



# 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.*

## Identical In Every Way

by Debora Richey

**O**n February 24, 1952, triplets—Colleen, Carla and Candice—were born to Katherine and Gerald Loran Hills, Sr., a 36-year employee of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company (now AT&T). Katherine and her doctor did not discover that she was to have triplets until six weeks prior to their birth. The sisters were the first set of identical triplets born in Orange and Los Angeles Counties, and the only identical same-sex triplets out of eight sets born in the world in 1952. At the time, the odds of being an identical triplet were one in a million. The Hills already had two sons, and the brothers of the trio quickly nicknamed them “Fatty,” “Noisy,” and “Peeper.”

Fullerton was still largely a rural town in 1952, and the births of the triplets caused quite a stir in an era when fertility drugs were unavailable. Shortly after giving birth to the triplets, Mrs. Hills was interviewed by George Putnam, a news anchor at KTLA, and the sisters quickly became local celebrities. When the girls came home from the hospital, the Fullerton police and fire departments threw a party for them in the



*Career girls Colleen, Carla, and Candice Hills, 9-month-old triplets, show off the Social Security cards issued to the young trio so they could get jobs in the television and modeling industries. Courtesy of Candice Hills-Ferneau.*

basement of the old city hall. Mrs. Hills was named Mother of the Year at the 1953 Fullerton Community Fair sponsored by the Lions Club. Television viewers also overwhelmingly voted her “Queen for a Day” on Jack Bailey’s show, winning her much needed high chairs and beds. When the local newspaper reported that the Hills were washing 400 diapers a week in the family bathtub, the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce Merchants Division chipped in to provide a new automatic washing machine. The Hills would have two more children after the triplets, and Gerald Hills, an active participant in the raising of his seven children, would also win top prize in the Pacific Bell employee

magazine for an at-home shot of a harried father.

High school sweethearts, Katherine and Gerald Hills moved to Fullerton in 1951, building a home at 927 Sierra Vista Drive based on a design taken from Homes & Gardens magazine. To supplement Gerald Hills’ stable but modest salary, the sisters guest

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## Loading Dock Project Nears Completion

by Terry Galvin

As of October, the Santa Fe Loading Dock structural, framing, roofing, and drainage work were complete and approved by the City. The painting is complete except for the plaster fascia, which should be done by the time you read this.

The first test of the drainage system was the unexpected downpour in September. The system worked perfectly. During the restoration, the causes of the deterioration

over the past 20 years were discovered and fixed. The drain was never plugged as originally suspected. The drain pan where the water collects as it goes down the drainpipe was eaten through and allowed the water to go through the roof material to the wood structure.

Another source of the problem was a faulty design by Santa Fe, which made the water on one side of the pan have to run uphill to enter the pan. That caused the water

to collect and eventually seep in around the pan through the roofing material.

A study is currently underway to determine possible uses for the loading dock. An architectural firm with vast restoration and preservation experience has prepared initial concept plans for a developer who is interested in a sales tax generating project that will properly respect and enhance this part of the historic Santa Fe Depot complex.

# Advocacy Issues

by Kate Dalton

## Design Review Committee:

Several new projects in the residential preservation zones have been approved by the DRC in the past few months. On April 23, DRC approved a second dwelling unit at 110 N. Berkeley in the College Park Preservation Zone, with only minor changes to the plan at the request of Fullerton Heritage. On June 11, DRC approved the demolition of a one car detached garage and construction of a detached garage, laundry and storage building at 326 W. Malvern Ave. in the Jacaranda/Malvern Preservation Zone. The design, materials and architectural features matched the original 1921 California bungalow home.

On August 13, DRC approved the restoration of the deteriorated 1917 home at 415 E. Wilshire Ave. including a small addition and attached 2 car garage to the original residence and a new second dwelling unit at the rear of the property which is in the College Park Preservation Zone. Despite the fact that this proposal met all of the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and the Design Guidelines and is a preservation sensitive addition to the neighborhood, the approval was appealed to the Landmarks Commission because one of the adjacent neighbors objected to the addition of a second dwelling unit in what they perceive to be an already congested area. While both the DRC and the Landmarks Commission members were sympathetic to the neighbor's concerns, the appeal was denied at the Landmarks Commission meeting on September 23, clearing the way for the project.

On August 27 the DRC approved a large addition including a family room, bedroom, bath and attached garage to the original 1915 house at 126 E. Valencia Dr. The project was non controversial, met all design standards and indeed ensures lower density in the R-3 East Valencia Preservation Zone.

At its November 12 meeting, DRC approved an addition at 1124 E. Whiting Ave. in the East Whiting/Stanford Preservation Zone. The proposal was a perfect example of a well designed and historically sensitive addition to a vintage home that will be an asset to the neighborhood.

