

# draft

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Jerome B. Ford House

Other names/site number Company House

### 2. Location

street & number 735 Main Street  not for publication

city of town Mendocino (Mendocino County)  vicinity

State California code CA county Mendocino code 045 zip code 95460

### 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   x   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   x   local

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

  x   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:) \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal
- private

### Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- building(s)
- object

### Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
		Objects
		buildings
1	2	<b>Total</b>

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

Mendocino and Headlands Historic District

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture - museum

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival/ Early Gothic revival

### Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete

walls: Wood weatherboard

roof: Wood shingle

other:

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## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Jerome B. Ford house is a 1 1/2 story wood frame vernacular building consisting of an original north-facing front-gabled section built in 1854 and a left (east) extending wing added c1865. The house is 63' east-west and 50' north-south, overall, including porches on the north and south elevations. Formerly part of a very large complex of buildings of the Mendocino Lumber Company, it was built to be the home of the company's manager and is now the only structure surviving of the vast lumber company complex. HABS surveyed the house in 1986 and noted that it was "Known as one of the most beautiful houses in Mendocino..." but also noted that "Much of the original 'gingerbread' trim is gone." HABS identifies its style as "Greek revival form with Gothic revival ornamentation." An 1863 picture looking southeast, by Carleton E. Watkins, shows the earliest (west) section of the house with a one-story flat-roofed porch across the north-facing gabled elevation, and surrounded by a lawn and a picket fence. The house is shown elaborately ornamented with sawn bargeboards on the gable and side eaves, a finial crowning the front gable, shutters, and ogee-arched trim between the pillars on the north-facing porch. Today the siding of the west wing is vertical, in keeping with the original Gothic Revival ornamentation. The east wing is sided in grooved weatherboard. There are two small dormers facing north and south, respectively, from the roof of the east wing, which also has a center chimney. In the 1854 section of the house, the north entrance has architrave moldings and sidelights sheltered by a porch (added in 1909 to replace the original, 1854 porch.) Across the south-facing gable and along the adjoining wing there is a second porch looking out across the headland to the sea. There are entrances to the original (west) wing and to the east wing from the south porch, and a basement entrance beneath it. Both the north and south porches have ornamental brackets and slender square columns with square "capitals" mounted near but not at their tops. Historic photos show a wide dormer facing west from the roof of the west section. This dormer, which was added during a remodeling about 1910, was removed by California State Parks in the 1980s. The rehabilitation by the California State Parks included construction of a new, poured concrete foundation, a new basement entrance under the south porch, and replacement of two non-historic windows in the west wall. An early twentieth-century brick chimney and fireplace on the south wall of the west wing was removed, as well as a chimney and fireplace in the northwest quadrant of the west wing, and a new fireplace was constructed in what was believed to be the location of an original fireplace. An ornamented staircase, probably added in the 1870s, in the northeast corner of the west section was retained. In the east wing, the original floor plan of dining room and kitchen is retained on the first floor, with a small curving staircase from the kitchen to a bedroom above. This upstairs room connects to another room and hallway in the east wing and bathroom, three bedrooms and the front stair in the west wing of the house. The exterior appearance of the house today is easily recognizable from photos taken in the 1860s and '70s. The 1909 front porch has approximately the same footprint as the 1854 original, and in all other respects the footprint and exterior shape of the house is unchanged, despite recurrent changes to the siding and the chimneys and the loss of shutters, bargeboards and finial. The south porch is especially fine. Its decorative detail is largely intact and entirely original. Viewed from the south, the porch gives the house a distinctive and characteristic appearance seen in a number of historic photos. To the southeast of the house are two wooden outbuildings. One is a square, flat-roofed two-bay garage, dating to 1916. The other is a small rectangular shed with a curved roof. The non-contributing outbuildings stand slightly south of the site of a windmill and tank, no longer extant. The house is well maintained and nicely landscaped in keeping with its present function as a museum and visitor center.

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## Narrative Description

See attached continuation sheets.

## 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)

Property is:

- 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.

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance corresponds to the period when the significant individual, Jerome B. Ford, lived in the house.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement

Social History

Industry

### Period of Significance

1854- 1872

### Significant Dates

1854, c1865

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Jerome B. Ford

### Cultural Affiliation

Euro-American

### Architect/Builder

Edwards C. Williams

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

. The Ford House was built in 1854 by the California Lumber Manufacturing Company to house its manager, Jerome Bursley Ford, and his bride Martha Pauline Hayes. It is significant at the local level under criterion B as the home of a pioneer settler, industrialist and leading citizen. Ford was the first lumberman to recognize the value of the redwood forests of the Mendocino coast. Numerous books and articles have been written that recall the story of the founding of Mendocino and the mill by Ford and his associates in the California Lumber Manufacturing Company, precursor to the Mendocino Sawmill Company and the Mendocino Lumber Company. At the direction of his employer, Harry Meiggs, Ford obtained the site of present day Mendocino for a lumbering operation. He led an expedition of men and oxen overland to prepare for the arrival by sea of a sawmill shipped from the east coast. The company thus begun became the first and for many years the largest lumbering operation on the Mendocino coast. As manager and co-owner, Jerome B. Ford was instrumental in the successful development and maintenance of the enterprise which was the main employer and source of wealth for the community of Mendocino from its founding up until the Great Depression. He and his wife contributed to the cultural development of the village. Jerome was the founder of the Presbyterian Church, the public school and two banks. His diary indicates that he also performed many charities. He is credited with development of a road to Ukiah and other improvements. He and Martha produced five children, of whom four lived to adulthood. Their son Chester Ford continued as manager of the lumber company after 1872 until 1902. During the period of significance several of Martha and Jerome's relatives were attracted to Mendocino and became permanent residents and prominent citizens. Several were also key employees of the mill. Throughout the period of significance the Fords set an example through their practice of religion and their family life, and by founding and supporting important institutions in the town. The critical importance of their contributions was recognized in both their obituaries and by a resolution of the State legislature, introduced May 1, 1992 by Rep. Dan Hauser and Sen. Barry Keene. The house is the only remaining structure of the many built and owned by the company, which once occupied the entire headland south and west of the house and the flat below on the Big River estuary. It is the building most associated with J.B. and Martha Ford. Thus the house uniquely recalls the exploration and settlement by J.B. Ford that started the town, the industry under Ford's management that sustained its growth between 1853 and 1872 and the leadership of J.B. and Martha Ford in the social history of the town. The house is eligible for local listing in the Register as the home of the Fords in the period from its construction in 1854 to their departure in 1872.

