

# FULLERTON HERITAGE

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May, 2003

## Fullerton's Mission Inn Connection

by *Debora Richey*

While thousands of Fullerton residents have visited Riverside's remarkable Mission Inn, very few realize that the builder responsible for supervising the majority of the Inn's construction—G. Stanley Wilson—also designed Fullerton's first city hall. Architect G. Stanley Wilson was selected by Fullerton city councilmen in 1933 because of the Mission Inn's fame and popularity. Wilson's work was well-known throughout Southern California, and the councilmen wanted the new city hall, Fullerton's first municipal office building, to attract as much architectural attention as possible.

By the 1930s, Wilson had established himself as one of the premier exponents of Spanish architectural styles, and he was a natural choice as the architect for the Fullerton City Hall, which now serves as the city's police department. Wilson's mastery of Mission and Spanish Colonial Revival styles was remarkable since he had no formal architectural training. He was born in Bournemouth, England in 1879 and immigrated with his parents and five siblings to Riverside in 1896, where he lived the rest of his life. In 1901, Wilson began work as a carpenter under master carpenter Donald J. McLeod, but as early as 1903, Wilson was working indepen-

dently, building a number of small houses. His first major commission was the Charles Orrick Evans house (4622 Indian Hill Road), a two-story Victorian-styled residence constructed in 1908. Wilson received much publicity when the Evans family gave him permission to use a picture of their house as an example of his fine work, and photographs of the house appeared in many of his newspaper advertisements. These advertisements generated additional business, allowing Wilson to open a practice in 1909 on Ninth Street and hire associates to assist him. Wilson also began to acquire architectural books and soon developed one of the most extensive architectural libraries in Southern California.

By 1915, G. Stanley Wilson's ability began to be recognized, and he was busy designing new structures all over Riverside. Some of Wilson's most important buildings still standing in the city of Riverside are the Reference Wing of the Riverside Carnegie Library (1922), the Simons Mortuary (1925), the Riverside Municipal Auditorium (1928-29), the Orange Street addition to the Riverside County Courthouse (1930), and the entire Riverside City College Quadrangle (1923-1950). Notable Wilson designs found in the surrounding areas include grammar and high schools in Perris, Upland, Hemet,

Fontana, and Corona, the Murietta Hot Springs Hotel (1920), the County Tubercular Hospital in Beaumont (1924), the Elsinore Theater (1924), the San Jacinto Women's Club (1927), the Odd Fellows Hall in Pomona (1929), the Redlands post office (1932), and the Perris City Hall (1934). Although known more for his civic

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## Project Fox Update

by *Dave Temple*

"Saving the Fox" has been at the top of Fullerton Heritage's list of tasks for seven years. Toward that end the committee known as Project Fox was formed with a charter of raising community interest and support for city involvement in the effort to save the Historic Fox Fullerton.

The accomplishments of Project Fox are many, some have been exciting and highly visible such as our petition campaign, while others were more mundane and "behind the scenes" such as our meetings with developers, city staff, and city council members.

The issue has clearly changed over time, and our role expanded and at times retracted to meet those fluctuating demands. This unstable nature of the project frequently caused us to work beyond our charter and often resulted in the resources of the

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# Advocacy Issues

by Katie Dalton

## Hillcrest Park: First Step in Historic Register Register Process Taken

On February 12, 2003 the board wrote a letter to City Manager Chris Meyer requesting City Staff and Council support for Fullerton Heritage's nomination of Hillcrest Park to the National Register of Historic Places. After review by the Community Services and Development Services Departments, staff recommended approval and the issue went to City Council on April 15, where it was approved. FH board member and research specialist Debora Richey has begun work on the application.

## Significant Properties to Be Reviewed for Local Landmark Status

Fullerton Heritage is working with Development Services staff on a new round of nominations of Significant Properties to Local Landmark status. Fullerton currently has approximately 75 Local Landmarks with an additional 50 "significant properties" that are eligible for Local Landmark status. Approximately 20 of these property owners have approached the City or have been contacted by FH regarding changing their property from Significant Property to Local Landmark. A public workshop sponsored jointly by City Development Services staff and FH is being planned to educate the property owners about the Local Landmark designation. Following the workshop, those property owners who want to proceed will be included in a Planning Commission agenda presentation requesting formal approval for Local Landmark designation. Look for future news on this issue.

