

Val Vita Food Products Company Headquarters

**1747 W. Commonwealth
Avenue**

1939

Streamline Moderne

Status: Significant Property



Constructed at a cost of \$24,000 by the Lynch Construction Company of Los Angeles, this striking building is the best example in the application of the Streamline Moderne style to a commercial structure in Fullerton. The building's low-set profile featuring curvilinear forms, rounded corners and the use of glass block is characteristic of the style. The structure was most likely designed by notable Los Angeles architect Douglas McLellan, who continued to design buildings for Val Vita both at the Fullerton site and other locations until 1957. McLellan is best known for designing the Mira Hershey Residence Hall and the Chancellor's House on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus.

The use of this architectural format suggests an interest on the part of the initial owner, Norton Simon's Val Vita Food Products, to project an up-to-date image when the office building was constructed in 1939. Val Vita was one of the rare companies to expand dramatically during the Depression, and the building was one of the few office buildings constructed in Fullerton in the 1930s. Val Vita would go through a number of company name changes before becoming Hunt-Wesson, Inc. in 1960. This building remained the headquarters for Hunt until 1962, when another executive office building – designed in a completely different architectural style – was constructed on the south side of Commonwealth Avenue. The building was then converted into the Hunt-Wesson Research Institute. Because there were other office facilities on the Hunt site, employees often referred to the building as the "Little Office".

No major exterior alterations to this one-and-a-half story, 5,350-sq.-ft. building have been made since its construction in 1939. The building is now being used as an educational facility by the present owner, Grace Ministries International.