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

**See attached continuation sheets**

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## Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The primary significance of the Ford house is its association with pioneer lumberman Jerome B. Ford. Through its origin in and long association with the California Lumber Manufacturing Company and its successors, the Mendocino Sawmill Company and the Mendocino Lumber Company, the house recalls a major industry of the northern California coast from its very earliest beginnings to the era of the Great Depression. It should be noted that the room in the northwest corner of the older section of the house was always an office and several memoirs refer to the management of the mill being conducted there. After the period of significance, Ford's son Chester became manager of the mill and continued until 1902. Until the mill closed down for good in 1934 the house, sometimes known as the "company house" was always the residence of the mill manager. The Union Lumber Company bought the company in 1906 and until 1924, the manager was John Simpson Ross II. Ross modernized and extended the lumbering operation. In 1972 the house was included in a transfer of the Mendocino headlands from Boise Cascade lumber company to the California Department of Parks and Recreation. It is presently the visitor center for the Mendocino Headlands State Park and headquarters of the Mendocino Area Parks Association.

The redwood forests were harvested by lumbering operations in towns located at the mouths of rivers along the coast, of which Mendocino, at the mouth of Big River, was the first and for many years the largest. The trees were cut at lumber camps in the forest and the logs were floated to sawmills located close to the sea. The sawn lumber was then loaded aboard small schooners, and later, steamers, and shipped to San Francisco, and to ports as far away as Peru and Australia. The earliest lumbermen were often from areas of lumber production in New England and Wisconsin, including a group in Mendocino remembered as the "State O'Mainers." Ford himself was born in Vermont and came to California in 1849, accompanying a shipment of the first steam-powered mill to California, which was erected at Bodega. Many of the first employees of the lumbering operations came to California in the Gold Rush and later found employment in the forests and mills. The first sawmill at Mendocino, shipped around the Horn from New England, was offloaded at San Francisco to the schooner Ontario (one of many ships that were abandoned at San Francisco by crews who went off to the gold fields) for the journey up the coast to Big River. The Gold Rush and subsequent settlement of California contributed to the demand for lumber, especially as San Francisco grew rapidly and had many fires, necessitating more lumber for rebuilding. The founding of the Mendocino mill took place in the context of very high prices for lumber shipped around the Horn from New England and Europe. Harry Meiggs, the entrepreneur who financed the building of the mill, went bankrupt in 1855 and fled the country. Ford and his partner Edwards C. Williams negotiated with the bankers who had bought Meiggs' stock, and formed a new company which enabled the mill to continue in business and eventually pay off the debt. Throughout its history, the company experienced fluctuations in the price of lumber and was also subject to losses through shipwreck, droughts which made it difficult or impossible to float logs to the mill, and a fire which destroyed the second mill in 1863. The commitment and leadership of J.B. Ford meant that the mill enterprise survived these challenges while the life of the town and its population developed steadily.

The architecture of Mendocino, including the Ford House, reflects the predominance of settlers from New England, who built wood frame houses decorated in the Gothic revival style that was fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century. The Ford house originally had vertical siding, a finial in its north gable, sawn decorative bargeboards, and ornate trim on its front porch. The extant 1868 Presbyterian church, founded by J.B. Ford and largely paid for by him, is a beautiful expression of New England taste of the period and an indicator of the aesthetic of the settlers. The town developed into a cultural and mercantile center, due in part to the role of Martha and Jerome Ford in attracting and retaining settlers, some of them relatives. Two extant early houses were built by Martha's brother-in-law, Charles Wellington Denslow in Gothic Revival style. Bear and Stebbins, Mendocino, Book One illustrates the distinctive character of the town's mid-nineteenth century buildings.

The area has been identified as an archeological site for the shell midden remains in the soil under and to the west of the house. A 1975 survey by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Paulette Barclay) describes the shell midden and also mentions the possible archeological value of former lumber company sites west and southeast of the house.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**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 #\_CA 2232\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other Mendocino Historical Research Inc.  
Name of repository: Kelley House / Mendocino

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

HABS CA-2232

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** Less than 1a  
(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1                                   
Zone Easting Northing

3                                   
Zone Easting Northing

2                                   
Zone Easting Northing

4                                   
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The land described below is part of parcel # 119-240-0, Mendocino County, Big River township. The parcel is part of the Mendocino Headlands State Park. The north boundary of the property being nominated begins at the fence post west of an opening from Main Street in the unincorporated village of Mendocino into the picnic area west of the Ford house and 89 feet west of the post on the west side of the path to the front entrance of the house. The boundary runs east-northeast co-incident with the fence in front of the house and parallel to Main Street for 180 feet, from the point of beginning to a point 14 feet east of the east side of the driveway. The east boundary begins at that point and runs perpendicular to the north boundary for 180 feet south-southeast. The south boundary goes from that point perpendicular to the east boundary and parallel to the north boundary, west northwest for 180 feet parallel to Main Street. The west boundary goes perpendicular from that point 180 feet north northwest and parallel to the east boundary to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries as described enclose that part of the former lumber company property, now the Mendocino Headlands State Park, which is functionally and visually related to the Ford house, including a mowed area west of the house which is furnished with picnic tables for state park visitors, the gardens around the house, the parking lot and driveway adjacent to the house on the east, and the two small outbuildings that lie southeast of the house. The south boundary is an approximation of a roadway, seen on the Sanborn maps and mentioned in memoirs of Ford descendants, which paralleled Main Street and was for a time considered the road "in front" of the house. This road, named Front Street on the 1890 Sanborn Map, paralleled both Main Street and the historic railway belonging to the lumber company that was used to haul lumber from the mill to a shipping point on the headland. The Sanborn map shows Front Street ending at Lansing Street, east of the Ford house, but we may surmise that the road that came up from the ferry landing and the mill on the river connected the Presbyterian Church, which faced it, and continued past Lansing Street to the three houses that were built on company land. The Ford house was the middle house of the three. The path of this roadway is seen in a 1930 aerial photo of the area as faint hedgelines running eastward south of the Ford house, parallel to Main Street toward the church. The boundary is also an approximate continuation of the south boundary of presently platted parcels to the east of the state park lands including the church property. Katie Ford wrote "...across this strip of land from Point to Incline to Beach where the Mill was situated--about a mile--was the railroad for hauling lumber to be shipped, also beside

it a wagon road for private travel...the main street of the town was on the north side of the company property." In the next generation, A.E. Wilder wrote in a letter preserved in the Kelley house archives: "The Ford house back then is the front now. The street that had the incline on it was the front."

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Jane Eiseley

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date June 1, 2009

street & number 1320 Addison Street #C432 telephone 510 548 0496

city or town Berkeley state CA zip code 94702

e-mail jeiseley2@yahoo.com

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** Photo, 1866; floor plan c1986

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## Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Jerome B. Ford House

**City or Vicinity** Mendocino

**County:** Mendocino

**State:** California

**Photographer:** Jane Eiseley

**Date Photographed:** May,15, 2008

## Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Photographer: Jane Eiseley<br/>Date: May 15, 2008<br/>California Historic Preservation Office<br/>View looking southeast</p> | <p>4. Photographer: Jane Eiseley<br/>Date: May 15, 2008<br/>California Historic Preservation Office<br/>View looking north</p>              |
| <p>2. Photographer: Jane Eiseley<br/>Date: May 15, 2008<br/>California Historic Preservation Office<br/>View looking south</p>     | <p>5. Photographer: Jane Eiseley<br/>Date: May 15, 2008<br/>California Historic Preservation Office<br/>View looking east</p>               |
| <p>3. Photographer: Jane Eiseley<br/>Date: May 15, 2008<br/>California Historic Preservation Office<br/>View looking northwest</p> | <p>6. Photographer: Jane Eiseley<br/>Date: May 15, 2008<br/>California Historic Preservation Office<br/>Exterior detail, north entrance</p> |

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications 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.).



