

# Fullerton City Hall

**237 W. Commonwealth Avenue**

**1939**

**Spanish Colonial Revival**

**Status: Local Landmark;  
Listed on the National Register**



An exceptionally fine example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style applied to civic architecture, the former Fullerton City Hall, now the city's Police Station, was one of several Work Projects Administration (WPA) buildings completed in Fullerton in the 1930s and 1940s. The building was originally designed to house all city government offices and departments, including a jail, the city council chambers, and a courtroom. At the time, Fullerton residents believed this building would contain all the services the city would ever need.

Constructed in 1939-42 of poured concrete, the building is a graceful, one and half story structure with a basement that has an "L"-shaped plan opening toward the southwest. An unusual three-story clock tower is positioned at the central corner. The building's balanced design, enclosing a sunken patio on two sides, is complemented by fine detail work, including art deco tilework and decorative wrought ironwork. One of the premier tile companies of the era – Gladding, McBean and Company – produced all of the colorful and noteworthy ceramic and terra cotta tiles that decorate both the interior and exterior of the building.

The former City Hall was designed by noted architect G(eorge) Stanley Wilson, a British immigrant whose family settled in Riverside in 1896. By the mid-1930s, Wilson had established himself as one of the premier exponents of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, and he was a natural choice as an architect for a city that favored Spanish building designs. Wilson was at his artistic peak in the 1920s and 1930s, and the former City Hall reflects the grace, harmony, and balance that his buildings had during this period. Wilson designed many buildings throughout Southern California, but he is best known as the architect who designed many additions to the famed Mission Inn in Riverside, which eventually became the largest Mission Revival building in California.

The former City Hall also houses a valuable treasure: a series of murals depicting Southern California history, which were painted by Helen Lundeberg (1908-1999), one of the leading female artists of the American west. In 1941, Wilson commissioned Lundeberg to paint a three-panel mural for what was then the city council chambers. Titled “The History of Southern California,” the panorama of panels depicts early California history, from the landing of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo at San Diego Bay in 1542, to the early days of the movie industry in Hollywood. In 1992-93, the murals – which had been painted over and obscured by a false ceiling when the building was adapted for use by the Fullerton Police Department in the 1960s – were completely restored by ConservArt Associates at a cost of \$80,000.

In the early 1970s, the block-like two-story annex at the northwest side of the building was constructed with little thought given in its design to the original construction.

In 2003, a new two-story building was constructed north of the original building to enlarge the facilities for the Police Department; this new building was designed and positioned so it is complimentary to the historic City Hall structure.



**Fullerton City Hall, 1941**