

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



*Final*

**1. Name**

historic Benbow Inn (Hotel Benbow)

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 445 Lake Benbow Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Garberville N/A vicinity of congressional district 1st

state California code 06 county Humboldt code 023

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Charles R. and Patsy J. Watts

street & number 2675 Benbow Drive

city, town Garberville N/A vicinity of state California 95440

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Humboldt County Courthouse

street & number 825 Fifth Street

city, town Eureka state California 95501

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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a rich, dark brown, contrasting sharply with the white stuccoed walls. Wrought iron lamps hang from the porch ceiling and six multi-paned French doors extend along the wall, with the one at the top of the steps leading into the lobby.

The porch extends only part way across the front; the remaining portion is of sandstone with multi-paned windows and white lattice work which also covers the side of the entrance steps. Much of the basement and main floor levels west of the porch are obscured by vines and vegetation.

The second and third stories each contain three slant bays which alternate with three flat windows. All of the windows are multi-paned casements with dark brown wood trim. Three small roof gables sit atop the three sets of flat windows. At the western end of the front, there is an angled gabled section with the third story overhanging the second. The gable contains half-timbering and the little, multi-paned windows in each story are highlighted with dark brown brackets and trim.

The east side appears unfinished, which it is as the original plans called for the construction of a massive sandstone tower and entrance. These plans, however, never materialized thus, the wood siding and unfinished appearance. Multi-paned casement windows, a fire escape, and a newly-added metal woodstove chimney cover this end wall. The main floor multi-purpose room addition of the 1960's is also covered with wood siding and repeats the multi-paned windows.

At the rear of the building, the Inn's great size becomes apparent as the slope of the land allows the west wing basement, which is covered with sandstone, to be above ground. Leading from the lobby onto the terrace and into the garden are ten, multi-paned French doors. The stuccoed terrace wall contains five cement buttresses, interspersed with four, wrought-iron wall lamps. A small ledge above the doors is marked with dark brown brackets. Six sets of multi-paned casement windows extend across the second story. The third story wall repeats the windows of the lower story except that two of the window groups are slanted bays. Six roof dormers, added in the 1930's, also contain multi-paned casements. In the angle between the main section and the west wing are long, door-like, multi-paned windows in the second and third stories.

The wing encloses the west side of the terrace. Opening onto the terrace from the diningroom are multi-paned French doors. In fact, the entire diningroom wall is covered with multi-paned windows which bring the light and English garden scenery into the dining area. Second and third story walls in the wing are similar to those of the main section. Three sets of multi-paned casements extend across the second floor; the third story has one flat window grouping and two bays, all with multi-panes. Dormers protrude from the wing roof.

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At the rear of the wing are two, off-set gables with little slant bays in each. Second and third story walls contain spaced, multi-paned windows. One of the gables has an interesting rectangular extension extending between both stories. On the front of this extension is a pointed protrusion with little windows. The rear wall of the diningroom repeats the multi-paned windows of the terrace wall. On the west corner of the building is the enclosed, main-floor patio.

The west end of the building has a center roof gable, flanked by gabled dormers which appear to be original. There are two large roof chimneys visible from this perspective. Second and third story walls contain both flat and bay windows with multi-panes. The main floor and the above-ground basement are covered with sand stone and again repeat the multi-paned windows.

Landscaping around the Inn and stone walks and walls contribute significantly to the building's architecture and atmosphere. Potted plants decorate the terrace and front entrance. A grassy lawn slopes gently to the East Branch, which, during the summer, is dammed to create a small recreational lake. The old Redwood Highway crosses the East Branch on a lovely, arched stone bridge, built by the Benbows during the highway's construction. Beneath the bridge guests enjoy the quiet lake and scenic beauty. At the rear of the Inn, magnificent black oaks gracefully spread their branches about the building and over the terrace.

The Benbow Inn is located at the confluence of the East Branch and the South Fork Eel River. Forested hillsides and open valley land provide a beautiful natural setting for this fine building. The original acreage attached to the Inn has been sold off over the years; however, land directly adjacent to the South Fork is now the Benbow Lake State Recreation Area.