## Design Review Working in Preservation Zones

The Redevelopment Design Review Committee (RDRC) approved a second unit on property at 242 W. Malvern in the Jacaranda – Malvern Preservation Zone and at 218 N. Yale in the College Park Preservation Zone. Staff and RDRC did a good job applying the Design Guidelines and working with the owners to develop projects compatible to the historic neighborhoods.

## Call for Volunteers

We need volunteers to walk or ride the Preservation zones and watch for new construction or modifications that don't meet design guidelines. The Preservation zones and Design Guidelines are only as good as our ability to apply and/or enforce them, and City staff can't do it alone. The more eyes we have watching for problems the better. If you would like to help, please give us a call on the hotline (740-3051) and leave us your name and phone number so we can contact you about this important project.

## Preservation Workshop for Realtors

A new committee of FH is working on a public workshop to educate real estate agents on the existence of Fullerton's historic landmarks and residential preservation zones. The goal is to help them educate their potential clients about the city's historic homes and ramifications of buying one. We will include information about the Landmarks Ordinance, Design Guidelines for Residential Preservation Zones, historic architectural styles, reasons and ways to promote historic homes, and resources available to research historic properties. The workshop will include a slide show of Fullerton's historic homes and neighborhoods. The workshop will be held May 1 at 7:00 pm at the Fullerton Main Library.

## Coming . . .

### Annual Meeting

June 22, 2003--Save the Date

Plans are being made for a very special annual meeting. Fullerton Heritage members will receive invitations by mail, as well as ballots for the election of the 2003-2004 board of directors.

### Docent-Led Walking Tour

May 24, 2003

Tour meets at 9 a.m. at the Museum Center, Pomona and E. Wilshire. The walk takes about one-and-one-quarter hours. There are a few (optional) steps. This is an opportunity to gain some new insights into our city's lively past. The tour is free to members of Fullerton Heritage, with a \$5 per family charge for guests. Anyone may join Fullerton Heritage at the beginning of the tour.

## President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

Thank you for your continued support of Fullerton Heritage and our efforts to preserve the historic architecture and environments of our city for future generations. With over one hundred families, individuals and businesses as members, our organization is being recognized as a valuable resource in our city. As with most volunteer organizations, the more the merrier so please help us grow. If you know anyone who has an older home or has an interest in preserving our beautiful city please tell them about us. We have a new Fullerton Heritage brochure that will be sent out to you along with the announcement of the annual

meeting. Please take a few minutes to read through it and then pass it along to potential members. We will be keeping a supply of them in the Launer room at the main library if you need more. Also, if you would like to keep up on our activities between newsletters, check out our web site at [www.fullertonheritage.org](http://www.fullertonheritage.org). I'm sure you'll be impressed by the great job Jim Powell has done on it.

I'd again like to recognize and thank the hard-working members of the Fullerton Heritage board of directors, Warren Bowen, Katie Dalton, Bliss Ehrlich, Ann Gread, Jim Powell, Michele Powell, Debora Richey, Dave Temple and Cathy Thomas for making my job as president so enjoyable and for all the volunteer hours they give to help make our city such a great place to live.

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## Wilson

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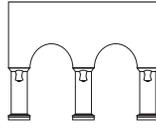
and commercial designs, he also designed some of Riverside's largest earliest residences, among them those of Judge Frank E. Densmore, Clinton Hickok, Lorenzo Scranton, and Allan Pinkerton, the grandson of the founder of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency.

The most renowned of G. Stanley Wilson's works are his various projects from 1909 to 1944 for Riverside's famed Mission Inn. In 1909, Wilson began to work closely with the Inn's flamboyant owner Frank A. Miller (1857-1935) on small additions and changes to the building, which eventually became the largest Mission Revival building in California. Wilson, working under Pasadena architect Myron Hunt (1868-1952), was superintendent of construction on the Inn's Spanish wing, when the Spanish dining room, large kitchen, Spanish Art Gallery and its rooms above were constructed in 1913 and 1914. In 1929, Wilson designed his recognized masterpiece—the five-story addition at the northwest corner of the block, facing Sixth Street and Main Street—completed in 1931. The wing included the International Rotunda, the Saint Francis Chapel (a wedding chapel never consecrated for religious services), the Saint Francis Atrio, and the Galeria. After completion, Wilson moved his offices into the International Rotunda,

which features a remarkable open air five-story spiral staircase. A tireless self-promoter, Wilson delighted in meeting prospective clients in the Rotunda and displaying his firm's design work. In 1944, Wilson also designed and rebuilt the Inn's Chimes Tower, which had been destroyed by a fire.

