



# FULLERTON HERITAGE

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*The mission of Fullerton Heritage is to foster an appreciation of our city's cultural history and to ensure the preservation of our historic architectural resources and environments.*

## **Carrie E. Ford: Fullerton Pioneer, Historian and Philanthropist**

*by Debora Richey*

**A**t last year's annual meeting, Fullerton Heritage Board members were approached by Harriet Spree, a long-standing member, who asked for assistance in placing her residence at 800 North Grandview on Fullerton's list of Local Landmarks. After conducting preliminary research, Fullerton Heritage agreed to support the Landmark application. The application was soon completed, and Mrs. Spree's home at the corner of Grandview and Union Avenue was designated a Local Landmark by the Fullerton City Council on October 19, 2010. Mrs. Spree's home is unusual for a Fullerton Local Landmark in that it is the only one associated with a woman—Carrie Earl McFadden Ford. Mrs. Ford (1867-1961) was a prominent pioneer known not only for her ranching efforts, but also for her social, civic, and business enterprise.

The 1½ story dwelling at 800 North Grandview was constructed by Carrie E. Ford in 1927 for \$4,650, one of the first to be constructed in Golden Hills after a 25-acre property was subdivided into 27 large parcels in 1921. The architectural style of the residence contrasts with other dwellings in Golden Hills, which in the 1920s favored newer revival styles, particularly Spanish Colonial Revival. Mrs. Ford's house is reminiscent of her childhood home and the two-story grove house that she and her husband built on West Commonwealth Avenue in the 1890s, and it is obvious that she was trying to recapture the feeling of those two earlier homes. The house was



*Carrie E. Ford and family*

designed by Arthur M. Thompson (1881-1943), a well-known local builder and contractor, who had moved to Fullerton around 1918 to erect a home for banker Frederick Kraus. Mrs. Ford lived in the dwelling from 1927 to 1953, when it was purchased by its second owners, the Spree family, and Harriet Spree, a longtime bus driver with the Fullerton School District, still resides in the house.

Carrie Earl McFadden Ford, known for

her feisty and often stubborn personality, lived a full and rich life, witnessing the founding and development of Fullerton and Orange County. Born November 11, 1867 in San Leandro, she moved at the age of one with her parents, William M. McFadden (1842-1902) and Sarah Jane Earl McFadden (1846-1908), both teachers, to what was then called North Anaheim. The Stearns Rancho Company was selling land for ten dollars an acre, and William McFadden purchased 100 acres on what is now the southwest side of Placentia Avenue and Yorba Linda Boulevard. At the time, there was not much more than a wagon trail through mustard fields just north and east of the small German community of Anaheim. Initially, the McFaddens could not make a living off the dry land, so William McFadden taught at the old Santa Ana School (1867), one of Orange County's first schools, located in what is now the Olive community, part of the City of Orange. While teaching, he was elected superintendent of schools of Los Angeles County (Los Angeles and Orange County were one then) for two terms and also as president of the Board of Education. McFadden quickly became known for his involvement in everything, a trait his daughter Carrie would emulate. McFadden started and served as president of the Fullerton Walnut Growers Association, organized the Southern California Orange Exchange, instigated the development of the Anaheim Union Water Company, which brought the

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# Advocacy Issues

by Kate Dalton

## Redevelopment Design Review Committee

The Redevelopment Design Review Committee considered several projects in the residential preservation zones over the past few months; two in Brookdale Heights, two in Jacaranda/Malvern, and one in College Park.

The RDRC reviewed the owner's revised plans for the remodel of his two-story residence at 336 W. Brookdale Place, which includes a new porch. The revisions were approved with conditions acceptable to the owner and the work will be completed in phases, at his request.

