



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.

Minimal Traditional: America's "Can Do" Architectural Style

by Deb Richey

Although often incorrectly seen as a non-style, the Minimal Traditional styled home is found everywhere in the nation. Popular from 1925 to 1955, the style – also known as the FHA house, the Depression-era cottage, the War Years house, the Victory house, the developer house, or the American small house – takes its name from the fact that it uses traditional stylistic references in a “minimal modern” or stripped-down manner. The style would go through several separate phases over thirty years, but it would be the last 20th century American residential style before developers took over the housing market in the 1950s.

By the 1920s, Victorian-styled homes and Craftsman bungalows seemed hopelessly outdated. For those who did not want one of the eclectic period styles popular at the time, the Minimal Traditional dwelling offered a more modern, streamlined style that looked ahead to the future rather than back to the past. The innovative style took massing and details from earlier styles

such as Tudor and Colonial Revival and simplified them to create a comfortable, “modern” home that was still traditional in design. Constructing dwellings with just enough detail to give it an identity satisfied many middle-class buyers, who quickly popularized the new

style. When the style began appearing in the 1920s, Minimal Traditional home designs were standardized and published in home pattern books that helped to spread the style across the country. Because the homes were for sale to the general public, the factory-built dwellings were designed to appeal to the broadest range of tastes. Variations of the style were used to appeal to many differ-



539 W. Valley View Drive

ent buyers in many different climates. The Minimal Traditional dwelling soon became the basic American home with durable, plain functionality.

After the 1929 crash, Minimal Traditional homes became an affordable response to the Depression era, because they could be economically constructed across the

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Fullerton College Building 300 Rehab Project

by Terry Galvin

The Commerce Building on the Fullerton College campus, designed by noted architect Harry Vaughn, started construction in 1935 and was completed in 1936. Looking at the building today, one would see little difference from its 1935 appearance --and that is the good news. It is now known as the 300 Building, but remains the oldest and most historically and architecturally significant building on the campus.

Plans for the rehabilitation of the building were started in late 2017, continuing through 2018. In March of 2019, the plans

and specifications were submitted to the State Architect's office for checking. Permits for construction were issued in October 2019.

Because of the building's historical significance, the designer was required to meet the qualifications of an historical architect as defined by the Department of the Interior. The Community College District selected Lucien Runge and R2R Architecture for the design work. In addition, a peer review of the design work was required. Mr. Runge recommended Fullerton Heritage for that role, and the College agreed.

Implementing the intent of the EIR requirements became extremely frustrating when the College maintenance staff in charge of the project attempted to ignore the historic preservation aspects of the project. Since the staff has no experience with or interest in preservation, the architect was in a constant defensive position. As the project moves into the construction phase we can only hope that there will be better communication and cooperation between the participants. Fullerton Heritage will continue to closely watch the project.

Advocacy Issues

by Kate Dalton

Local Landmark Nominations/Issues

Fullerton Heritage nominated the historic Naylor House at 200 North Cornell Avenue in the College Park Preservation Zone as a Fullerton Local Landmark. The property qualifies as the only example of a Yorkshire cottage in Fullerton. In addition, it qualifies because of “identification with a person or persons or group who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city”. The current owners organized a movement to establish the R2 Residential Preservation Zone which was adopted by the City Council in December, 1979 and applied to the College Park neighborhood in February, 1980. They are founding members of Fullerton Heritage and have been active in the preservation movement in Fullerton for four decades. The Fullerton Landmarks Commission recommended approval of the nomination at its meeting on November 13, 2019 and the City Council unanimously approved the Local Landmark #103 on December 17, 2019. Thanks to Deb Richey and Bob Linnell for their tireless work on both Local Landmark and National Register nominations.

A representative of the YMCA contacted Fullerton Heritage regarding possible landmark status for their neon-lighted sign that was constructed in 1962. After researching the subject, it does qualify as a Fullerton Local Landmark and we have supplied the necessary research information to the YMCA Board of Directors. They have indicated their intentions to submit the nomination application and we will continue to assist them in the process.

Fullerton Heritage continues to work with the City of Fullerton Community Development Department on an update of our historic building survey, *Fullerton Through the Years*, and updates to the General Plan and zoning ordinance with respect to preservation issues. We have submitted our input and staff is currently working on the revisions and the staff report. We expect this important update to be presented to City Council sometime in February or March 2020.