Jerome B. Ford house

Name of Property

# draft

Mendocino CA

County and State

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Jerome B Ford House

County and State Mendocino County,  
California

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page

### Introduction

The Jerome B. Ford house is situated on a bluff overlooking the Big River and the site of the sawmill that was the origin of Mendocino, California. Historic photos indicate that the house has always had an unobstructed view of the Big River estuary and has always been prominent in views of the town from across the river. The fact that it is now the only building on the south side of Main Street west of Lansing Street results from its historic role as the manager's house for the lumber company. While the sawmill and other buildings were lost in the years following the closing of the mill in 1934, the house remains. It is a 1 1/2 story frame building with a north-facing gabled section, built in 1853-54, to the west, and a side-gabled wing, added in the 1860s, extending east. The house is 63' by 34 1/2' overall, not including porches on the north and south facades. It was surveyed by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1986. HABS noted that it was "Known as one of the most beautiful houses in Mendocino...", but also noted that "Much of the original 'gingerbread' trim is gone." HABS identifies its style as "Greek revival form with Gothic revival ornamentation." An 1863 picture looking southeast, by Carleton E. Watkins, shows the house with a flat roofed porch across the north side of the west, front-gabled, wing, and surrounded on the north and west by a lawn and a picket fence. The house is shown elaborately ornamented with sawn bargeboards on the gable and side eaves, a finial crowning the front gable, shutters, and ogee-arched trim between the pillars on the north-facing porch. Formerly part of a very large complex of buildings of the Mendocino Lumber Company, it was built to be the home of the company's manager and is now the only structure surviving of the vast lumber company complex. The manager of the lumber company from 1852 to 1872 was Jerome B. Ford. During his tenure the wing was added in the 1860s and the kitchen and dining room, which had been in the basement of the west wing, were moved upstairs. A porch with elaborate Italianate trim was added along the south-facing wall of both wings, and remains intact. After 1874 and until 1902 the house was occupied by Jerome B.'s son, Chester Ford. After 1906, when John Simpson Ross II became manager of the lumber company, the front porch was replaced and the first floor of the original, west wing, was remodeled. After the house was acquired by California State Parks in 1972, the interior of the west wing was again remodelled. Two picture windows in the west facade were replaced with windows and sash matching historic photos of the house, a west-facing gable was removed, a poured concrete foundation was installed and the house became a visitor center for Mendocino Headlands State Park. The exterior appearance of the house today is recognizable from photos taken in the 1860s and '70s. The front porch has approximately the same footprint as the 1854 original, and in all other respects the footprint and profile of the house are unchanged, despite recurrent changes to the siding and the loss of shutters, bargeboards and finial. The south porch is especially fine. Its decorative detail is largely intact and entirely original. Viewed from the south, the porch gives the house a distinctive and characteristic appearance seen in a number of historic photos.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Foundation and basement

The poured concrete foundation was installed by California State Parks in 1979-80. It is covered by wooden skirting designed to match the original. The basement originally contained a kitchen and dining room, reached by a stair inside the west wing. Chester, oldest son of Jerome B. and Martha Hayes Ford, wrote in 1941: "It was funny to build the Ford House...with one story below ground...Our old dining room had a window of one half sash to light it and the kitchen had to use a candle all the time" (quoted in Bear and Stebbins, Book One, p 19.) His sister, Catherine Ford Rea wrote "The house originally had a basement kitchen-dining room, and dairy closet and a long porch connecting the upstairs rooms with those below. When the new wing was built, putting the living rooms on one level, the basement was used as a laundry..." A granddaughter, Alice Earl Wilder, born in 1889, said in an oral history interview in 1977, "The original house...was built under the direction of E. C. Williams...He said everybody in New England had their kitchen and dining room on the basement floor ... And she (her grandmother) had to go down to the kitchen and dining room on a steep stairway... inside (the house.)" After the east wing was built and the basement became a storage and laundry, " ...to go into it, it had as the doors... You opened it up, hooked the doors to side posts, went down, opened the door into the basement..."

The present basement is reached from poured concrete steps leading to a door under the south porch. Dirt from the excavation for the foundation fills part of the basement; the rest is used for storage. There are no window openings into the basement, although one of the original openings in the west wall remains and is boarded up. The foundation wall has been painted a light blue. The lot slopes gently south, so that the foundation is exposed approximately 5' at the south side of the building, and about 18" on the north side.

### Exterior porches, facades and roof

The west wing of the house has vertical tongue-and-groove siding, in keeping with its original Gothic revival ornamentation. The siding on the east wing is grooved weatherboard. Architect's specifications for the California State Parks rehabilitation of the house in the 1970s specify that any rotted siding is to be covered with matching siding. Inspection shows that this occurred on both wings. However, photos found in the Kelley house archives and pictures of the house in the early 20th century give a much more complicated picture. One photo, undated, shows the entire south and east facades of the house including the second floor gabled end of the 1854 section clad in horizontal shiplap! The widths of the vertical siding on the west wing today indicates that on the west and south sides it is newer, as would be expected given that the openings on the west wall are all restorations and a large chimney was removed from the

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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south wall. The only siding on the house which appears to be original is the vertical siding on the north side of the west wing, including the fine architrave framing around the door and windows on that façade. Nonetheless, the present siding on all facades adequately reproduces that seen in photos of the house dating from the 1860s. The bargeboards and finial that are seen in early photos could be easily replaced as there is good detail in the photos and many historic examples are still extant in the town.

The north-facing façade of the house, facing Main Street is the main approach to the visitor center. It is nicely framed by hedges and garden plantings. The porch, which has approximately the same footprint as the original, 1853-54 porch, was built in 1909. The porch has scroll-sawn brackets in the openings between slender square columns. Sheltered by the porch, the north façade has a 3-bay design, with a Greek Revival-style formal doorway with architrave moldings, sidelights with four lights and kick-panels and a door with two vertical panels. To the left (east) is a pair of windows, also framed with architrave moldings, with kick panels below. To the right is a single window, with the same framing. Historic photos show two windows in this space, although not within a single frame as on the other side of the door. Above the porch, in the gable, are two symmetrically spaced second-floor windows. The north-facing wall of the east wing has two windows on the first floor and a small gabled dormer in the roof. All of the sash is double-hung 6-over-6.

The east-facing façade of the house is a simple gable end to the east wing. It has two 6-over-6 windows in the second floor gable. Slightly off-center below them is a modern window, somewhat shorter than others in the house. It is a center 6-over-6 window flanked by two much narrower windows, also 6-over-6. This window lights the kitchen and may have been installed with the interior built-in cupboards. A photo taken soon after the east wing was constructed, shown in Bear and Stebbins, Book Two, page 64, shows two first floor windows which appear to be of the same size and shape as other windows in the house, placed off center to the right (north) in this wall. The open end of the south porch, which was later enclosed, can be seen in this early photo at the corner of the east façade.