## Beckman Instruments Administration Building Local Landmark Nomination:

Fullerton Heritage has nominated the historic Beckman Instruments Administration Building at 4300 N. Harbor Blvd. for Local Landmark status and the issue was reviewed at the Landmarks Commission meeting on June 24. The building, constructed in 1953, meets the standards to become a Fullerton Local Landmark as well as listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The property has been sold and during that process, neither Beckman nor the prospective buyers were willing to voice an opinion about the nomination, instead remaining neutral. The remainder of the original Beckman site has been demolished and is undergoing environmen-

tal cleanup. Instead of recommending approval of the landmark nomination to the City Council, the Landmarks Commission continued the item to a date uncertain, because of concerns over owner consent. Landmark designation requires meeting an objective set of criteria and Fullerton ordinance, like most other cities, does not require specific owner consent. As a follow-up to this motion, at its meeting on July 8 the Landmarks Commission directed city staff to study and prepare a resolution for a zoning change requiring owner consent for all landmark nominations. Scheduled for the Landmarks Commission meeting on September 23, they continued the item until October 28, because of the absence of some Commissioners. As you can imagine, this issue is extremely important to preservation in Fullerton and if recommended by the Landmarks Commission and approved by the City Council, it will have a significant impact on our protection of historic properties. We will report further information as the issue evolves. In the meantime, Deb Richey who prepares all of our historic documents, has completed and submitted an application to the National Register of Historic Places for the Beckman Administration Building. We have received notice from the State Office of Historic Preservation that the application is complete and it will be heard by the State Commission in either January or April of 2016.

## Miscellaneous Issues:

We have been consulting with the Muckenthaler and the City regarding the deterioration of the balustrade and entry plaster details on the historic mansion.

We have also been consulting with the City about the deterioration of the large leaded glass window on the east facade of the Museum Center. Panes of the window were broken by vandalism and the bottom portion of the wood frame is severely deteriorated. We are obviously concerned for the condition of this beautiful window with a wet winter predicted.

The owners of the historic Chapman building on Harbor have requested approval to install up-lighting to highlight the building's architectural features. There is currently a trial installation that will be reviewed for compatibility, with both Fullerton Heritage and the City concerned about the physical impact on this iconic Fullerton Landmark.

We are closely monitoring the Fullerton College Master Plan and its impact on historic buildings and neighborhoods in Fullerton. We expect to have much more information on this important issue in the near future and we will keep you informed.

Finally, I am sure you have noticed the removal of the beautiful heritage tree that was in front of our historic Amerige Brothers Real Estate Building on Commonwealth next to the Community Center. Sadly it was slowly dying and losing very large limbs, presenting a danger to life and property. While we all mourned the loss of this natural beauty, we now have to look to the future. We are using this sad event to begin the planning for the exterior site improvements that we have envisioned since we completed the restoration of the building and began using it for our Fullerton Heritage board meetings.

## President's Corner

by Ernie Kelsey

Greetings Fullerton Heritage members,

Happy Winter everyone! I hope everyone had a great spring, summer and holiday season. It's hard to believe the holidays have passed and now we're into a new year, 2016!

It's been a busy nine months for Fullerton Heritage and a lot has happened since the last newsletter. In addition to our monthly meetings, City Council and Design Review Board attendance and advocating for a historic presence in Fullerton, we've had some downtown walking tours, a Home Tour, our Annual Meeting and continue to lead the restoration of the Santa Fe Loading Dock. Wow, that's quite a lot if I do say so myself!

The 2015 Annual Meeting was held on July 12, 2015 and was quite fun. We had approximately 30 people attend the gathering, held in the auditorium at the Fullerton Museum Center. The Fullerton Heritage "Year in Review" included some great achievements like our ongoing preservation efforts including welcoming the City's newest Local Landmarks #94 and #95, the Anita Shepardson House and the Carter Apartment House. Vice President Tom Dalton updated the audience on our ongoing support for the Fox Fullerton restoration project and like everyone we are very excited about the imminent opening of some new eating establishments! We also let everyone know the mural on Plummer Auditorium had been repaired after Fullerton Heritage alerted the Fullerton Union High School District that the mural had been damaged. We also showed some pictures of our very successful 2015 Fullerton Heritage Home Tour featuring the Hillcrest Neighborhood, held on June 27. Then

Terry Galvin gave the group an update on the progress of the Santa Fe Loading Dock restoration project which is going very well.

We also celebrated some award winners! The Community Support of Preservation Award went to the Rotary Club of Fullerton for their ongoing support of our plaque placing efforts and various other projects throughout the years. The 2015 Preservationists of the Year Award went to Laura Gallagher Lopez and Todd Warden for their work on leading the effort to gain Preservation Zone status for the Hillcrest Neighborhood. Finally, we celebrated Warren Bowen with the 2015 Local History Lifetime Achievement Award. This was in recognition of the many years Warren has devoted to Fullerton Heritage, and the City of Fullerton in general. Warren also gained Emeritus status with his Board membership and is now available for special projects and all our local history needs. We truly appreciate Warren's many years of service! The City is lucky to have him as a resident.