Dedication of the restored Beckman Instruments Administration Building will take place on Thursday February 27, 2020. This iconic building was saved from the wrecking ball when the rest of the expansive Beckman property was redeveloped. The building was purchased and restored to the Secretary of the Interior Standards by A. J. Kirkwood and Associates Inc. Due to the advocacy of Fullerton Heritage the property was successfully placed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been listed as a Fullerton Local Landmark. Thanks to AJK Chairman Arch Kirkwood and his entire staff for their dedication to saving this important piece of Fullerton's history. We are truly indebted, welcome them to Fullerton and wish them a long and successful tenure.

Fullerton Community College Historic Chapman Houses

The move of the historic houses in the 400 block of E. Chapman Ave. to the vacant lots in the 400 blocks of E. Wilshire and Amerige Aves. is progressing with preparation of the houses for the actual move. The stone porches have been dismantled stone by stone for reconstruction and the lots have been surveyed, cleared and soils testing done for necessary compaction. The move should take place by the end of January barring any last minute complications. Following the move, Fullerton Heritage member and local developer Tony Bushala will completely restore both houses, volunteering to follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards to the greatest extent possible, even though he is under no obligation to meet such a high standard. The project has already gone through City review for design review and zoning requirements. When completed, these houses will be welcome additions to Fullerton's historic housing.

CSUF Master Plan Update

Board members of Fullerton Heritage met with CSUF Vice President Danny Kim and staff on August 30, 2019. We were assured that the three historic buildings on campus (Lottie Hetebrink House, Henry Hetebrink House/Titan House and Dr. George Clark House/Heritage House) will be preserved and any improvements will be done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. On September 10, 2019 we subsequently met with Alexandra Madsen of Rincon Consultants who is preparing the cultural and historical resources analysis of the campus, which may be submitted as part of the Draft EIR of the proposed Master Plan. We provided her with possible resources to assist her in this important analysis.

California State Senate Bill 451

Senate Bill 451 was passed by the California legislature and subsequently signed by Governor Newsom. This important bill has been promoted by preservation groups throughout the state, including Fullerton Heritage. The bill will allow California tax credits of up to 20% of approved costs associated with restoration of specific historic properties, similar to what is allowed in more than 30 other states. Eligible properties are those listed on the California Register which includes those placed on the National Register of Historic Places and those dedicated as a California Point of Historic Interest. Passage of this bill represents an important step forward in encouraging the preservation of California's historic buildings.

“Can Do” Style

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United States. The style came into vogue in the 1930s, when the modest homes could be easily approved for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) insured home loans. The modest Minimal Traditional became known as “the little house that could” during both the Depression and post World War II. It was the affordable house built with a Federal Housing Administration-insured loan; the home that could be constructed quickly to accommodate millions of relocated World War II defense-plant workers. The modest but comfortable dwelling was rapidly built during the late 1940s in post-World War II neighborhoods.

Federal housing policies in the 1930s had a profound influence on the style. During the Recovery Era between 1937 and 1941, and in the years immediately following World War II, there was a severe housing shortage; it was necessary to construct houses quickly and inexpensively. To get the housing industry back on track, Congress passed the National Housing Act of 1934, revolutionizing home financing. For the first time, the federal government insured loans granted by private lending institutions with mortgages fully amortized through monthly payments. This guarantee resulted in a much smaller down payment requirement, lower interest rates, and longer payback periods – making it possible for more people to qualify for home mortgages.

The FHA did not care about classical design when it came to new homes. What the FHA wanted was simple, well-constructed homes that achieved maximum square footage for minimum cost. FHA house building requirements limited sales price, in order to



769 Ocean View Drive

keep the market open to all buyers. To keep costs down it limited the size of the house. This in turn led to an efficient design for rooms and storage space, with all the non-essential forms eliminated. The FHA spelled out its home building rules and standardized home designs in a 1936 booklet, *Principles of Planning Small Houses*. When architects and builders pointed out regional differences in home construction, the FHA published booklets geared to specific areas, including *Minimum Construction Requirements for New Dwellings Located in the Southern California District*. The FHA recommended five basic house designs – all designed in the Minimal Traditional style. These Minimal Traditional homes quickly began appearing as in-fill housing in existing neighborhoods and as basic units of new subdivisions. It would mark an unprecedented com-



189 Buena Vista Drive

ing together of government agencies and private interests to meet a critical need for single-family homes during a succession of desperate economic times. These efforts represented something unique in American history, when there was a clear national goal of providing well-designed, well-built, and affordable single-family homes.