The most striking feature of the south façade is the porch, which follows the contour of the building across its entire south side. The porch is ornamented with square posts, sawn brackets and a row of dentils along its eaves. During the period when the Parks Department was deciding what to do with the house, Robert Collier of Mendocino wrote in the Mendocino Beacon (June 9, 1977):

"The south porch of the Ford House was built in 1856 by Eric Albertson, the same carpenter who built the Masonic Hall and the Kelley House.

It is a priceless masterpiece of early Mendocino woodworking which has survived wind, rain, and the indifference of man for 122 years.

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Using choice virgin redwood Mr. Albertson carefully cut each bracket with a foot-pedal jigsaw.

He made the moulding and gutters by hand with shaped planes, and cut the moulding into narrow slices for the dentils.

At first the house had bargeboards hanging from all the eaves and there were balconies beneath the dormer windows, but all that remains of the original gingerbread is on the south porch..."

There is a difficulty with Mr. Collier's account, since we know that the east wing of the house did not exist before 1863. However, the accounts of Ford children and grandchildren attest that there was a porch at least from the date of the east wing, in the mid-1860s, and perhaps, in some form, before. The trim on the south porch, described by Mr. Collier, does not precisely match the trim seen in photos of the original north porch, although both had ornamental "capitals" mounted below the top of their columns. Still, there is no reason to doubt that the south porch is an early masterpiece of Mendocino woodworking. That it has survived the years is fortunate indeed, and adds greatly to the historic integrity of the building.

There are doors from the south porch to the east and west wings, and two 6-over-6 double-hung sash windows, asymmetrically placed, in each wing. From the dining room in the east wing triple French doors also give on to the porch. There is an east-facing window giving onto the porch from the east wall of the west wing. From the south porch into the east wing kitchen there is a simple (not original) panel door. The door to the west wing is glazed with 10 panes and serves as a visitor entrance/exit to the south porch, the vista over the headland and the picnic grounds below the house. This doorway has been perceived as the historic front entrance to the house. Alice Earl Wilder stated, "The (back of the) Ford House ... then is the front now. The street that had the incline on it was the front." She says in "Mendocino County Remembered" (1977) that "The Ford house is facing backwards because the street that it really faces is no longer present." The earliest of the Sanborn maps is dated 1890. It shows a street parallel to and south of Main Street, along the headland, but it is shown as stopping at Lansing Street. The railroad did run west along the headland behind the house, to the point where the loading chute that lowered the lumber to ships was located. There was a track paralleling the railroad and leading to the various buildings of the lumber company west of the house. The formal composition of the north façade, the fact that the 1863 Watkins photo was taken from the northwest, showing the north and west facades, and the memories of the south porch being used for laundry and access to the basement suggests that the north entrance was the original front entrance.

Above the south porch there are two 6-over-6 double hung windows in the south-facing gable of the west wing and a small dormer in the roof of the east wing, matching the one facing north. There is a chimney rising through the roof ridge near the center of the east wing.

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The first floor openings on the west façade have been restored by California State Parks, replacing picture windows installed during the 20th century. Today, the west façade is the one most clearly matching the earliest (1863) photo. It has three 6-over-6 double hung windows, not quite evenly spaced along its 34 1/2 foot length. The pleasing proportions of the original house are most appreciated in this view. Before the restoration, the west-facing roof had a wide dormer, which was removed. The 1863 Carleton E. Watkins photo shows two window openings in the foundation wall at its south end; only one still exists. This photo and others from the 1860s show the house with shutters on all windows above the foundation; none of these survive.

The roof of the house is clad in wood shingles. As noted, there are central chimneys in each wing. The complex history of the interior, described below, is indicated by a comparison of the chimneys seen in historic photos of the house. The earliest of these (Carleton E. Watkins, 1863) shows a single chimney in the north west corner of the original, west wing, rising through the slope of the roof close to the eaves (chimney #1). A photo taken soon after the construction of the east wing (the Ford children are seen playing in the foreground) shows a chimney rising through the ridgeline of the west wing in the approximate location of the present chimney (chimney #2). The original chimney (#1) in the west wing can be made out as well. If there was a chimney in the new east wing (probable, since it was the kitchen) it is obscured by a tree in this photo. An early, undated photo from Baker, et.al., Mendocino, Past and Present, shows the house from the northwest. Two chimneys (#1 and #2) are seen in the west wing, as described above. Finally, a photo in Bear and Stebbins, Book One, pg 18, taken sometime after the introduction of electricity, shows the house from the southwest. The wide gable, later removed by California State Parks, is present in the west-facing roof of the west wing, and an exterior brick chimney (chimney #3) is seen on the south wall. This chimney was added during the remodelling done by John Ross after 1906. The chimney in the center of the wing (#2) is gone, as is the earliest chimney (#1) but there is another chimney (#4,) larger and higher than chimney #1, but still in the northwest quadrant, higher and nearer the center of the west-facing roof. The chimney on the south wall (#3) is seen in a floor plan dated December, 1976, as is chimney #4. At some time after this, California State Parks decided to remove both fireplaces and chimneys. During the 1980s, a restoration of chimney #2 was attempted in the belief that it was the original chimney.

### Interior

Investigations by California State Parks in the 1980s showed that the outside walls are redwood planking covered with many layers of wallpaper, which is, in some areas, underlaid with felt or paper. Most of the interior of the house, including all of the second floor and the first floor of the east wing is substantially as originally built. There is considerable original hardware, including doors with lift-off hinges, and original panelling on interior partitions. Only the first floor of the west wing has been

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repeatedly altered. Its present form is an attempt by California State Parks to partially replicate the original, 1854 plan.

Catherine Ford Rea, daughter of Jerome and Martha, related in a memoir published in 1978, "The house originally had a basement kitchen-dining room, and dairy closet and a long porch connecting the upstairs rooms with those below. When the new wing was built, putting the living rooms on one level, the basement was used as a laundry; a huge brick fire stove with iron kettle built in, heated water for the laundry, also for bath purposes. A huge tub had been put in the old dining room and water had to be carried from the kitchen to bathroom. The long porch held the washing machine and tubs for rinsing... Our house was probably built in 1852 or 1853 by Mr. Williams and also furnished by him, but after 1854 my parents lived there. It was originally a nine room house; living room-parlor, office and bedroom on ground floor. Three bedrooms upstairs - kitchen, dining room, pantries and dairy room below. Later a wing was built on, putting kitchen and dining room on ground floor, with maid's room and large bedroom over dining room and store room." From the kitchen a narrow stair with a 180 degree turn leads to the second floor.

