Have you looked at your high school graduation portrait lately? If so, you may find that a few changes have occurred in the intervening years. There have been some major changes on the campus also, as Humboldt State Normal School became Humboldt State College and finally Humboldt State University. The photographs featured here document this changing landscape from 1914 to 1940.
Top: Three views of Arcata from the hill-site for Humboldt Normal School.

Far Left: Looking east on a snowy day toward the temporary quarters.

Above Left: View toward Eureka and site of present-day corporation yard.

Below Left: Assembled student body of Humboldt State Normal. These buildings included dormitories as well as classrooms.
Top, page 16: Founders Hall, 1922.

Bottom, page 16: Founders Hall, 1928. Note city parking at foot of steps.

Left: Entranceway, Founders Hall, with replica of “Winged Victory.”

Below: Founders Hall Courtyard, about 1925. Photograph was taken before the archways were glassed in and before the fish pond was built at the south end.
Dear Adorable Family: July, 1927

At last my journey is ended, and I am a student in this far-away College. I might almost say, this College is the country. But let me begin at the beginning.

First to preserve this atmosphere of remoteness, after a long walk from the stage depot, one arrives at the foot of a hill, upon which the school is located. It is true, is it not, that gaining an education is "up-hill" work? But reaching the foot of the stairs leading to the entrance, I patiently, a step at a time, counted to forty-four—before I found myself within the building. Good fortune attended me for there stood a most efficient-looking lady, of whom I quickly inquired my way to the Girls Dormitory. In most businesslike manner she replied—"Right down the hill; first detour to the right."

It will seem strange to you that having just ascended that hill, I had failed to recognize my future home, but wait—I now proceeded to follow directions, made the detour, and found myself confronted by a low rambling structure, quaint and picturesque. It is hard to tell you just the style,—One needs the ability to write descriptive prose, for it is so "fetching". Approaching the building, there came to me sounds as of the stroke of an ax. You know how poems always come to me. Immediately I thought of those lines—"Woodman, spare that tree." Instinctively my steps quickened.

Now, what do you suppose it was:—Only a Dormitory girl chopping kindling. Isn't that too thrilling! I have since learned that every girl learns to use an ax. What a magnificent opportunity to develop energy—"initiative - poise!! It brought to my mind a subject for some future theme, such as Physical Independence - or Advantages of Dormitory Life - or - Wood-pile Anthropology. Such a lot of ideas came tripping along.

You will want to know about my room, (I will describe it in detail later) but it is so lofty, making one feel that here is a place conducive to high thinking. And the windows open out in most enticing fashion. Any young man passing by would want to step up for a chat. (I was so disappointed to find that this is not allowed.) But it gives one such a romantic feeling. "Gaily, the troubadour"—you know.

Then the laundry, keeping up the fire there is something like a relay race, each one in turn, carrying wood. Another chance, you see, to gain physical prowess. Speaking in terms of the movies, one might call it "a continuous performance."

And now,—about our lawn. Seldom does one see grass grow so luxuriantly as it does here. It attains such a height that it may be dignified by being called hay. Do you know, I mean to tell the girls what a fine chance for dramatization this will furnish. You remember that old poem "Maud Muller on a summer day Raked the meadow sweet with hay." The girls would be so sweet with picture hats and lovely new rakes. Don't I think of more things, folks? There is certainly something about this climate that sharpens one's wits. There surely can be no dullards in this school.

The best comes last - Our dear social room. It does not contain the type of furniture so commonly used now. No over-stuffed davenport, and such things. Every - piece - is - so different. Even the piano has an individuality of its own, being, in color, a cheerful red. These things, I'm sure, belong to different periods, but all border on the antique. It fairly takes one back.

Now the girls - they speak for themselves, as you would agree if you could only hear them. You shall at least hear more about them.

There's just the whistle from the athletic field. It just occurs to me what a double opportunity one has, with both natural and artificial athletics. But I must hurry to school. Now isn't California wonderful —wonderful! It's truly unusual, folks!

Your affectionate and happy
Mary Lou Humboldt
Above: Classroom; Botany 1B, 1930s.
An aerial photo of the campus, 1938. Note Gist Hall along the right hand edge of the picture.