FHA Houses could be built in a variety of materials but had to be “attractively designed without excessive ornamentation.” Architects were expected to keep home designs simple and useful based upon one guiding principle: “A maximum accommodation within a minimum of means.” Basic floor plans consisted of a living room and dining area, kitchen, bath, one to three bedrooms, with or without an attached garage. The FHA booklets called for the uniform standardization of the parts of a house, including plumbing, ceiling heights,



150 N. Berkeley Avenue

pipes, ducts, closets, cabinets, windows, and doors. The result was some of the best built homes in American history. Rather than small houses, cheaply built of inferior materials, the Minimal Traditional homes were constructed of the same quality materials as larger, more expensive homes. Although simplified versions of historic styles, they were still built with high quality materials: lath and plaster walls, traditional fireplace mantels, paneled doors, wood cabinetry, etc. Most of the homes in the 1930s were constructed by experienced journeymen and carpenters who had learned their trade by constructing high quality Craftsman bungalows and eclectic-styled homes in the 1920s. The FHA placed high priority on a home’s efficiency, and new labor-saving techniques were reflected in kitchens equipped with modern appliances and in utility rooms with an integrated mechanical system that replaced the basement furnaces of earlier homes.

The style continued to be popular after World War II with newly returned veterans, and its popularity grew when it was featured in several movies, most notably *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (1946) starring Cary Grant and Myrna Loy. The sparseness of the Minimal Traditional homes ensured that they could be built inexpensively and rapidly. But as the economy picked up, the plainness of the style lost its popularity and more ornamentation and architectural elements were added to the homes, including dormers, pediment overhangs, and customized shutters. Developers tried enhancing the homes by adding more and more architectural details, but the style was

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“Can Do” Style

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gradually overtaken by the more spacious split-level and the long, rambling Ranch house.

As the “Plain Jane” of 20th American residential architecture, many Minimal Traditional homes have been significantly altered due to their perception as uninteresting and style-less. The homes, however, are perfect for those who want a comfortable and well-built traditional home. The Minimal Traditional is being rediscovered by new homeowners as the style that immediately preceded the suburban tract homes by merchant builders of the post-World War II era.

Minimal Traditional Homes in Fullerton

The first Minimal Traditional homes in Fullerton were constructed around 1919/1920 in what was, new housing being built on Brookdale Place, Jacaranda Place, and Malvern Avenue. Architect



728 W. Wilshire Avenue

Frank K. Benchley, known for the Muckenthaler Estate and the California Hotel (now Villa del Sol), was the first building designer to construct houses in this style (126 W. Malvern Avenue, 132 W. Brookdale

Place). Newly returned from World War I, Benchley was eager to jump-start his architectural practice, and began building modest but stylish Minimal Traditional residences that he called “cottages”. They sold for between \$3,500 and \$4,000. In his early designs, Benchley was transitioning from the Craftsman bungalow to the more modern Minimal Traditional style, and in such dwellings as the John Menges House (224 W. Malvern Avenue), the front elevation had the Minimal Traditional style while the rear elevation continued to use Craftsman elements. Benchley’s homes proved to be popular, and other local builders, such as Luther J. Ellis and Arthur M. Thompson, began mimicking the style. At the same time, homeowners began selecting Minimal Traditional homes from mail order catalogs produced by the Pacific Ready Cut Company in Los Angeles. A number of the factory homes were assembled on lots throughout the city in the 1920s (623 N. Pomona Avenue, 426 W. Malvern Avenue, 201 N. Berkeley Avenue).

The 1929 stock market crash temporarily halted building in Fullerton, but in the 1930s and 1940s, the style continued to be popular. A new set of builders who favored the Minimal Traditional

style: Hobart A. Palmer, George Mortimer Carroll, Bill Pearson, Horace R. Blair, George C. Pickering, etc. Like building contractors of the 1910s and 1920s, each one developed a unique design style. George C. Pickering, president of the Building Contractors Association of America, was particularly adept at adapting the style to serve the needs of his clientele (300 Cannon Lane, 605 N. Drake Avenue, 533 W. Valley View Drive). During this time, dozens of Minimal Traditional styled homes were built as in-fills in established neighborhoods with older houses all around; others were often at the tail-end of existing tracts. On occasion, small building companies outside Fullerton, such as the May Building Company of Montebello or the Warfield Company of Santa Ana, would hire a local builder to construct Minimal Traditional “spec” or custom homes based on FHA-approved plans (313 and 321 N. Adams Avenue, 114 Buena Vista Drive). While the style did not lend itself to business establishments, it was well suited to multi-housing and several duplexes and apartment buildings were constructed in the Minimal Traditional style (416-418 E. Chapman Avenue, 317-319 and 321-323 North Basque Avenue). By 1938, when the housing program was in full swing, the average Fullerton home ranged in price from \$2,875 to \$4,000, with homeowners expected to have a monthly income around \$250 to qualify and house payments around \$30-40 a month.

