

Fort Humboldt State Historic Park



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The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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**Fort Humboldt
State Historic Park**

3431 Fort Avenue

Eureka, CA 95503

(707) 488-2041

*Soldiers tried to
preserve a sense
of family life at
Fort Humboldt in
the midst of conflict
between settlers and
Native Americans.*



Fort Humboldt State

Historic Park is built on the edge of Humboldt Bay near Eureka in scenic northwest California. The fort gives visitors a glimpse of pioneer-era military life in the mid-19th century.



Fort Humboldt taken from Humboldt Bay, 1860s

NATURAL HISTORY

The bluff where Fort Humboldt sits is composed of alluvial and marine deposits, sand and sedimentary clay. Loamy topsoil covers these layers.

The deer and bear that once inhabited Fort Humboldt are now gone—leaving only pocket gophers and local dogs and cats. Shrubs, spruce and alder trees grow on the west shoulder of the bluff while willows and berries have filled in the freshwater pond south of the bluff.

Typical of coastal regions, Eureka is foggy year-round, with average temperatures in the 50s and 60s.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

California Indians have lived in the northwestern area for several thousand years. About 14 tribes lived in the region later served by Fort Humboldt, including the Wiyot, Yurok, Whilkut, Nongatl, Mattole, Sinkyone, Hupa, Karuk and Yurok people. The Wiyot occupied the area now known as Humboldt County. Archaeological and

historical evidence points to a flourishing Wiyot culture thousands of years old. Primarily hunters and gatherers, they dwelled in an area rich in marine and other edible resources.

The village of Tuluwat on Indian Island was the Wiyot physical and spiritual center. They held annual world-renewal ceremonies at Tuluwat to bring the world back into balance and heal social discord.

Worlds in Conflict

After Major Pierson B. Reading discovered gold at the Trinity River in May 1849, the natives' traditional way of life ended. Gold fever spread quickly, luring fortune-seekers to the state. Uniontown (later renamed Arcata, its original native name), Bucksport and Eureka sprang up around Humboldt Bay. New settlers sought the natives' territory. Rather than clearing the redwoods from unoccupied land, settlers took over native villages and traditional hunting and fishing sites; Indians died defending themselves and their homes. Violence escalated and bloody battles ensued as vigilantes attacked the natives. Desperate settlers also appealed for help from the government.

Fort Humboldt Established

In January 1853, Fourth Infantry U.S. Army soldiers, led by Brevet Lt. Colonel Robert C. Buchanan, arrived at Humboldt Bay to broker peace. Buchanan selected a fort site on a high, barren bluff overlooking the bay above Bucksport. Soldiers constructed platforms on which to pitch their tents. By 1857, 14 redwood and plaster structures had been built in a "U" shape around a parade ground. Due to its strategic location high on the bluff, no outer walls or palisades were built to protect the company of soldiers.

The Military Dilemma

The military troops found themselves acting as mediators between settlers and Indians to resolve conflicts and avoid violence. Many newcomers wanted the natives moved to reservations out of the area.

In an effort to bring about a sustainable peace, seven agreements were signed with California Indians living between Clear Lake and the Klamath River. These treaties were never ratified by the government, and the natives never received the land that they had been promised.



Surgeon's Quarters and Hospital

When most federal troops departed for the Civil War, prominent local citizens formed a self-proclaimed militia. On February 26, 1860, the militia attacked five separate Wiyot villages over a 30-hour period and massacred over 100 unarmed Indians. The village of Kutuswalik, within sight of Fort Humboldt, was burned completely. The Army built an 80-foot, open corral near the fort to hold both captive native prisoners and those who sought refuge at the fort from vigilantes. Fed an unfamiliar diet of hardtack and beans, some natives died of dysentery; others were killed in continuing violent outbursts. More than 200 natives died before the survivors could be resettled on reservations.

Today, the surviving descendants of the Wiyot have established federal recognition. They have regained parts of Indian Island and are restoring its plundered sacred sites.

Life at the Fort

A bugle call or drum beat regulated the routine of fort life. Fort Humboldt's supplies, mail, and even soldiers' pay were often delayed for months. Away from family and friends, isolated and lonely, soldiers found that time passed slowly; many deserted.

One unhappy young captain, Ulysses S. Grant, was stationed at Fort Humboldt in 1854. He was a loner, preferring to spend his leisure time at a nearby tavern or riding in the countryside near the fort. After five months, Captain Grant resigned his commission and went home to farm. He later rejoined the Army during the Civil War, soon



Ulysses S. Grant

promoted to colonel and rose to lead the Union troops as general. In 1869, Grant became the 18th president of the United States, serving two terms.

Seth Kinman was a hunter who supplied elk meat to troops at Fort Humboldt and entertained the soldiers with tales of his exploits with grizzly bears. Kinman played music for the soldiers on his fiddle, made from the skull of his favorite mule, "Dave."

Harriet St. John Simpson, her husband Assistant Surgeon Josiah Simpson, and their children enjoyed their post in the surgeon's quarters from 1854-1857. Mrs. Simpson chronicled life at the fort in lively letters to her family back East. Her letters and sketches provide the clearest historical record of daily life. She

would often throw parties for the fort's officers and their families, detailing both her menus and her servants' cooking methods.

Fort Humboldt Today
Abandoned as a military post in 1870, the land



Harriet Simpson



Seth Kinman

and one remaining building—the hospital—were sold to W. S. Cooper in 1893 for \$6,000. Cooper's widow donated the property to the City of Eureka. Title was transferred to the State of California in 1955, and Fort Humboldt became a state historic park in 1963. The restored hospital building is now used as a museum. The garden features medicinal, edible and floral plants, similar to the fort's garden in the 1850s.

