

# FULLERTON HERITAGE

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*The mission of Fullerton Heritage is to foster an appreciation of our city's cultural history and to ensure the preservation of our historic architectural resources and environments.*

## The Many Sides of Lillian Yaeger

by *Debra Richey*

One of the highlights of the Fullerton Museum's Ghost Tour is the visit to the former home of car dealer Lillian E. Yaeger on West Brookdale Place, now Le Potager. Yaeger, then 90 and in ill health, passed away in the two-story home on October 10, 1978, and her spirit is said to haunt the European home décor boutique.

Taller than the average woman (and some men), Yaeger was known for her spectacular swearing and bluntness, but she was also the most successful and astute businesswoman in early Fuller-



*Lillian Yaeger in 1924*

ton, amassing a small fortune by the time of her death. One of five siblings, Yaeger was

driven by the need to escape her family's constant genteel poverty. Quite early in her life, she would become the sole support of her mother and sisters. Her father, Jacob Yaeger (1861-1928), a German immigrant, was often absent, pursuing a series of pipe dreams that never paid off for the family. In 1887, Jacob took up gold mining in Trabuco Canyon, digging a tunnel straight through a hill under what is still known as Yaeger Mesa. He pulled out some gold, but the mine did not make any significant money. It was enough, however, for Jacob to continue to mine

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## 2017 Amerige Building Activities

by *Terry Galvin*

So far in 2017, Fullerton Heritage has seen to the completion of several improvements for the safety and security of the building as well as information about the building and Amerige Park.

With the support of funding donations and volunteer labor, the historic street light is functioning to help light the front of the building, the historic hitching post was installed, and information plaques about the building and the donors for this project were installed on a new stone pilaster built to match those around the park. An additional plaque about the park was installed on

a nearby park pilaster. The city installed irrigation and landscaping in the entire area around the building, including a new signature tree.

The next improvement was the installation of new wrought iron fencing matching the park fencing to secure the east and south sides of the building. This area has been the subject of constant and increasing occupation by transients, who have damaged the electrical panel and left debris, shopping carts, and other trash for the city maintenance staff to deal with.

The building was designated as a

State of California Point of Historical Interest last year. The designation included a sign to place on the street to point out the location. The sign was ordered and installed by the Public Works Department on a street light pole on the south side of Commonwealth west of the Amerige Building.

No one knew how big the sign would be and what the wording would say. Unfortunately, the sign is very small and looks like it is pointing to the Community Center. It was some time before anyone from Fullerton Heritage knew it was there. The next project will be to design and install a new sign that will be more appropriate for the situation.

# Advocacy Issues

by Kate Dalton

## National Register and New Local Landmark Approvals

The Beckman Instruments Administration Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 31, 2017; Fullerton now has a total of 21 properties listed.

The Pomona Bungalow Court and Apartments (314 and 320 North Pomona Avenue) and San Souci Court (501 West Whiting Avenue) as well as the Beckman Instruments Administration Building were approved as Fullerton's newest Local Landmarks by the Landmarks Commission on March 22 and by City Council on May 16, 2017. Following approval by the city as a Local Landmark, Fullerton Heritage has nominated the Pomona Bungalow Court and Apartments to the National Register of Historic Places. We will keep you updated as we move through that process.

## Design Review Committee

Several new projects have been approved in the residential preservation zones in the past few months. On January 26, the Design Review Committee reviewed and approved the restoration of the original historic home and the building of a compatible second unit at the rear of the property at 238 W. Whiting. At that same meeting they approved an addition to the original home at 130 N. Lincoln Ave. as well as a new second unit and garages at the rear of the property. The original home had been severely modified and stripped of its original features and materials without permits, making restoration nearly impossible. The approved project at least improves the property and makes it more compatible with the surrounding historic homes in the College Park Preservation Zone.

On March 9, DRC considered a new second unit at 205 W. Malvern Ave. in the Jacaranda Malvern Preservation Zone. Fullerton Heritage worked extensively with this property owner to modify his initial desire to build the new unit in a different architectural style than the original historic home. By researching other homes in the preservation zones that were of the same style as his, we were able to convince him to embrace the lovely 1940s home and design the new unit in the same style. Final approval for his project was given at the DRC meeting on March 23 and the new unit will be an exemplary addition to this historic neighborhood.

Finally, a major project involving renovation and an addition to an original 1920s home and the building of a new second unit and garages at the rear of the property at 228 N. Lincoln Ave. was reviewed by DRC on April 27 with final approval on May 25. This is another project where Fullerton Heritage worked with the homeowner to understand and appreciate the design and integrity of the original historic home and modify the plans accordingly to ensure a much more architecturally significant and compatible project. In reviewing the project, DRC requested a few changes as well, that the owner agreed to, and that will further benefit the beauty and integrity of the College Park Preservation Zone.