In designing the Mission Inn, a National Historic Landmark, Wilson worked under the close scrutiny of owner Frank A. Miller, and the building reflects both Miller and Wilson's fascination with all aspects of Spanish architecture. Wilson designed buildings using a number of architectural styles, but as one critic noted, the bulk of his work "visioned the romantic Spanish colonial traditions of California." By the 1920s, he had completely embraced Spanish architectural styles, and became a leader in the civic efforts to create a Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival image for downtown Riverside. His early works are traditional in design, but then he moved into a Mission Revival period. His Mission Revival structures, which relied on Mexican and mission influences, were noted for their profusion of architectural elements—towers, balconies, arches, flying buttresses, rich ornamentation, etc.—and Wilson frequently incorporated elaborate Islamic and Mediterranean elements into their design. Some of his buildings during this period, such as the Park Avenue Baptist Church (1925), were also built of adobe. In the late 1920s, Wilson moved into a sophisticated and refined Spanish

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## Wilson

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Colonial Revival style, which he viewed as more associated with the twentieth century. He became concerned with shapes, and his buildings became looser and more fluid. His Spanish Colonial Revival structures, which looked to Spanish and European influences, were very sophisticated, relied on simpler details both inside and out, and used fewer types of materials.

While working on the Mission Inn, Wilson began construction on the Casa de Anza Hotel and Apartments (3425 Market), named for Captain Don Juan Bautista de Anza, the first white man to enter California. The large, ornate, three-story Spanish Colonial Revival hotel-apartment complex, Riverside's Cultural Heritage Board Landmark #85, served as Wilson's residence and second office until his death in 1958 at the age of 79. Located on the corner of Market and Fourth, Casa de Anza is just a brief walk from the Mission Inn.

Wilson was at his artistic peak in the 1920s and 1930s, and the Fullerton City Hall reflects the grace, harmony, and balance that his buildings had during this period. He frequently used many of the same types of materials on his buildings, and the yellow, white, and blue ceramic tiles that decorate both the interior and exterior of the City Hall were also used by Wilson to embellish the Armistad (friendship) dome of the Mission Inn's International Rotunda. Throughout the City Hall's construction, the Fullerton City Council approved building contracts, but G. Stanley Wilson was responsible for coordinating all aspect of the project, including the commissioning of Helen Lundeberg (1908-1999), one of the leading female artists of the American West, to paint the three-

paneled murals in the former city council chambers. Wilson made two major changes to the original plans—the addition of the sunken court and the assembly hall—but the 1933 plans remained largely unchanged. The Fullerton City Council was so impressed with Wilson's architectural and administrative skills that he was asked on June 3, 1947 to prepare preliminary plans for a proposed World War II memorial to include a recreation building, armory, and swimming pool, but the project was never completed.

Although never completely abandoning the Spanish style, Wilson tried somewhat unsuccessfully after World War II to adapt to modern architectural styles. Heart trouble and ill health eventually forced him to retire in 1952. He passed away of an apparent heart attack on September 23, 1958 in his rooms at Casa de Anza. Wilson's two sons, Harry and Ernest, had assisted their father in his offices, but it was Wilson's daughter, Mabyl Bareham, an architectural student at the University of California, Berkeley, who went on to become the second architect in the family. Today G. Stanley Wilson endures as Riverside's most influential architect.

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## Fox

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organization being taxed and the postponement of other projects important to the public we serve. In late 2001 a group was formed called the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation, to take a parallel track toward the goal of seeing the Fox open again. Comprised of many Fullerton Heritage members, friends, and past board members—the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation work with the luxury of the Fox as their only focus. Since November of this year, with still more changes in the make up of the fight to save the Fox, with a new council, and a developer (The Morgan Group) highly involved in the process, we in Project Fox realized that we clearly were acting outside of our charter and began to let the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation take the lead on all Fox issues. Because of their successes in that regard, their ability to take the issues of the Fox to “the next level” including gaining more national attention to the matter, and make it their sole focus, Fullerton Heritage has moved to combine the efforts and dissolve Project Fox. Though not operating under the auspices of Fullerton Heritage, we will continue to support the efforts of the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation in our mutual desire the see this most historic and vital economic cornerstone to our beloved downtown preserved for future generations to enjoy.



### *Board of Directors 2002-2003*

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