

FULLERTON HERITAGE

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Firestone Building: Fox's Former Full-Service Neighbor Has a Pedigree of Its Own

While fans of the Fox Fullerton Theatre often call it a “theater with a pedigree” because of its association with a famous architect and building firm, the Firestone addition on the south side of the Theatre has a pedigree of its own. The building opened on July 13, 1929 with a Saturday night community dance on the forecourt’s polished cement floor. Customers who purchased five gallons of gas, then selling for eleven cents a gallon, received a free quart of oil. Charles C. Chapman, Fullerton’s first mayor, at a cost of \$17,000, built the 7,150 square-foot auto service center, but the outlet was sponsored by the Firestone (later Bridgestone) Tire and Rubber Company. In the 1920s, the three largest tire manufacturers—Firestone, Goodyear and B. F. Goodrich—all of which had plants in Los Angeles, developed and built full-service outlets throughout the United States to distribute their products. In May 1931, Harvey Samuel Firestone (1868-1938), the president and founder of the company, made a



Photo courtesy of the Launer Local History Room

The building opened on July 13, 1929 with a Saturday night community dance on the forecourt’s polished cement floor.

well-publicized visit to the Fullerton store.

The Firestone addition, now known as Fox Plaza, was one of the city’s first super service stations, a new form of building design that started in 1914. Initially filling stations had fuel pumps curbside, which caused traffic logjams, but owners quickly found that placing fuel pumps in the center of a court made refueling easier. Owners also found that if they offered customers a full

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Firestone Building

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complement of services—greasing, washing, brake repair, rest rooms—along with gas, they could dramatically increase their revenue. Like the Firestone outlet, most super service stations were L-shaped buildings set toward the rear with a large forecourt that allowed drivers to see at a glance the services offered. This concept of one-stop shopping, new at the time, led to the development of the “drive-in” market in the 1920s, which was then eclipsed by the supermarket in the 1930s.

Stiles O. Clements, the addition’s architect, was one of the first architects in Southern California to design buildings to accommodate growing automobile use. By the 1920s, Southern California led the nation in car ownership, forcing architects to design buildings that reflected the area’s growing reliance on the automobile. At the same time he was designing the Firestone building, Clements was working on two other buildings in Los Angeles for the Chapman Brothers that reflected this change in architecture: the Chapman Park Studio Building (3501 West 6th Street), which provided adjacent parking for clients, and the Chapman Park Market Building (3451 West 6th Street), the first “super” drive-in market in Los Angeles that opened three weeks before the Firestone store. At the time, the Market, which provided free parking for 500 cars, was the costliest and largest drive-in market in the western United States. Both of these Spanish Colonial Revival buildings, noted for their elaborate wrought iron and Churrigueresque detail, are now Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monuments.

Clements was a native of Centerville, Maryland, where he was born on March 3, 1883, the son of a physician. His maternal grandmother, Rebecca Todd, was a sister of Mary Todd Lincoln. He was educated at private schools in Delaware and attended Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, graduating in 1904. He did postgraduate work at both the Drexel Institute and the Boston Institute of

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Technology (now M.I.T.). In 1911, he moved to Los Angeles where he practiced architecture until his retirement in 1965. In 1922, he joined the firm of Morgan, Walls & Morgan, a descendant of the oldest architectural firm in Los Angeles. He acquired the entire practice in 1937, and the name of the firm was renamed Stiles O. Clements, Associate Architects & Engineers. A workaholic, Clements designed thousands of buildings throughout Southern California, including the Hollywood

Race Track, the Samson Tyre and Rubber Company Plant (now the Citadel Shopping Mall), and the Pershing Square Parking Garage, as well as the Mayan, Belasco, Music Box, and El Capital Theatres. Clements is also credited with being responsible for much of the development of commercial architecture in Los Angeles, designing 69 buildings along the portion of Wilshire Boulevard known as the Miracle Mile. A dapper dresser who always wore a foribunda rose or miniature carnation in his lapel, he was known for his signature horn-

rims glasses. His hobbies included riding, raising exotic birds, cooking, and opera (he was a founder and president of the Los Angeles Opera Guild). Interested in civic affairs, Clements served on the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission, was one of the founders of Los Angeles Beautiful, and originated the Los Angeles Trees-in-the-Streets Program. Upon his death on January 15, 1966, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council adjourned their meetings in memory of his great contributions to the community.