Three local building contractors – the Jewett Brothers, Horace R. Blair, and City Councilman Homer B. Bemis – would develop small tracts of Minimal Traditional homes in Fullerton and other nearby cities. In April 1942, the Jewett Brothers announced that they would be building 39 new homes for defense workers on West Amerige Avenue, North Adams Avenue and North Woods Avenue. Sold for \$4,650 to \$4,750, the Minimal Traditional dwellings would be the first homes in Fullerton built to support the World War II effort. Other small tracts would soon follow. The homes were advertised as “FHA constructed” which indicated to potential homeowners that their loans would be amortized with low interest rates.

Minimal Traditional factory homes also continued to be purchased and assembled on vacant lots in Fullerton in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly those pre-cut by Pacific Systems Homes of Los Angeles (1224 and 1321 Luanne Avenue, 616 N. Drake Avenue). New houses were in such high demand that several local companies also began publishing home building catalogs, including C. Ryt Homes, Inc. of Whittier and the Brown and Dauser Lumber Company of Fullerton.

Fullerton Heritage has documented well over 100 Minimal Traditional homes in Fullerton, dating from the 1920s to the mid-1950s; neighborhoods to spot a good number of 1930s and 1940s vintage homes will be found in the “Presidents” area east of Euclid Street (North Roosevelt, North Jefferson, North Adams, North Truman Avenues), as well as the 500 through the 700 blocks of West Valley View Drive, and the 600, 700 and 800 blocks of West Amerige and West Wilshire Avenues.

President's Corner

by Ernie Kelsey

Greetings Fullerton Heritage members and Happy New Year! What a beautiful New Year's Day – broadcast on the Rose Parade so the rest of the nation can see how great it is to live in Southern California. But, we all know the place to be is in Fullerton!

Fullerton Heritage has been active as usual since our last newsletter. We always have a lot going on and the second half of 2019 was no different. In August, we held our annual Goals and Objectives meeting. We all agreed that we would continue to work on Educating, Advocating and Communicating about Fullerton's historic past so we can keep our treasured resources around for generations to come. This includes raising awareness of Fullerton's Historic Districts – what they are and what it means to buy/sell/live in a Historic District. We are working to place “markers” at the entrances of our existing districts so people will know where they are when they're out and about on the town.

In August we welcomed new Board Member Jordan Byers. Jordan is a local with a love of all things vintage, including his 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air. A 2003 Sunny Hills High School graduate, his family has been in Fullerton for years. Jordan owns a vintage home and spends many hours lovingly restoring it. Welcome Jordan!

As always, we have our eye out on things happening in town. Right now these key items include the restoration of Building 300 on the Fullerton Community College campus, the CSUF master plan, a proposed hotel in the Fullerton Transportation Center, the Fox Fullerton and of course, our beloved Amerige Brothers Realty Office. This is in addition to our “normal” workload that includes meeting with homeowners and answering their preservation questions, conducting walking tours, advocating for properties being restored or at risk, and attending many City meetings. In fact, your Board met with most of the “new” city staff who have impact on preservation issues. Our relationship with the City continues to be excellent.

Did you know that the Fullerton Heritage board watches out for the Amerige Brothers Realty Office? We do! In addition to checking on it weekly, we have a team that goes down monthly to clean and maintain the property. Unfortunately, we have experienced trash dumping and vandalism lately. To combat this, we worked with the City and several local companies (who donate time and money!) to help secure this precious resource. We added more lighting outside (vintage from the City yard) and cut back on the landscaping that helped hide the building from the street. Then, mother nature took control and blew over the tree that sat in front of the building. Sad, but now the building is “front and center”. With the implementation of all these steps, and help from the city and local donations, we have successfully improved security.

As we start 2020, I want to truly thank you for all you do to support Fullerton Heritage. Our members really make the difference. Without your membership and monetary support, we would not be able to do everything we do. This why I'm asking you to renew your

membership today. We've made it easier – you can renew or donate on our website (fullertonheritage.org/Join). Remember, membership in Fullerton Heritage makes a great gift - it really is a gift that keeps on giving.