A self-guided trail of lumbering exhibits, including locomotives and steam donkeys, showcases logging in the area from the 1850s to the present day.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Parking, restrooms and exhibits are generally accessible. The museum is accessible from mostly level paths.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- The park is open for day use only.
- Pets are welcome on a six-foot leash.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Azalea State Reserve, 15336 Hwy. 101 Trinidad (707) 488-2041
- Little River State Beach, 13 miles north on Hwy. 101 (707) 488-2041
- Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, 16949 Hwy. 36, Carlotta (707) 777-3683

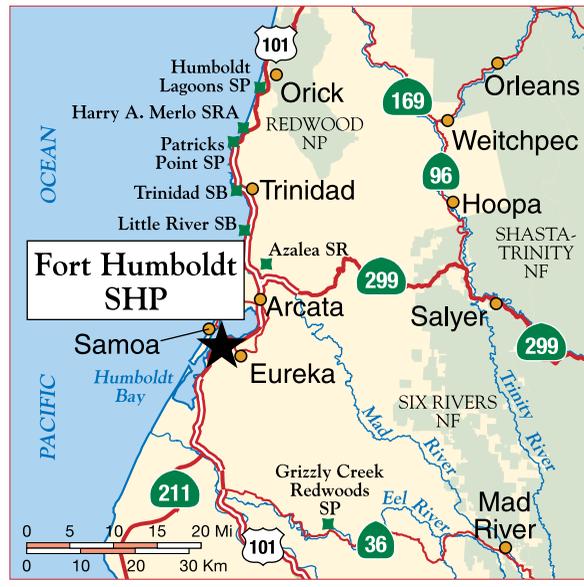
This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization.

For more information, contact:

North Coast Redwood Interpretive Association
115336 Highway 101 North
Trinidad, CA 95570
www.ncria.org

Fort Humboldt State Historic Park

- ### Key to Detailed Map
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Commanding Officer's Quarters ② Officers' Quarters ③ Officers' Quarters ④ Company Offices ⑤ Company Quarters ⑥ Company Quarters ⑦ Guard House ⑧ Hospital/Museum ⑨ Commissary ⑩ Lieutenants' Quarters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑪ Lieutenants' Quarters ⑫ Surgeon's Quarters ⑬ Sink ⑭ Blacksmith's Shop ⑮ Historic Magazine ⑯ Stables ⑰ Laundress' Quarters ⑱ Bake House ⑲ Servants' Quarters |
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to Fortuna,
Ukiah
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Truesdale Street

101

Highland Avenue

BAYSHORE
MALL

EUREKA

Legend

- Paved Road
- Paved Trail
- Historic Area
- Parking Area
- Urban Area
- Accessible Feature
- Historic Building
- Historic Building Site
- Park Building
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Visitor Center

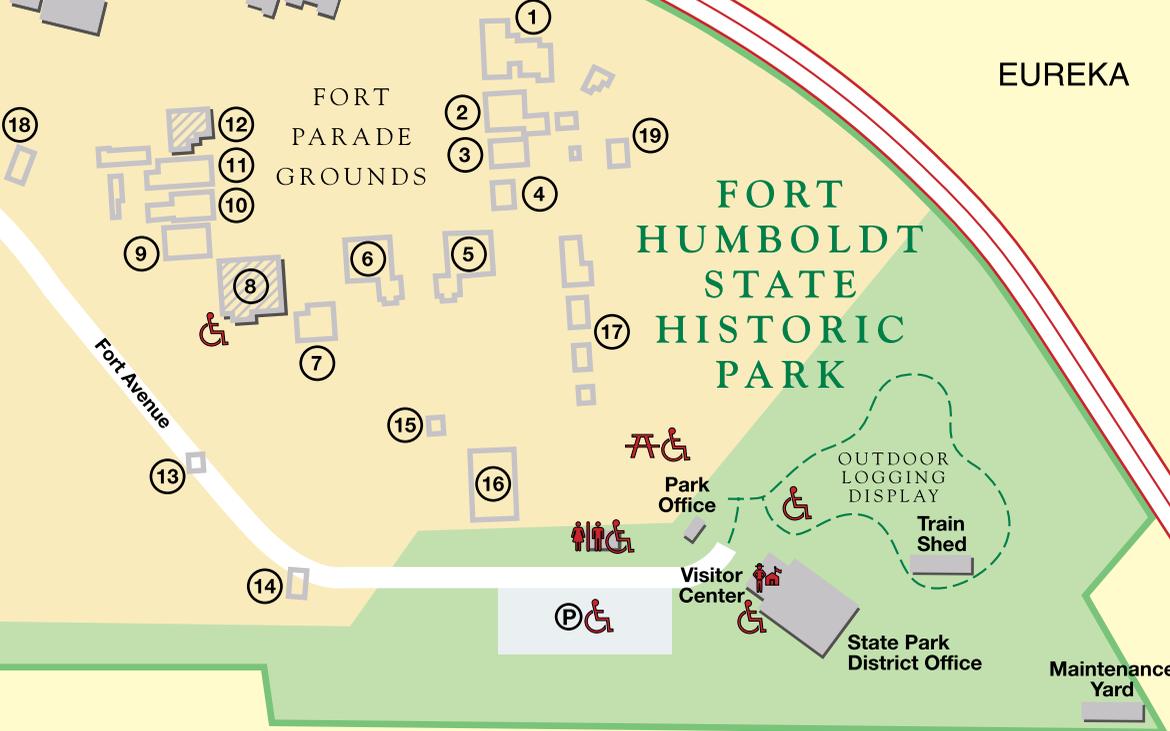
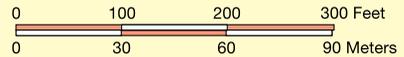
● Park
Entrance

Highland Place



Iowa Street

Highland Avenue



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to Trinidad,
Klamath
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