At the same meeting, the RDRC reviewed and approved plans to remodel a 1960s-era residence at 430 W. Brookdale Place, with specified conditions intended to make the front façade a more uniform design. Although the 1960s house is a non-contributing structure to the historic features of the neighborhood preservation zone (it was constructed in 1962 as a replacement for a 1920s home that was destroyed), review of the proposed improvements is necessary to ensure that changes do not have a significant negative impact on the historic neighborhood. The RDRC's conditions are intended to have the house retain its 1960s architecture.

A new accessory structure at 239 W. Malvern Avenue was reviewed and approved by the RDRC with conditions that will ensure that the structure is similar in appearance to the existing residence. The review and discussion was an excellent example of how well the process is working for all concerned.

The owner of the residence at 336 W. Malvern Avenue came before the RDRC to request changes to the architectural details on a second dwelling unit previously approved in December 2007. In reviewing the requested modifications substituting wrought iron stair and porch railings for the approved wooden structures, the Committee determined that its original approval relied significantly on the aesthetic compatibility of the wooden railings with those of the existing covered front porch (which is the predominate feature on the original house). The RDRC continued the item at the request of the owner, so that he could provide more detailed information to the Committee, in an attempt to convince them to approve the change. The Committee suggested to the owner that they considered the original wooden design to be the appropriate choice based on the Design Guidelines and that

if he insisted on pursuing the change, they might determine that the change was so significant that he would need to file a formal application, with fees, to modify the approved Minor Development Project. The day of the next RDRC meeting when the continuation was to be heard, the owner notified staff and the RDRC that he had decided to withdraw his request for change and would build the originally approved wooden structures.

The RDRC reviewed and approved, with conditions, plans to rehabilitate the existing residence and garage at 127 N. Cornell Ave.

As part of the ongoing restoration of the Fox Theatre complex, the RDRC reviewed and approved the design for enclosing the open space between the former Tea Room and Angelo's and Vinci's restaurant to the north. The modification will provide walled patio space for a new dining venue while also sheltering the area from noise along Harbor Blvd.

## City Council

On April 5, the City Council approved the Proposed Master Plan for historic Hillcrest Park. The master planning process took well over two years and involved numerous public meetings to obtain extensive input from concerned citizens. Approved priorities include restoration of the historic elements as well as several improvements and additions to the open space and connectivity of the park. The Council requested that the Hillcrest Master Plan Committee continue to work with City Staff and ML+A, the landscape architectural consultants, to determine phasing priorities to the City Council for approval. The Council and city staff will continue to pursue additional sources of funding for the master plan improvements to supplement the \$5 million currently available. Hillcrest Park is one of only a few parks in the United States that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

## Miscellaneous Issues

The city is again working on the **General Plan Update** with the review of the Administrative Draft by the General Plan Review Committee. For the first time, Chapter 3 of the new plan consists of a separate Historic Preservation Element, the result of public input, work by Fullerton Heritage, and collaboration and support from Community Development Department staff. The review process is expected to take

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## Behind the Fences at the Fox

by Kyle Moore (Board Member, Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation)

After many years of stops and starts, work on the beloved Fox Fullerton complex has finally begun. Construction fences have sprung up around the property, and signs of work in progress are evident.

For Marcus Alfaro, Project Manager for Lundgren Management, the Fox project is just another day at the office. However, when it comes to restoring a set of buildings that are nearly 90 years old, minor miracles have to be delivered.

“What we’re doing right now is not really glamorous, and it doesn’t have a lot of visible curb appeal, but it’s pretty vital,” says Mr. Alfaro. The first major task that had to happen was a seismic retrofit. The entire Fox complex (including the Theatre, the Firestone Building, and the Tea Room) had to be reinforced against the danger of earthquake – measures which weren’t in place when the buildings were originally constructed in the mid-1920s. For the Theatre, that meant performing an astonishing bit of engineering sleight-of-hand: inserting a 2,400-lb. steel I-beam under the balcony, using rigging constructed on the interior walls.