The first major change to the house, following its expansion in the 1860s, came when Chester Ford returned to Mendocino in 1874 to become manager of the Mendocino Lumber Company. Catherine Ford Rea writes "...Chester was Manager until the sale of the Company. He changed and improved the old home, making it more cheerful and attractive." Unfortunately, she does not specify the improvements but we know from an account by Alice Earl Wilder of a family reunion in the house in 1899 that the two small rooms on the west side of the older, west section of the house were still there. Whether Chester built the staircase in the northeast corner of that section, and whether it was Chester who installed the triple French doors in the dining room, is unknown.

During the tenure of John Ross Simpson II, other changes were made. He altered the house by taking out the wall that separated the southwest corner of the first floor of the west section, making one space across its south end. The study in the northwest corner, to the right of the front door, remained. Alice Earl Wilder said in 1977, "There were two smaller rooms, and they made one big room...It doesn't look natural to me. And on the left hand side you still have the door opening into the dining room and into the kitchen behind it. And then there...are two stairways that go upstairs..." It was either Ross or Chester Ford who replaced the original stairs with an attractive staircase in the northeast corner of the west wing, to the left of the front door. The staircase has a shaped newel post and an openwork balustrade. Two steps lead to a landing, and from the landing the stair rises against the east wall. Ross painted the house and the water tower red, replaced two of the windows in the west wall with a shed-roofed, Craftsman-style bay window and added a wide second floor dormer facing west. In 1909 he replaced the original front

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porch with the present porch, which instead of covering the entire north façade of the west wing, stops two feet short at each end. Although it appears to be the same depth as the original porch, instead of a flat roof it has a central gabled portico, flanked by hipped roofs on each side. The same year, according to a letter from Dorothy Ross Balaam to Dorothy Bear, found in the Kelley house archives, he installed a tennis court immediately south of the house. In the south wall of the larger living room created by removing part of the longitudinal wall in the west wing, he installed a brick fireplace with an exterior chimney of ornate brickwork that rose through the roof of the south porch. In 1916 Ross built the double garage to the southeast of the house. Sometime after Ross left in 1924, the bay window was removed and two picture windows were installed in the west wall. The red paint appears to be present in a photo in the Parks photo archives taken in 1936, but the house was restored to the original white sometime between then and a c1957 photo found in the archive in the house. After California State Parks acquired the house, in 1972, they removed the Ross-era "improvements," and restored the west façade of the house

### Setting

The Ford house never had a discreet parcel of land separate from the large holdings of the lumber company for which it was the manager's house. Historic pictures show it surrounded on the west, north and east by picket fences and hedges. One picture from the south also shows a fence, and a vegetable garden in the foreground. Between the south side of the house and the edge of the headland was the railroad used to haul the sawn lumber from the mill to the loading chute to the west. The lumber company built two other company houses on the same side of Main Street, and the Sanborn map for 1890 shows various sheds and the two additional dwellings. On the 1909 Sanborn map these have disappeared although there is a small building identified as the fire department facing the row of businesses on Main Street. In the last decades of the 19th century there was a group of sheds and a barn on Main Street near the northeast corner of the house. Like many houses in Mendocino the house had its own windmill and water tank, no longer extant. Presently there are two small non-contributing buildings south of the former water tank, a square, flat roofed garage, and a small shed with a curved roof.

Today the house is surrounded on the south and west by an open headland overlooking the mouth of the Big River. To the north of the house, parallel with its front (north) elevation, is Main Street. Across Main Street from the Ford house is the Kelley house, another of the historic homes of Mendocino. (Jerome and Martha Ford welcomed the Kelleys when they arrived in Mendocino in 1855 and gave them lodging.) To the west on the side opposite the Ford house, Main Street presents a spectacular row of well preserved 19th century business buildings. To the north of Main Street, the famous Masonic Hall, with its steeple crowned with carved statuary, is visible from the house. To the east of the house is a well-screened comfort station that is part of the State Park facility, and farther east on the south side of Main Street is the Presbyterian church, built largely with funds donated by Jerome B. Ford, in 1868.



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The buildings that stood on the south side of Main Street during the period of significance, and the railroad, are long gone, as are the large pines that add to the charm of the historic pictures. Nonetheless, many of the nearby buildings that were present during the period of significance are still there, while the Ford house has always appeared to have space around it, with an uninterrupted view over the headland, as it does today.

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### Introduction

The Jerome B. Ford house is significant at the local level under Criterion B for its association with Jerome B. Ford who was a key actor in the exploration and settlement of Mendocino, California. Ford was an important contributor to the establishment of the California Redwood Manufacturing Company at Mendocino, and its reorganizations in 1855 and 1870. The company was founded in 1852 and was the first and for many years the largest lumber company on the Mendocino coast. It was the sole stimulus to a settlement that grew into the town of Mendocino. The house was built in 1854 specifically to house the manager of the company, Jerome B. Ford. Ford and his wife Martha Hayes Ford lived in the house from 1854 to 1872. Jerome B. Ford retained his ownership in the company after moving to Oakland in 1872 until his death in 1889, and made frequent visits to Mendocino until he suffered a stroke in 1880. His son Jerome Chester ("Chester") Ford became manager in 1874 and lived in the house until 1902. Today the house is the only structure remaining to recall the lumber company which up until 1934 was the main industry in Mendocino. The large complex of lumber company buildings occupied the entire south part of the headland where the village is situated as well as a flat on the Big River below the headland. It included two mills, the large one on the river and an earlier one on the headland, two houses in addition to the Ford house, storage buildings and barns, administrative offices, cabins and a dining hall for workers, a steam-powered hoist and a railroad to move lumber from the mill up to the headland and a mile west to a loading chute. Jerome B. Ford was not only a pioneer founder of the lumber company and its manager during its first critical years, he also contributed to the development of the town of Mendocino as a founder of the Presbyterian Church, the public school and two banks. Martha Ford welcomed many new families to Mendocino over the years, and she and her children were at the center of the social institutions of the town, including the beautiful Presbyterian Church, built in 1868 and still extant. The social history of Mendocino is a reflection of the Fords' New England origins, their religious faith and their generous spirit.

### Social History

The marriage of Jerome Bursley Ford and Martha Pauline Hayes became a major feature of the social history of Mendocino. In February, 1854, Ford left Mendocino for a trip to the east coast. After visiting family in Vermont and Connecticut, he married Martha Pauline Hayes on May 3 and returned with her to Mendocino, arriving on July 4. She was the sister of a woman Ford had intended to marry, who had died. The buildings constructed at Mendocino for the California Lumber Manufacturing Company included a house for the manager, Jerome B. Ford. Closely associated with the house was Edwards C. Williams, who was also involved in the original establishment of the mill and was a co-owner with Jerome B. Ford of the company after its reorganization in 1855. Williams, a descendent of Puritan preacher Jonathon Edwards,