The major sad intrusion on this beautiful setting is U.S. Highway 101 freeway which was built during the 1960's and essentially cuts through the heart of the valley. The freeway runs just to the east of the Inn. The building's fine architecture, interior furnishings, landscaping, and natural setting, however, combine to make the Benbow Inn a special place for those who come to enjoy its gracious, country-manor atmosphere.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1926

Builder/Architect Albert Farr

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Benbow Inn is nominated to the National Register as a fine example of English Tudor architecture. Built during the era of period architecture in America, the Inn embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Tudor mansion, retaining a high degree of historical and architectural integrity some 57 years after its construction. Through the years its inviting location along the South Fork Eel River and its gracious atmosphere have been enjoyed by such notable persons as Eleanor Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, John Barrymore, Basil Rathbone, Charles Laughton, to name a few, as well as innumerable travelers drawn to this beautiful northcoast region. The Inn's fine architecture and idyllic setting combine to create an atmosphere which has been described in numerous articles including one by William Rice in the Washington Post in which he recalled his visit to Benbow as "wonderful," like an "evening in Brigadoon." The Inn appears in Country Inns of the Far West (J. Killeen, et al., 101 Productions, S.F., 1977) and Historic Country Inns of California (Jim Crain, Chronicle Books, S.F., 1977). The fine English Tudor architecture and enduring historical qualities easily justify the placement of the Benbow Inn on the National Register of Historic Places.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1924 the nine Benbow brothers and sisters purchased land on the South Fork Eel River in southern Humboldt County. It was their purpose originally to find a place along the river where they could meet with their families for a camping get-together during the summer. At some point, probably as the construction of the Redwood Highway was nearing completion, the Benbows decided to pool their resources and build a hotel for the travelers and vacationers who would be following the highway northward to the beautiful redwood region.

Albert Farr, San Francisco architect known in the Bay area for his shingle-style and half-timbered houses, the most notable of which was Jack London's Wolf House near Glen Ellen, was selected to design the Benbow's hotel. Along with the hotel, the Benbows developed a golf course, riding stables, a canoe area, and a power and water company.

The Inn opened for business in 1926 and soon became widely known for its attractive architecture, fine cuisine, gracious accommodations, and beautiful surroundings. Movie stars and statesmen found their way to remote southern Humboldt and the Benbow Inn.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Benbow Inn Scrapbook. In the possession of Charles and Patsy Watts.  
 Benbow, Phyllis. "When the Stars Stayed at Benbow." Hum. Co. Magazine, 1981.  
 Deed Records. Humboldt County Courthouse, Eureka, CA.  
 Watts, Charles. Personal communication. March 19, 1983, Garberville, CA.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3  
 Quadrangle name Garberville

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** AP# 213-191-54. Three acres in SE $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 36, T4S;R3E, near confluence of East Branch and South Fork Eel River at Benbow Lake State Recreation Area; bounded on east by U.S. 101, on north and west by old Redwood Highway, and on south by access road off U.S. 101. (See

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** attached deeds)

state N/A code NA county N/A code NA

state N/A code NA county N/A code NA

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susie Van Kirk

organization N/A

date April 7, 1983

street & number 1162 G Street

telephone (707) 822-6066

city or town Arcata

state California 95521

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature K. M. Ellman

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date AUG 9 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

[Signature]  
 Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

Attest:

