

John Reeder Gardiner Building

125 W. Santa Fe Avenue

1922

Brick Commercial

Status: Local Landmark



This brick commercial building is historically associated with two prominent residents: John Reeder Gardiner, who served on Fullerton's first Board of Trustees from 1904 to 1906, and Hugh W. Warden, a two-term city councilman and former mayor (1948-1956).

Constructed by builder R. B. Carey in 1922, the building is a fine example of a typical brick commercial structure in Fullerton in the 1920s. It was one of a number of brick commercial buildings that replaced the initial wood-framed structures in the center of town. In this particular case, the connection with the wooden storefront format comes through particularly clearly. The façade of the one-story building features a parapet with rich coping that extends almost two feet above the roof line, a somewhat unusual feature for the time period. The west facing exposed brick wall features a series of arched window openings with fine detail work.

The structure was constructed for businessman John Reeder Gardiner, the son of Alexander Gardiner, an early rancher who arrived in the Fullerton area in the 1860s. J. R. Gardiner worked as a blacksmith, eventually developing the largest blacksmith shop in north Orange County by the 1920s. In 1920, he expanded into the farming and agricultural implement business and, in 1927, he started the J. R. Gardiner Company, Inc., which specialized in real estate, insurance, and loans. He worked out of his new building at 125 West Santa Fe Avenue while continuing to sell and manufacture farming implements at the same location, remaining there until 1932. Gardiner's real estate business eventually held extensive land holdings through California, making him a wealthy individual. A lifelong resident of Fullerton, Gardiner was elected to the first Board of Trustees, now the City Council, after incorporation in 1904.

Hugh W. Warden leased the building in 1934, using it as the main office for the Service Roofing Company until 1979. In 1948, Warden was elected to the Fullerton City Council and was named mayor in 1954. During his time on the City Council, Fullerton's population doubled, and Warden oversaw the development of new postwar housing tracts, the expansion and construction of new schools and parks, the

creation of the Fullerton Boys Club (now the Fullerton Boys and Girls Club) in Amerige Park, and the start of the St. Jude Hospital complex.

In 2002, the building went through alterations and a modification to adapt it to a new use as a restaurant, Heroes Bar and Grill. Stucco was removed from the façade, exposing the original brickwork; exterior lights and awnings were added; windows on the front and west side were modified; and a patio with stone walls was added at the rear. A small, dilapidated wooden addition at the rear, used at one time by Service Roofing Company workers as a dressing room, was demolished. The building was also seismically retrofitted. The adaptive reuse of the building was sensitively done, and changes that were made do not detract from the overall historic character of the structure.