Work is ramping up in the other buildings as well. “In the Tea Room we’ve done the foundation work, and we’re digging a pit for the elevator that will be installed there. We’ve also de-

moed the two walls of the old kitchen area. At the Firestone Building, the original roof tiles have been removed for cleaning; broken tiles will be replaced. Meanwhile in the Theatre, we’re starting the orchestra pit demolition as well as the stage house foundation work.”

A few months ago the buildings looked like haunted houses, with puddles on the floors, huge holes in the walls and ceilings, trash, graffiti, and an air of hopeless, irreversible decay. These days, the buildings are noisy and crawling with workers. When asked, Mr. Alfaro cites an astonishing figure: approximately 20,000 hours of intense, dirty, and dangerous labor will be performed by skilled craftsmen before this stage of the project is completed.

There’s plenty of work ahead, obviously. The current construction efforts will lay the groundwork for what’s to come - the finishing work on the Firestone Building and the Tea Room that will put the “icing on the cake.” Exterior surfaces will be refinished and painted, parking lot improvements will have been completed, and the two buildings made ready to hand over to new tenants by December. Once this phase is complete, with new businesses drawing customers and providing rental revenue, the big push will be on to begin the restorative work that will finally reopen the Fox Fullerton Theatre’s doors.

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## Ford

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first water to north Orange County, and was one of the first ranchers to grow oranges in the area. He was one of five commissioners named by Governor Bartlett to organize Orange County in 1889. In 1901, he led a building movement to construct the first Masonic Temple at Amerige Avenue and Harbor Boulevard, now the Parker Building (201 N. Harbor), and was the first Master of the Fullerton Masonic Lodge. Carrie E. Ford’s mother, Sarah McFadden, was also involved in the community, and it was Mrs. McFadden who was entrusted at an 1884 community meeting with the responsibility of naming the new settlement, eventually selecting Placentia as the town’s name.

William and Sarah McFadden had eight children (six survived), and Carrie E. Ford was the oldest and only girl in the family. As a child, she planted walnut trees, budded orange trees, and packed fruit for shipment, while also attending her father’s school. At the age of ten, she was once told by her father, who was assisting his wife with the birth of their third son, to drive a buckboard and double

team with a load of supplies—picks, shovels, food, gunpowder, etc.—out to Chinese laborers working on new irrigation ditches. During her childhood, she met prominent individuals and pioneer families moving into the area, including Madame Modjeska and her husband Count Bozenta, Richard Gilman, who planted the first commercial Valencia orange grove in Orange County, and members of the Kraemer, Yorba, Peralta, Gardiner, Bastanchury, Hetebrink, Starbuck, and McDermott families.

In May 1889, she married Herbert Alvin (Bert) Ford (1859-1894), a member of the prominent Ford family, for whom Ford Avenue is named. Ford had moved to Orange County in 1884 from the Dakota Territory, then moved to Los Angeles to set up a photography business. When the town of Fullerton was founded in 1887, he relocated, starting the town’s first store inside the Wilshire Building at Commonwealth and Harbor Boulevard, one of the first buildings in the new town. He applied to the federal government for a post office, and the town’s first postal service started in his store in 1889. In 1890, Ford, suffering from early symptoms of the

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## Ford

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tuberculosis that would kill him at the age of 35, sold the store so he could spend more time outdoors. He and Carrie E. Ford then turned to ranching, building a new grove home on the northwest corner of Commonwealth and Highland Avenues (303 W. Commonwealth), now the location of Fullerton City Hall. By 1894, the couple had acquired twenty acres along West Commonwealth Avenue from the Pacific Land and Improvement Company (the Santa Fe Railroad), along with ten more acres adjoining the south end, and an additional two blocks from Amerige to Whiting and Pomona to Harbor Boulevard. The land was used to grow walnuts, peaches, and oranges. In October 1894, Herbert Ford died, leaving his wife with two small boys and a newborn son.