While the firm of Morgan, Walls & Clements designed 1,691 buildings during its peak years from 1920 to 1940, including a large number of small Spanish Colonial Revival commercial businesses, the company only designed nine buildings in Orange County. The Firestone building was converted into retail space in 1978, but the building’s original use as a super service station is still evident in its layout and arrangement.

President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

One of the most important things we do at Fullerton Heritage is helping protect the historic housing stock we have in our city. Thanks to the efforts of Fullerton Heritage, concerned citizens and the City's Development Services Department we now have six preservation zones in Fullerton protecting hundreds of vintage Craftsman, Spanish and Tudor style homes from destruction. We recognized years ago that there are developers out there who have no appreciation for these beautiful old houses and, given the opportunity, would replace each of them with apartments and condos. Now, thanks to the great press we have received, two new Preservation Zones are being pursued by residents of two of our city's most beautiful neighborhoods; the 300 and 400 blocks of West

Brookdale Place and the Golden Hills area on Valley View and Fern Drives. Fullerton Heritage has provided the petitions to the residents and facilitated the meetings with Jay Eastman, the City's Preservation Planner. We are hopeful that the homeowners in these neighborhoods will recognize the benefits of keeping these homes original and embrace the Preservation Zone effort.

On a related note, at a recent Redevelopment Design Review Committee meeting, the development services planner reviewing a proposal for an additional unit in the Jacaranda-Malvern Preservation Zone actually directed the owner to correct the un-permitted replacement of the siding and windows on the front of the original home on the lot as a condition of acceptance. This is a tremendous step in the right direction and demonstrates the effectiveness of our organization and the City's renewed commitment to preservation.

Downtown Walking Tour Expands to Bus Tour May 21

It's going to be another first for Fullerton Heritage! For several years we have been conducting downtown historic walking tours for interested members and citizens. We have had good feedback from participants and now will try a new approach in addition to continuing the occasional walks.

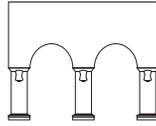
On Saturday, May 21, there will be the first of the combination walk and ride historic tours. This tour is limited to members of Fullerton Heritage. We will use a small bus to accommodate 20 riders (the maximum number for good communications). Leaving from the Amtrak Station area at 10:00 a.m. (free parking there), we will move around town to include places too distant or hilly for the regular downtown walking tour. We will have two or more docents to help with the narrations and questions. The drive part will finish near Villa del Sol where we will walk back to the starting point to begin the walking portion of the tour. People who have

done the walking tours before may want to drop off at this point.

The cost of the venture will be \$15.00. We hope you will join us. Make reservations by calling the Fullerton Heritage Hotline at (714) 740-3051. We will return your call with a confirmation and payment instructions. We live in a historic place...let's celebrate it!

Save the Date: Annual Meeting June 26

Save the date: June 26, 2005. Fullerton Heritage will hold its 2005 Annual Meeting at Hillcrest Park. Festivities will include placing a National Register plaque denoting the park's new status on the National Register of Historic Places. Members will receive a meeting notice and a board of directors election ballot in late May.



Resources Guide Now Available Online

The Restoration Resources Guide to aid owners of historic properties in their improvement projects is now online on the Fullerton Heritage website at <http://www.fullertonheritage.org>. Because this is an online resource we will always have room for more suggestions. If you have any "tried and true" craftsmen, contractors, supply/hardware resources etc., please send their names,

Photo Needed: Dewella Apartments

Fullerton Heritage is in need of a photograph of the Dewella Apartments (232-236 Wilshire Avenue). A photo taken in the 1930s or earlier would be appreciated. If you have such a picture, please call the Hotline at (714) 740-3051.



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Yes, I want to support Fullerton Heritage in preserving Fullerton's historic cultural and architectural resources. Please check one:

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I would like to be active in Fullerton Heritage, and am interested in the following activities:

- | | |
|---|---|
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