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is believed to have designed the house. Williams was active in the affairs of the company, both in Mendocino and in San Francisco until his death in 1913. The New England Puritan ethic which informed the social history of Mendocino was revealed by J.B. Ford in a letter, written to his nephew Jerome Kendall in 1865, in which he describes how well he has been "prospered" as a result of his hard work and piety and advises, "...now all you want is to be a good Christian young man, then you will be worth more to the world around you, and your friends, and to yourself, that is worth millions. Be steady and faithful and you will...be prospered." In his diary, June 7, 1867, Ford notes that it is a week of prayer: "we hold meetings every night in the study." February 6, 1868, he "Paid off Maxwell for building new church." Dedication of the new church, for which other sources note that he provided a steeple and a bell, is noted in his diary on July 5, 1868. In October, he writes to a relative that he has been to Sunday school where he taught the catechism. The same letter contains a mysterious reference to the public school being "deep in iniquity," and adds that "my Chester stole a book...how watchful we must be of our children..." Is this the beginning of the decision to move to Oakland in 1872? The reason given for the move was to obtain better schooling for the boys, Chester and Charles. In the event, they did not like the military school and within a year Chester was back in Mendocino where, under the tutelage of Edwards C. Williams he began his 30 year career as manager of the mill. The public school was built in 1861, and J.B. Ford was a member of its first board. The Bank of Mendocino was incorporated in 1870. In 1871 the Mendocino Discount Bank was formed. J.B. Ford was an officer of both banks. Relatives of J.B. Ford who came to Mendocino were his sister's husband, Alonzo Kendall and later, Kendall's sons Jerome and Carl, both of whom worked at the mill.

Occasional glimpses show that the Fords were prominent in the social life of the town. Ford's diary records in June of 1867 a trip into the woods with his sons and Godeffroy, one of the banker-partners, and others to go "hunting, fishing and camping." In 1870 Mendocino had a paper called the Independent Dispatch. On September 10 it carried a story of an outing given by J.B. Ford on his "commodius boat" on which 25 guests sailed up the Big River by moonlight. Three miles up river they built a bonfire. On the return trip they saw a bear on the riverbank but "arrived at the starting point safe, sound and deeply grateful to Mr. Ford for the pleasure of the trip." On August 8, 1870 Ford's diary states "Preparing for going out on a hunting tour...Party packing up and arranging the necessaries of which the most important seems to be whiskey." In April 1870 Ford's diary relates that a skating rink at Kelley's Hall is "good amusement for the children but heavy on the old and lame."

On July 5, 1868 Ford's diary records the dedication of the new Presbyterian church. 200 people were there. The church stands today, about 300 yards east of the Ford house. It faces south towards the river, confirming the accounts that there was a road there at one time, coming up from the river and continuing to the company houses to the west. It is a beautiful symphony in wood and glass, very large for a town of

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some 700 people, some of whom were Portuguese Catholics or Chinese, who worshiped at their temple, or Joss house.

Alice Earl Wilder, in the oral history by Levine, (1977) related, "...so you found officers in the Masonic Lodge, many of them were also elders in the Presbyterian Church and involved in the local school board. They were the same grouping of people. They all did things together...we were considered part of the Ford family...My Mother (Ella Jane Ford) was born in Mendocino in 1860 and left for Oakland in 1872 at the age of 12. She returned in 1890 or '91 as a married woman with her children. But she did come back all the time that Uncle Chester was there and Grandfather was alive and the family was back and forth at Mendocino--that was their home."

At Jerome B.'s death in 1889, the Beacon noted that at the funeral "Main Street was a mass of human beings who had assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to one that was held in the highest esteem by all." His obituary said that "He was the principal mover in the building of the present Presbyterian church edifice, in the erection fund of which he was much the largest contributor. He was a man of more than ordinary business qualifications, of generous impulses, and a useful and much respected man as well as one of the most prominent citizens of Mendocino during his residence here." The Oakland Tribune said he was "...one of the pioneers of California, a man of most exemplary life, sterling character, and large benevolence."

Martha Hayes arrived as new bride, aged 23, in Mendocino in 1854, to become one of only three white women in the settlement. Her diary notes that she immediately set about to have the grounds around the house fenced, and planted trees, lilacs and a garden. In April 1855 she writes that "Mr. Kent and Hills arrived from San Francisco with their wives. Came immediately to our house where they stop 'till they can get a home of their own. They are very fine pleasant ladies and I am delighted to have more society." In August the Kelleys, whose large house across Main Street from the Ford House is now a house museum and library, arrived and stayed two days before moving into their first house on Albion Street. Relatives of Martha who settled in Mendocino were her sister Susan, who married John Chalfant, the superintendent at the mill, and a nephew, Charles Wellington Denslow, who came to be the bookkeeper at the mill.

Martha's granddaughter, Alice Earl Wilder, recalled visiting her Uncle Chester during the years that he lived in the house: "Every Sunday we went to church...because that's the way my grandmother would have liked it. Her children always had to go to church ... every Sunday..." She also recalled a reunion around 1900 at which "the people that mother knew (or) knew that their parents were friends of hers or they had been...those people all came back to Mendocino and we had a big church party ... they all came over because that's where they all had to come to school, the cattle had been raised and we had gotten the various things to eat from the mill...at the big ranches. And those people were all friends of the Fords.

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They all came to the reunion party that we had at Mendocino... the school that I heard about when I was a child ... started at Grandfather Ford's and the teacher lived there and he paid the bills. Later on we had an elementary school...the church had parties for women and for children, and classes, and singing schools and all of the extra social things that families would like to do. Mother had many relatives. Her brother Chester lived there. The Denslows came out, the Hayes came out. The Paddlefords came out. They were all relatives of Grandmother's."

In the 1970s Aline Ford Pierce, daughter of Martha's son Charles, recalled Martha's "sweet disposition" and her "practicality, making sure her daughters learned how to cook, to sew...in short to be self-reliant women." Martha's children were Jerome Chester., born a year after her arrival in Mendocino, Catherine Pauline born in 1857, Charles Denslow, in 1858, Ella Jane, 1860, Susan Fidelia, 1864 and Persis Amanda, 1866.

After the period of significance, the house continued to be the home of the manager of the mill. For two years that was E.C. Williams, but Chester must have loved Mendocino, for he took no interest in the schooling that had been the reason for the move to Oakland, and returned within two years to the mill, and took over as manager in 1874. His sister Katie noted that "My brother Chester went back in a couple of years to learn the business and lived in the house...Finally Mr. Williams and family came to Oakland...and Chester was Manager until the sale of the company. He changed and improved the old home, making it more cheerful and attractive." The Beacon, in a special edition on August 5, 2004, states that Chester was credited with "the most attractive grounds in town." He was active in the community, in the schools and in the Presbyterian church. He helped to organize the volunteer fire company, which the Sanford map shows was located on company land not far from the Ford house. Jerome B. was still active in the business, going back and forth from Oakland to Mendocino until 1880 when he had a stroke while on a hunting trip near Mendocino. Bear and Stebbins characterize Chester in Mendocino, Book Two as "always a man of vitality, very observant and interested in all that went on about him. From his letters to Mendocino friends and his niece Alice Earl Wilder, it is not difficult to gather that he lived easily and comfortably...After his father died in 1889 when Chester was 33, he became the logical head of the family, and while he lived in the Ford house in Mendocino it was the gathering place for the clan." Chester is remembered for an unhappy love affair when he was young and for having married, much later, the widow of his handyman. Alice Wilder recalled a family gathering at the house in 1899, and remembered that her Uncle Chester and Mrs. Brayton, had separate bedrooms on the first floor of the house. In January 1900 he married Mrs. Brayton, but the family never accepted her. The Beacon reported on July 19, 1902, that Chester had sold his stock in the mill, and added that the town's workingmen were losing a friend who worked long and hard to bring the 10 hour workday to all the mills on the Mendocino coast, before there was legislation.