Widowed at the young age of twenty-seven, Mrs. Ford quickly took control of the ranch and her extensive land holdings, establishing herself as a powerful business figure in her own right. During this era, she was the only woman running a ranch in the area. Shortly before his death, Herbert Ford had filed and won a \$2,000 lawsuit against J. J. Bushard for failure to furnish delivery of a pre-paid order of orange trees. When Bushard failed to pay the judgment, claiming that Mrs. Ford had no claim to the money, Carrie Ford took her case all the way to the California Supreme Court, establishing the legal right of widows to claims won by their late husbands. Upon the death of her mother in 1908, Mrs. Ford further expanded her property holdings by becoming an equal partner, along with her five brothers, of the powerful Placentia Ranch Company, not selling her portion until 1950. In 1917, Mrs. Ford began to subdivide the original twenty acres along West Commonwealth Avenue, known as the Orchard Subdivision. The property was sold off under her personal management and quickly became



*The SpreelFord house at 800 North Grandview*

the choice residential district of Fullerton.

Throughout her lifetime, Mrs. Ford was one of Fullerton's most philanthropic residents. She was extremely active in church, social, and civic affairs, serving as a pioneer and founder of many Fullerton organizations. In 1912, shortly after the State of California granted women the right to vote, Mrs. Ford, along with Mrs. Joan Hale, ran for the Board of Trustees (now the City Council), becoming the first women to run for public office in Fullerton (a woman was not elected to the Fullerton City Council until 1970). After the Fullerton Union High School burned down in 1910, a fire she saw from her home on West Commonwealth, she worked to turn the land into Commonwealth Park (now Amerige Park), the City's first public park.

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, women had limited economic, social, and political options, and like many females during this era, Mrs. Ford looked to women's clubs and organizations to support the community and issues she favored. In 1889, she became a charter member of the Fullerton Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Fullerton's first women's club, serving as president and member of a number of committees. In 1906, she worked with Mrs. Clara Chapman and other prominent women in the WCTU to pass an ordinance banning the issuance of saloon and liquor licenses, which remained in effect until the end of Prohibition. In 1902, she became a charter member of the Woman's Club of Fullerton (1902-1977), serving on various committees and as a guest hostess. That same year, she was a charter and later honorary member of the Placentia Round Table, serving as vice-president in 1902-03, then president in 1903-04. Open to women in Orange County, the Placentia Round Table quickly became one of the best known and important women's clubs in the County. Initially established to discuss intellectual and cultural issues, the club eventually became a social and political force, with the members erecting the first women's clubhouse in Orange County in 1912. In 1903, she became the first president of the Women's Missionary Society of the

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*Harriet Spree*

## President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

We have several positive items to report since our last newsletter including the placement of Local Landmark plaques on six of our historic properties around town; the start of the restoration of the Fox Theatre complex, including the Tea Room and Firestone Building; the set-backs around historic buildings and height limitations established in the Transportation Center Specific Plan; the adoption of a master plan that protects the historic elements of Hillcrest Park; and an excellent historic preservation Webinar sponsored by the City's Community Development Department, thanks to Director Al Zelinka. Also, members of Fullerton Heritage's Board of Directors met with Dr. John Derry, President of Hope International University and several of his staff members to discuss the restoration and adaptive reuse of the Exaggerated Moderne (or what many call Goochie) theater and office buildings on their campus across from CSUF. We are happy to report that HIU values these buildings and plans to incorporate them in their revitalized campus. We thank Dr. Derry and his staff for their foresight. As you may have heard, CSUF had planned to buy the property and had no plans to retain the historic buildings. Several other buildings around town that were built in the 1960s have architectural or social significance to our community, including ones at Beckman-Coulter, Hunt-Wesson (ConAgra), and Fullerton Community Bank. We will be contacting the owners of these treasures to encourage them to apply for Local Landmark status as their buildings turn 50 years old.