As we begin the New Year, I want to remind everyone that a membership to Fullerton Heritage is a gift that keeps on giving. Your membership renewals and the memberships you give as gifts are so important to keeping Fullerton Heritage operating and working towards preserving historic Fullerton. Please take the time to renew your membership and when you're in a gift giving situation, give the gift of membership this year – you'll be glad you did! Remember to check out our Facebook page and share our information with your family and friends. Without our members, Fullerton Heritage would not be such a wonderful organization!

Here's wishing you all a Happy New Year!

*With my warmest regards and sincere thanks,  
Ernie*

## Triplets

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starred in a number of television shows, including Topper, My Friend Irma, and Truth or Consequences hosted by Bob Barker. They appeared in advertisements for Ivory soap, Speed Queen washing machines, and Folda Triplet Strollers, and for over a year, were featured on billboards and delivery trucks for Helms Bakery. They also modeled children's clothing, including Shirley Temple's period clothing line. When Disneyland officially opened on July 17, 1955, the pint-sized celebrities escorted the Disneyland Band down Main Street. Later, the triplets would hoodwink a bachelor



*The Hills Triplets at Pacific Bell in Fullerton in 1955/56. Courtesy of Candice Hills-Ferneau.*

when they appeared together on Jim Lange's Dating Game in the 1970s.

The triplets were the youngest children to ever receive Social Security cards at the age of nine months, part of a government promotional program to encourage child actors to sign up for the cards. They attended St. Mary's Elementary School in Fullerton, then obtained four-year scholarships to Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana. The sisters currently share a business partnership called  
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*The Hills Triplets in 1992, celebrating their 40th birthdays at the Fullerton Police Department. Courtesy of Candice Hills-Ferneau*

## Russell House Nominated as Local Landmark

Earlier this year, the owners of the Russell House (516 West Amerige) requested assistance from Fullerton Heritage in nominating their historic home as a Fullerton Local Landmark. The application is currently on file with the city. Constructed in 1903, the residence was originally situated in the 100 block of West Commonwealth, and then moved to its current location on West Amerige in 1923. Originally part of a working ranch, the home is now nestled in a residential neighborhood which



includes historic homes as well as contemporary apartment buildings. An

outstanding example of an early, first generation Colonial Revival home, it is also one of the best preserved in Fullerton. During the early years of the city, the style was very popular with new arrivals, and Colonial Revival homes dotted the original townsite of Fullerton at the turn of the 20th century. The Russell House is one of the few that still remains in the city. The current owners have been good stewards of the home and both the interior and exterior of the home are remarkably intact.

### Welcome New Members!

Fullerton Heritage extends a warm welcome to our newest members: Charlotte (Rosie) Jones, George Merino, Richard and Pat Hopping, John Brennan, Ph.D and Lucina Moses, Cristal and David Drake, Barbara Betterton, Curtis Miles, Madison Broussard, Bob Winkelmann, Leah Smith, Greg and Stacey Sebourn, David and Nellie McLerram, Joan Wolff, Mitch Hanlon, Mac and Irene McCormick, Saputo Mitchell, Sue Dutcher, Dana Radding, Nanette Arroues Price, and Heather Holt

## Fox Theatre Update

by Tom Dalton

The Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation has completed the ceiling restoration of the theatre, installed a fire alarm, and reconditioned the rooftop sign with energy efficient LEDs. Thank you to all of you who came to the Fox for Speakeasy Days to tour the theatre and see the completed work. We were happy to entertain over 3,000 Fox fans over the two days and are very appreciative of the generous donations by our sponsors and guests.

The Bootleggers Ball fundraising event was held at the theatre on November 13th to help celebrate the 90th birthday of the Fox. Brian Newell once again put together the program for us and it was, as always, professionally done and a lot of fun. Thank you to everyone who attended and donated to the cause.

The Foundation has hired local architect John Silber to help us identify all of the remaining items we need to complete in order to receive a certificate of occupancy from the city. We're also contracting Westlake Reed Leskosky, the nationally recognized historic restoration company we used in Phase I, to provide a master plan and a cost estimate for the completion of the theatre's restoration.

If you aren't already a Friend of the Foundation, please consider joining and help us keep the momentum going. The website is [foxfullerton.org](http://foxfullerton.org).

## Triplets

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The Three C's With Love, which provides motivational guidance at venues, and as adults, would all work in accounting, office management, and other business fields. For a time, Colleen owned the popular Roy's Photo on Harbor Boulevard. On the 40th anniversary of their shared birth date, the three sisters, married with children of their own, would join their parents, still living in Fullerton, for another birthday celebration in the courtyard of the old city hall.



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