Enjoy 2020 everyone and keep an eye out for Fullerton Heritage's activities over the upcoming new year by visiting our website, and following our Facebook and Instagram pages.

Thank you,

–Ernie

Welcome New Members

A big **Welcome!** to our many new members:

Barbara Barboza
Brooke Fessler
Diana Fisher
Robert Knox

Stephanie Light
Dr. Allen Menton
Shawn Nelson
Luis Rodriguez
Jon Warshawsky

Plummer Auditorium Update

by Terry Galvin

Since the High School Board of Trustees authorized implementing the Fullerton Heritage recommendations relating to preserving the Plummer Auditorium balcony and related changes to the ticketing operation, the plans for seismic retrofit and the subsequent required ADA improvements were prepared and submitted to the State Architect for check and review. It was a long process due to the extensive seismic work required for the building, tower, and auditorium.

The State permits have been issued and Fullerton Heritage Board Members have reviewed the plans. While there will be damage to the columns and detail artwork in the auditorium, there are requirements in the plans for documentation of these areas prior to doing the seismic work and for qualified conservators to restore, repair or reproduce the damaged areas. One item that was not noted on the plans was protection of the mural on the west wall of the building during construction. Proper notations will be added to the plans.

Implementation of the Fullerton Heritage recommendations removed all proposed changes to the front of the building, the second story of the addition on the east side, and all proposed changes to the balcony. In addition to preserving much of the original structure, our recommendations saved the district over \$1 million in construction costs.

The next challenge is funding the construction. Primary funding is expected to come via a California State Grant for seismic retrofit of historic buildings that the district is in line to receive. With the plans complete the district can now apply for the grant. The project has a high priority in the State ranking system because of the seismic needs and it is hoped that funding will be approved this year.

Fox Update: Security Options Considered

by Tom Dalton

Things at the Fox have been pretty quiet up to and including the holiday season. The Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation is still anticipating the \$2.5 million grant that Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk Silva was successful in securing for the Fox restoration project and poised to start work as soon as the funds become available. In the meantime, the outside of the property is being spruced up with available resources.

Have you noticed the windows in the Tea Room along with the new paint and door on the northeast corner of the theatre where we

had a fire a few months ago? Right now the Foundation is working to secure the property to ensure no one can access that part of the building again. The Fox Board has also started to talk about replacing the chain link fencing across the front entrance with wrought iron or some other more appropriate and attractive material. Security is the number one priority, however it is agreed that the chain link is unsightly and presents a poor image at the front of this beautiful, landmark building.

Amerige Brothers' Building Security Improvements

by Terry Galvin

During 2019, the Amerige Brothers' Realty Office Building continued to be an attraction for the homeless to take up occupancy on the porch for sleeping, eating, or other purposes that are not good for the building or the surrounding area.

During September several members of the Fullerton Heritage Board met with the City Manager, the Police Chief, the Public Works Director, and a Maintenance Superintendent to discuss the challenge and options for improving security.

Three primary issues were identified:

1. Visibility was determined to be a major problem, since the landscaping had matured and although looked good, had become a visual barrier between the street and the porch.
2. It was unclear who had the authority to request Police response to remove homeless persons from the property as the property is owned by the city. Response to calls for assistance from FH Board members often was not received.

3. Lighting at night was not good enough to deter people from occupying the porch when they could hide behind the landscaping.

As a result of the meeting, the Police Chief authorized police response to any calls reporting people loitering on or around the building. Public Works Department personnel removed all landscaping in front of the building, and will replant with low growing plants and ground cover.

Fullerton Heritage Board members volunteered to add a second vintage light pole to the front of the building, hoping that we could secure some donations to fund the effort. City Public Works personnel transported and installed the pole, which had been stored at the City Yard. They also converted it to a LED fixture. The foundation for the pole was excavated and poured by Bushala Brothers. Fullerton Electric Company installed the underground electrical wiring and light sensor in the trench excavated by Bushala Brothers. Both

companies donated the time and materials for the project as they did for the first light pole in 2016. We are grateful for their continued support of preservation projects in the city.

The additional lighting has made a big difference at night and the landscaping removal has made visibility from the street unobstructed, especially since Mother Nature sadly blew down the tree that partially obscured the view from the street. We are pleased to report the improvements are working and we are thankful for the positive support of the City to improve security for the historic site.



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