Thanks to the much-appreciated efforts of Fullerton

Heritage Vice President Ernie Kelsey, we now have a new PowerPoint presentation that features Fullerton's 17 National Register properties and several of our Local Landmarks. In February, Ernie and I were invited to deliver our new presentation to the Rotary Club of Fullerton after which we were told it was very well received. From the Rotary Club, we just received another \$500 gift to help fund our ongoing campaign to place plaques on our National Register and Local Landmark properties. Thanks to their generosity, over the past 15 years Fullerton Heritage has been able to place 54 plaques!

Finally, please notice that the Fullerton Heritage Newsletter has a new editor, Joel Gread. Joel has volunteered to coordinate with former FH Board Member Jim Powell who has generously offered to continue to do the layout despite the fact that he has moved out of the area. We are very proud of our newsletter and, with Joel's help, we expect it to be even better.

I look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Fullerton Heritage.

## Welcome New Members!

Fullerton Heritage extends a warm welcome to our newest members: Linda Conner, Manuel Garcia, Jr., Matthew Hendricks, Walt Johnson, and Craig & Elizabeth Wilke. Thank you for supporting our city's all-volunteer preservation organization!

## Ford

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Fullerton Presbyterian Church, a position she held for years. In 1917, Mrs. Ford became a charter and life member of the Fullerton Ebell Club, and later served in 1908-09 as matron of the Fullerton Chapter 101, Order of the Eastern Star. In 1925, she became a charter member of the Mojave Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. While Regent of the Mojave Chapter in 1929, she spurred the effort to

place a historical marker, one of the first in Orange County, on the site of the old Santa Ana School where her father taught from 1869 to 1879 and she herself was a student. In 1927, she became a charter member of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, Grace Parlor Number 242, later serving as president. Mrs. Ford's extensive work in various organizations brought her into contact with many prominent Orange County women, and her residence on Grandview Avenue became a frequent location for luncheons, meetings, and fund-raisers.

Because she was a witness to the founding and development of Fullerton and Orange County, Mrs. Ford was often called upon by writers for her first-hand knowledge of the area. She maintained a lively interest in Fullerton's history and was frequently asked to speak on the City's early years at meetings of various organizations. Her fascination and love for the City where she lived for more than sixty years illuminated her talks and writings. Her recollections, on file in the Fullerton Public Library, (continued on page 6)

## Ford

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have often been used by public historians as primary sources for a number of history books, including Bob Ziebell's *Fullerton: A Pictorial History* and Virginia L. Carpenter's *Placentia, a Pleasant Place*. When Mrs. Ford died on January 31, 1961, at the age of 93, her death made the front page of the *Fullerton Daily News Tribune*.

## Advocacy

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several more months, followed by City Council consideration and approval.

The **North Orange County Community College District** is currently reviewing its proposed master plan. As such, Fullerton Heritage took the opportunity to inform them of our concern about two vacant properties adjacent to the College Park Residential Preservation Zone that are owned by NOCCCD. The properties have been vacant and unkempt for decades. In our letter to the NOCCCD, we stated the desire to see the properties developed with new residential units that fit the historic character and thus would be an asset to the neighborhood.

The issue of the **Amerige Brothers Realty Office**, as we

have previously reported, continues to progress with the new Fullerton Community Center now under construction. The latest news confirms that the historic building will be stored on site during development of the Community Center with moving and renovations to be included in the scope of the overall project. The final location of the building will be just north of its previous spot, as requested by Fullerton Heritage. We will be meeting with city staff and the project developers to solidify the detailed scope of work regarding this historic building. Thus Fullerton Heritage will continue working with the City to ensure that the Realty Office again takes a prominent place in Fullerton's consciousness.

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## Go Green Option

Beginning with the next issue, Fullerton Heritage members may elect to go paperless by receiving their newsletter electronically rather than by US Mail. This change will reduce paper and postage costs, a welcome savings for our grassroots organization. To "opt in" for paperless delivery of the newsletter, simply send an e-mail to [webmaster@fullertonheritage.org](mailto:webmaster@fullertonheritage.org) with the word "Paperless" in the subject line.



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