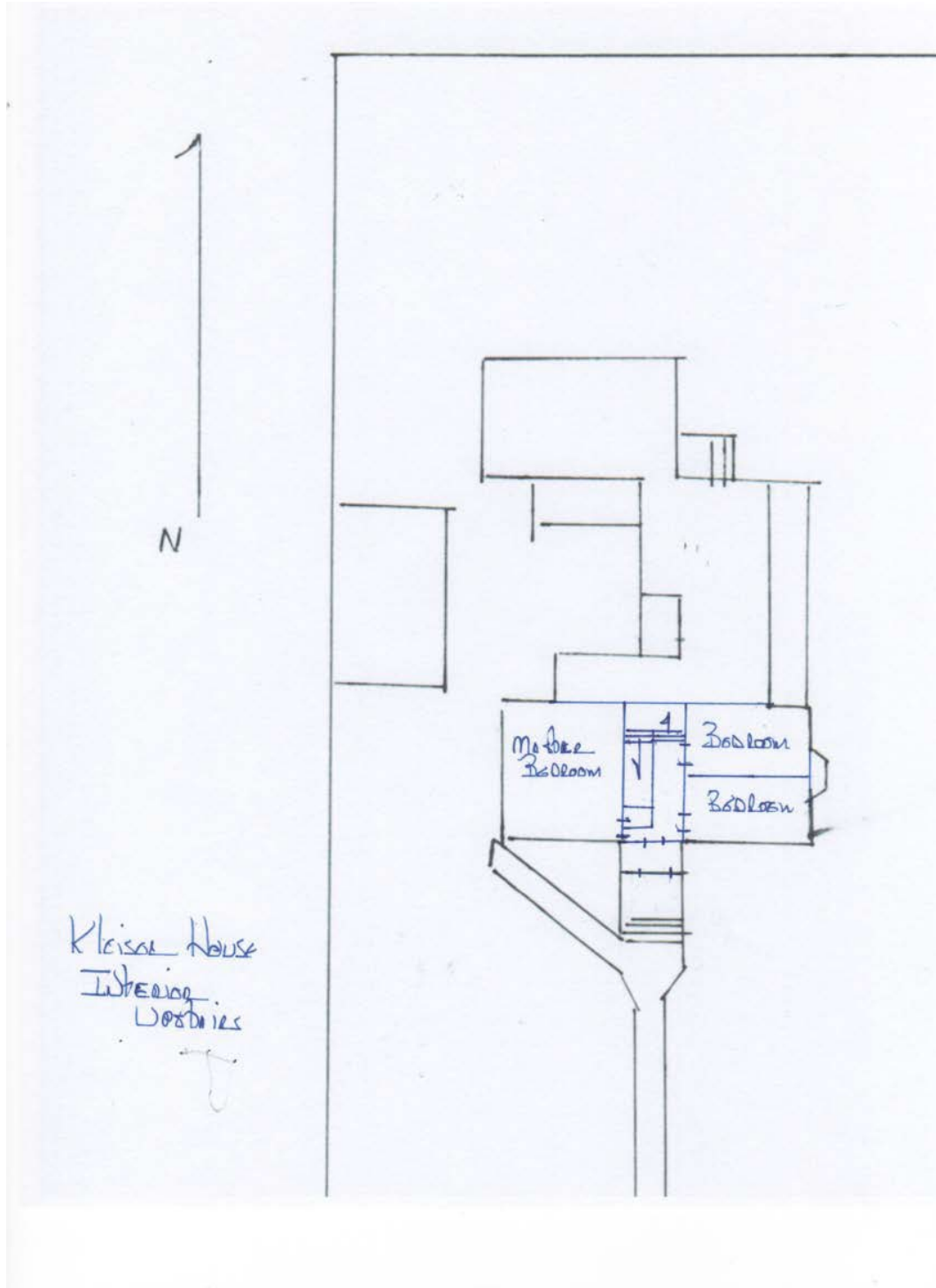
Figure 7: Kleiser House Interior Downstairs



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Figure 8: Kleiser House Interior Upstairs



Kleiser, James, House  
Name of Property

Humboldt, CA  
County and State

Figure 9: Location Map

