

Fullerton College

321 E. Chapman Avenue

1935-1942

Hispano Moresque

Status: Significant Property



In 1907, California became the first state in the nation to enact legislation creating public junior colleges, and six years later Fullerton College was established in 1913. It is now the oldest continuously operating community college in California. At its founding, the college was a two-year postgraduate extension of the high school curriculum, but in 1922, it was reorganized as an independent institution.

In August 1934, the Board of Trustees purchased 14.54 acres of the southern portion of the James C. Sheppard Ranch of East Chapman Avenue for \$29,980 as a separate site for Fullerton College. Influential landscape architect Ralph D. Cornell created a formal plan and layout for the new site inspired by Thomas Jefferson's plans for the University of Virginia, with the historic core of the new campus consisting of rectangular-shaped buildings arranged in axial fashion around a central library. Multi-level buildings were centered on a grassy, open-air quadrangle and interconnected by pathways and walkways.

In 1935, Harry K. Vaughn was employed as the resident architect for the project, which was expected to be completed in ten years. Vaughn designed, and supervised the construction of, three original buildings on the campus – the Commerce/Business Education Building (1936), the Administration and Social Science Building (1938), and the Technical Trades Building (1938) – as well as the north portion (the Locker Room) of the U-shaped service building at the rear portion of the original site.

Vaughn developed a unique Hispano Moresque style that combined Spanish and Moorish architectural elements that can also be seen in the WPA Fullerton Public Library, now the Fullerton Museum Center, which he designed in 1941/42. All of the Fullerton College buildings were funded in part by the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Work Projects Administration (WPA), making the long-range development of the new campus one of the most ambitious New Deal projects in Fullerton history. World War II, unfortunately, stopped all campus construction in 1942.