Chief of Office

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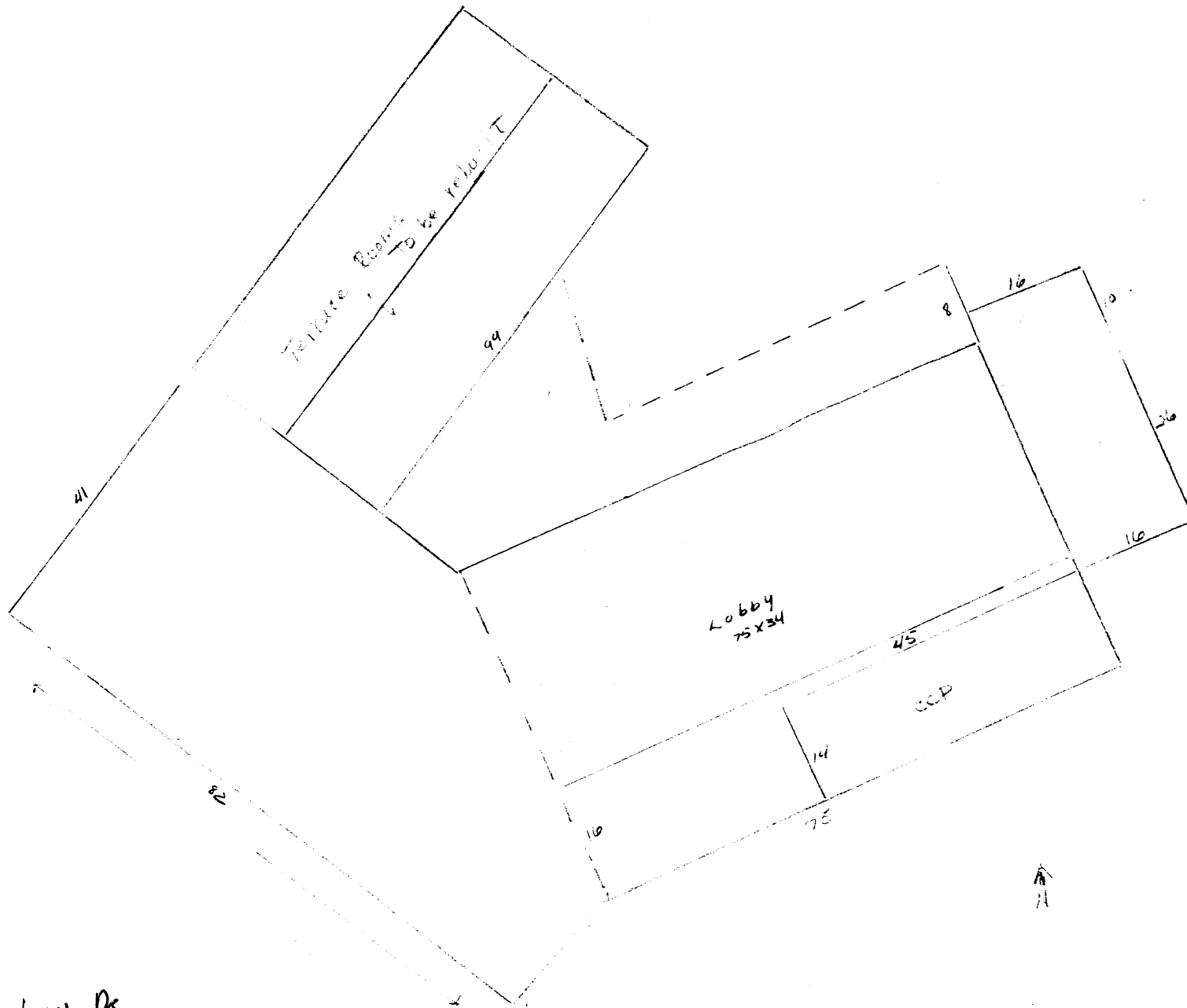
PAGE

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The Benbows managed the Inn until 1952 when it was sold to George Thompson. Falling on hard times, the Inn was returned to the Benbows who sold it again in 1962 to Arthur and Claudia Stadler. Dennis Levett and Cornelius Corbett purchased it in 1975. Three years later, the present owners, Chuck and Patsy Watts, bought the Inn.