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The role played by the manager of the mill in the social and cultural life of Mendocino, so thoroughly established by Jerome and Martha Ford and maintained by their son Chester when he became manager, did not end in 1902. The new manager was John Simpson Ross II. He grew up in Mendocino and nearby Caspar and when he ended his 18 year tenure as mill manager the Beacon wrote (December 27, 1924) "Mr. and Mrs. Ross have taken a leading part in promoting the welfare and advancement of Mendocino during their residence here and it is with much regret that their many friends see them depart." His obituary, March 4, 1950 states that under his management "The Mendocino plant became one of the most productive and best managed in the industry," while for the town he brought about the "greatest progress in cement sidewalks and fire protection." His daughter, Dorothy Ross Balaam wrote (letter to Dorothy Bear in Kelley house archives) that theirs was the first tennis court in town, built about 1908 or 1909. In editing her father's autobiography, Balaam wrote that she remembers the idyllic life in Mendocino before WWI when her parents and their friends among the professionals and business people of the town had time to play tennis, followed by tea, on most afternoons. In their own way, the social roles of Chester and Mr. and Mrs. Ross were shaped by the leadership of the founding Fords. This continuing tradition is testimony to the pivotal importance of Jerome and Martha Ford in the social history of Mendocino.

### Industry

Brinzig offers a picture of how important lumbering was to early California: "Lumber was the prime requisite of the building of the city (San Francisco.) Nearly all the buildings were of wood. This was one of the reasons why the early fires were so disastrous. Of course, each fire increased the demand for lumber needed for rebuilding. Piling for wharves, sawed lumber for buildings, shakes and shingles for roofs, and a little later, ties for the infant railroads were in great demand. The mines...also needed large amounts of lumber ... Small mills quickly cut the timber from the Contra Costa region and the nearer ports of Marin County. Capt. Steven Smith had a saw and grist mill a Bodega...one of the first mills in the coast redwoods. Lumber was also shipped at large profits from the Oregon pine mills and from the Hawaiian islands. Prices were so high...it was even profitable to ship lumber...around Cape Horn..."

It was in this setting that Jerome B. Ford recognized the value of the stands of giant redwoods at Big river, and as employees of Harry Meiggs, he and E.C. Williams started the mill.

In 1853, once the mill was operating, Meiggs demanded more output, and a second mill, the Page mill, was built at water level on the river. Dorothy Bear and Beth Stebbins wrote in Book Two of their 1977 Mendocino history, "The men could see that the mills would become the beginning of a settlement. With the second, larger mill more men would be needed and there would be an increase in population. The half-mile long peninsula surrounded on three sides by the sea was well suited to becoming the redwood lumber center for the coast north and south." Martha Ford wrote in her diary on January 1, 1855, "Mills

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run under a lease to Williams and Ford and turn out in the months of July, August and September and part of October nearly two million feet of lumber each month keeping 200 laborers and 10 vessels in constant employment." This promising start was aborted on October 10 when the sheriff arrived with a writ of attachment, closing the operation down. Harry Meiggs, the owner of the California Lumber Manufacturing Company, had financed the building of the mills through the sale of stock. Meiggs fled San Francisco in October 1854, leaving a mountain of debt. Fortunately, E. C. Williams had seen the trouble coming and had rushed to Sonoma to file a lien against the property for the wages that he and Ford had not been paid. Other creditors also had claims against the mills, including W. N. Thompson, who had paid Meiggs in advance for a large delivery of lumber and Godeffroy, Sillem, and Freundt, San Francisco bankers who had invested in the mill. The company was sold to the bankers by the sheriff for \$17,142.36. They then formed a five-member partnership with Williams and Ford under which Ford would manage the mills, Williams would represent the firm, renamed Mendocino Sawmills, in San Francisco, and Freundt would live in Mendocino and keep the accounts. Godeffroy, Sillem and Freundt had capital amounting to \$224,360.08 invested in the mill, and debts of \$781,465.59. On January 1, 1855, J.B. Ford noted in his diary that the population of Mendocino had fallen to 28.

The mill was re-started on April 30. The San Francisco paper reported the arrival of ships from Mendocino, the first, with 60 million feet of lumber on May 20th, another with 130 million on May 25th, and three more ships in June. Freundt traveled to Chile in 1862 to confront Meiggs and actually recovered \$75,909.44 from him. The mill later profited greatly from the sale of redwood ties to a railroad that Meiggs was promoting in Chile and Peru. J.B. Ford maintained a close personal relationship with the bankers, who made visits to Mendocino which included hunting and camping expeditions in the forest. Freundt lived in a company house, no longer extant, next to the Ford house and the Ford descendents remember him for his kindness and his beautiful garden. A letter from Freundt to J.B. Ford during his 1862 trip to Chile ends "...so goodbye my dear old fellow, God bless you and all your family--believe me ever truly yours." Alas, Freundt died before reaching San Francisco. It took until 1870 to fulfill the terms of the agreement to pay off the creditors. After that, Williams and Ford became co-owners and the company became Mendocino Lumber Company.

Through the years of working off the debt, Ford managed the mill through good times and bad. The very year that the partnership was formed, Williams observed that business in San Francisco "became very dull." In 1864 the Page mill burned, and was immediately rebuilt. In 1865 a storm washed 10 ships ashore at Mendocino, and blew several workers' cabins off their foundations. There were accidents at the mill and with the loading chute that lowered lumber from the headland onto ships below. The chute was replaced in 1867. In 1868 Ford obtained a franchise for a wharf to ship railroad ties. In February, 1870 the Independent Dispatch reported that the "Mendocino Mill Co. have decided to keep up the wages of their men, at all events for the present. Good news for the toiler." The following item states that "Owing

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to the general stagnation of the lumber trade, our laboring men are leaving the Coast in large numbers." The same year a fire burned most of the business district of Mendocino. In October 1870 Ford wrote "Running the mill short for want of sufficient water..." In January, 1871, "Very strong freshet. 2000 logs came down." The difficulties of getting the enormous trees out of the woods and down to the mill are told by W. Francis Jackson. He states that the Mendocino mill "played an important part in the history and development of Northern California ... as it was a spur to the coastal shipping industry and provided the lumber to rebuild San Francisco after its frequent fires." Jackson gives maps showing the location of 27 dams and camps established between 1860 and 1924 where the loggers and their agents brought out logs for the Mendocino Lumber Company. The process depended upon enough rain to float the logs downstream, but not so much that they were washed out to sea.