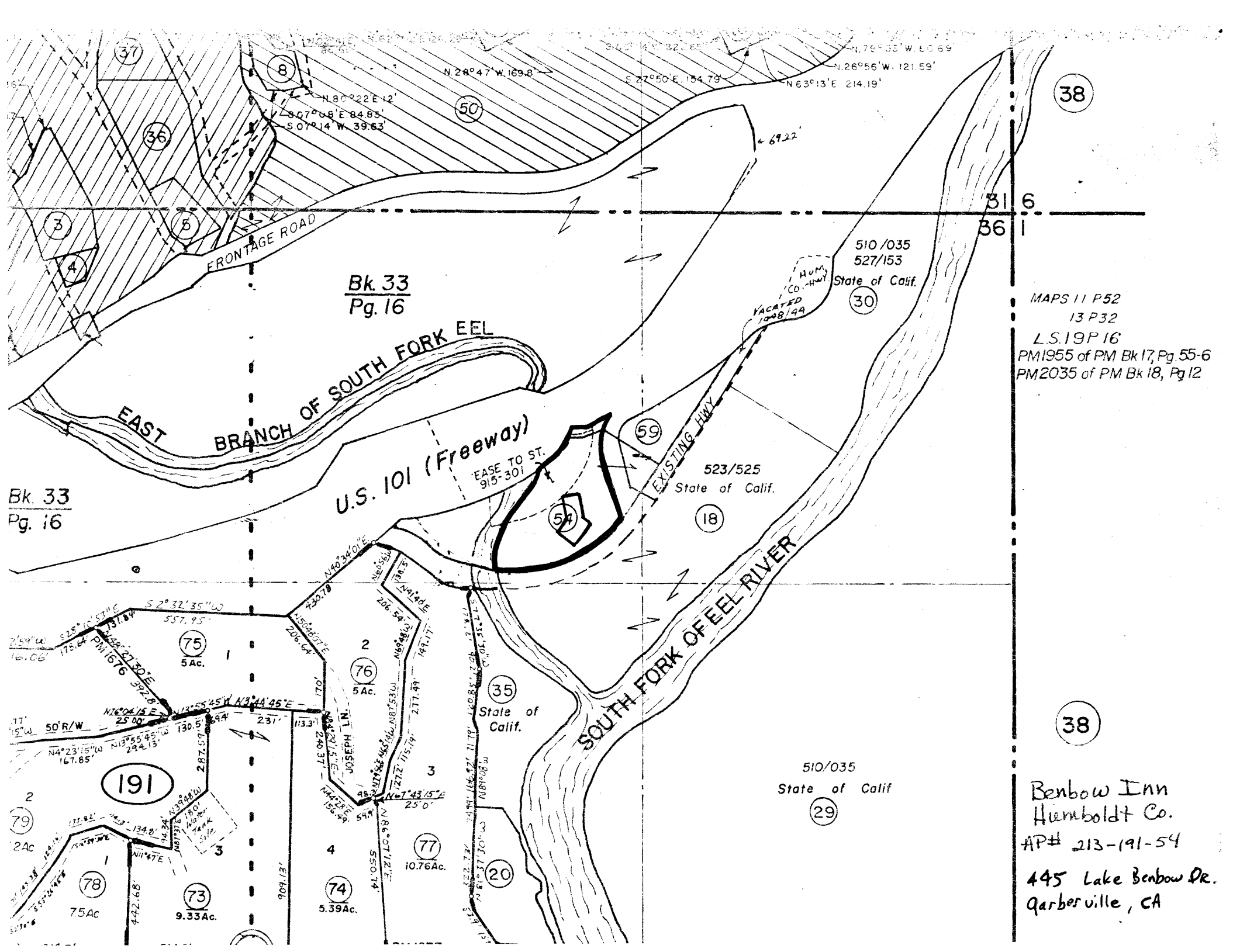
Through careful restoration, the Inn has been returned to its charm of former years. Antique furnishings complement the heavy wood columns, pendants and arches of the lobby. Instead of televisions and telephones, the guest rooms, also furnished with antiques, have baskets of books. Flowers abound both inside and out, and the purpose of all those multi-paned windows is evident when sun and scenery pour into the Inn's rooms.

For its fine English Tudor architecture, enhanced by a lovely natural setting, the Benbow Inn is nominated to the National Register. Such designation recognizes the Inn's architectural and historical integrity and provides a measure of protection for this most deserving historic place.



Benbow Inn  
 445 Lake Benbow Dr.  
 Garberville, CA.  
 Humboldt County





Bk 33  
Pg. 16

Bk 33  
Pg. 16

MAPS 11 P52  
13 P32  
L.S. 19 P 16  
PM 1955 of PM Bk 17, Pg 55-6  
PM 2035 of PM Bk 18, Pg 12

Benbow Inn  
Humboldt Co.  
AP# 213-191-54  
445 Lake Benbow Dr.  
Garberville, CA

510/035  
State of Calif.  
29

523/525  
State of Calif.  
18

510/035  
527/153  
State of Calif.  
30

EASE TO ST.  
915-301

FRONTAGE ROAD

U.S. 101 (Freeway)

SOUTH FORK OF EEL RIVER

VACATED  
1988/44

HUMBOLDT  
CO. HWY

EXISTING HWY

909.13'

74  
5.39Ac.

77  
10.76Ac.

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35  
State of Calif.

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75  
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