David Warren Ryder states, "It was lumber from the Mendocino Saw Mills...that helped materially to rebuild San Francisco after its many conflagrations in the (1850s). It was the Mendocino Saw Mills that had what is claimed to have been the first railroad in California--a mile of track over which oxen pulled carloads of lumber from the mill up to the chute on the Point. It was the Mendocino Saw Mills that provided the first cargoes of lumber for the little two-masted schooners which became so much a part of the life and history of the Mendocino Coast. And it was the Mendocino Saw Mills that founded the town of Mendocino and made it for years the most important shipping center and community on the whole Mendocino Coast." Brinzig writes "the spoilation of the government lands by the Mendocino Lumber Company...on Big River, was established in 1877 to have been \$3,000,000 worth of timber.

The impact of cutting the trees was not, perhaps, considered during the years when Ford and Williams were laboring to pay off Meiggs' debt. But, looking back in 1912, E.C. Williams wrote of the first trip he and Ford made to Big River,

"The winter rains had not wholly ceased; the river was banks-full, its slight ripples meeting the verdure of the shore, the tall redwoods with their great symmetrical trunks traveling towards the skies, with the bright colors of the rhododendron profusely scattered over the hills forming the background, the clean blue sky above reflected in the placid river, and over all the hush and solitude of the primevil forest--all combining to impress upon our minds the beauty and truth of the opening of Bryant's Thanatopsis, 'the groves were God's first temples' and as I recall the beauty of the picture, I cannot but regret the part it appeared necessary for me to enact in what now looks like a desecration."

The 1880 History of Mendocino County, California notes that J.B. Ford was treasurer and an incorporator of the Bank of Mendocino. The History tells the story of the 1854 failure of Meiggs, and mentions the railroad and the fire that burned the Page mill. It states that the company owned timber to 24



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miles inland, having cut 18 miles, and had 225 employees, paying \$7000 monthly wages "at full capacity." The 1914 History of Mendocino and Lake Counties, California offers that "among the early settlers who led long and useful lives might be mentioned J.B. Ford ... (and) E.C. Williams...the payroll of the mill and timber camps, ties, bark and post sales are the main support of the town."

Today the Ford house is the only building that survives of the entire lumber company complex of mills, railroad, chutes, lumber camps, dams, workers' cabins, mess hall, houses and storage buildings.

### Exploration and Settlement

David Warren Ryder wrote in 1948, "What the discovery of gold did for the developing of California, redwood did for the Mendocino coast. ... when in 1851, E.C. Williams, Jerome Ford, Henry Meiggs and Capt. David Lansing saw the vast redwood forests meeting the sea at the mouth of the Big River, the Mendocino coast soon became the mecca for lumbering men all the way from Maine and Canada to Michigan and Wisconsin. As gold settled California, so redwood settled the Mendocino coast."

Leading up to the period of significance, Jerome B. Ford was the subject of an almost mythic tale of pioneer fortitude. In 1852 he was sent north by his employer, Captain Smith, who with Harry Meiggs had a sawmill at Bodega that sent the first redwood lumber to San Francisco. Ford's errand was to look for salvage from the Frolic, a ship from China that had gone aground at Caspar. To understand his importance before the period 1854 to 1872, the years he lived in the house, it is necessary to know that it was Ford who was the first to recognize the value of the redwood forest at Big River. Ford returned from his northward exploration to report on the stands of huge redwood trees. In San Francisco Harry Meiggs had a lumber yard on the wharf, and while Ford was making his discovery, Meiggs had sent Edwards C. Williams to the east coast for the machinery for a larger mill to be installed at Bodega. When Ford reported the trees at Big River (later to become the site of Mendocino) Meiggs sent Williams and Ford by sea to evaluate the Bodega site and scout for a possible alternative. Their report caused Meiggs to buy a ship, the Ontario, from among many abandoned at San Francisco by crews bound for the gold fields, and use it to re-direct to Big River the saw mill machinery and the men who had come west to run it. Ford was sent overland, starting from Benecia, to Sonoma, to Bodega, where he bought 8 oxen, and then through roadless forest with mules and oxen, fording rivers, one of which carried away the mules. It took ten days, suffering cold and hunger, to reach Big River from Bodega. Meanwhile Edwards C. Williams was on board the Ontario, which began to take on water and was delayed by rough seas. While he waited for the arrival of the Ontario, Ford lived in the cabin of the squatter, Kasten, made a bargain with Kasten for the mill site, and made a pre-emption claim for adjacent lands.

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At last, the mill was successfully landed. Williams wrote years later that, "The difficulties with the building of the mill were many and great. Our millwright proved wholly incompetent, men became dissatisfied and left at a moment's warning, and their places could only be supplied by our sending to San Francisco and bringing them overland up the coast. Before the mill had its roof on, the storms began, and the memory of that winter for years came to me as a horrible nightmare; but spring came and at last the mill was finished, and we were shipping its output to market at the rate of about 50,000 feet per day." The first mill was located at the western end of the Mendocino headland.

The events leading up to the successful completion of the first mill do not end the story of the Ford house in relation to the exploration and settlement of Mendocino. It should be noted that the house that was built for Ford in 1853 is now one of only two or three surviving in Mendocino from the settlement period. Martha's diary entries indicate that immediately upon arriving in Mendocino she began a garden. Later memoirs and photographs show that the company land on the headland near the house was used to raise food and the company also owned large tracts outside the village where meat and vegetables were raised for the company dining hall. The original style of the house, which we know from several early photographs, with its fancy Gothic revival bargeboards, ornate front porch and formal front façade, became the model for later construction in Mendocino, while the relatives of Jerome B. and Martha Ford brought New England tastes and mores that shaped the town. The house was a stopping place for many of the settlers who came in the first years after its construction, until they could settle into their own homes. The role of the Fords in attracting settlers and promoting civic life in Mendocino has been described, above, under Social History.

Ryder, in chapter 4 of his book lists the early coast towns as of 1881 and states "Mendocino City was by far the largest of these at the time, with three hotels, four or five general stores, two banks, a newspaper, two drug stores, several restaurants, a saddlery, a millinery shop, three livery stables, a barber shop....The population was about 700. ...It was here at Mendocino that the first sawmill (was built) ...and it was this sawmill which had made the town." In the following chapter Ryder describes the economic spinoffs from lumbering, particularly the shipyards in San Francisco, Oakland, Benecia and Vallejo, and the lumber needed to keep San Francisco growing despite repeated fires.

### Conclusion

The story of the discovery of the resource at Big River and the subsequent twists and turns of men and capital to realize a profit from it is dramatic but not atypical of the many that occurred during the westward expansion. This particular story played out in part in the Ford house, which still looks today much as it did when Ford, Williams, Freundt, Goddefroy and Sillem worked out their agreement that kept the Mendocino mill in operation. It was J.B. Ford who discovered the resource, chose the location and

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managed the mill for its initial twenty years and who made it successful despite various difficulties, while with his family also acting as the religious and social leaders of the town. The house is the structure most associated with Jerome B. and Martha Hayes Ford.

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