## Miscellaneous Issues

On November 9, 2016 the Landmarks Commission approved the fence at 201 W. Brookdale Pl., despite noncompliance with the Design Guidelines for Residential Preservation Zones. Another homeowner in the neighborhood, with the support of Fullerton Heritage, appealed the fence approval on the grounds that the Landmarks Commission took inappropriate action in a preservation zone. Unfortunately, on February 22 the Fullerton City Council denied the appeal and allowed the property owner to retain the four foot high wooden fence, setting a negative precedent to allow nonconformity to existing building codes and design guidelines.

On March 6, Fullerton Heritage and Local History Room Curator Cheri Pape hosted a design workshop for the city planning staff. We covered the existing resources available to guide design issues and decisions regarding Fullerton's historic buildings, provided a handout listing additional resources and guided a discussion of major issues that frequently need to be considered and resolved with new preservation projects. We are now working closely with the Community Development Department staff at the early stages of proposed projects in an effort to ensure a better process and experience for everyone involved.

Finally, Karen Haluza, Director of Community Development resigned in mid-May to take a job in Washington State. During her tenure with the City, Karen provided excellent leadership of her department, hired competent new staff and was a strong ally for preservation issues in Fullerton. She will be missed. Planning Manager Matt Foulkes is our new contact person in the department; City Council has chosen not to fill the Director position at this time.

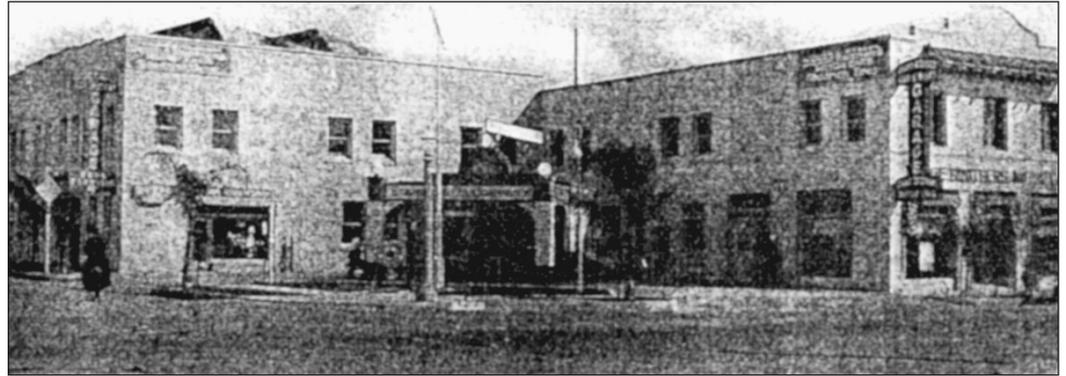
## Yaeger

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Tabuco Canyon for the next 42 years, always waiting to strike it rich. The main entrance to the mine, now considered dangerous, was sealed off in 2009, but tales of gold treasure still persist.

Jacob had a cabin at Yaeger Mesa where he lived while working at the mine, but he and his growing family later moved to a Craftsman bungalow at 200 East Elm Avenue. (The Yaeger House was later moved and can be found at 602 South Harbor Boulevard.) In 1893, Jacob was a passenger when two trains collided at the Miraflores Station near Anaheim. Jostled about and with a few minor injuries, he sued and won \$30,000 from the Southern California Railway Company, claiming he could no longer work. Never one for discretion, Jacob bragged that he had gotten one over on the big railroads, and the company appealed the case and won a reversal in July 1895. Jacob filed an appeal, wasting needed money on legal fees, and lost when the California Supreme Court upheld the reversal in December 1897. Another losing project for Jacob would be the Fullerton Winery, which he quickly opened and closed, crippled in part by Fullerton's anti-alcohol stance.

Born January 23, 1888, in Anaheim, Lillian Yaeger began working at the age of 11 in a confectionary store. She would hold a series of jobs, including working as Fullerton's first telephone operator. Realizing she could make more money by going into business for herself, she opened a bicycle repair shop, making all the repairs herself. Borrowing \$1,000, and with her personal savings of \$71.85, Lillian opened, on January 27, 1914, a Chalmers car dealership and the El Camino Supply Station at the corner of Chapman Avenue and Harbor Boulevard. In February 1914, she became the first woman in Southern California to hold a contract as an automobile agent, responsible for selling the Chalmers, Detroit, and Saxon lines. Mechanically inclined, she quickly learned how to take a car apart and put it back together. Later, when business picked up, she added a garage and employed a mechanic, George L. Esmay, who



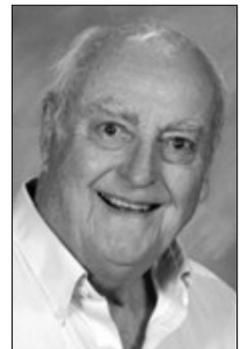
*Yaeger's garage at Harbor & Chapman, 1924.*

would work for Yaeger for years. Hiring Esmay freed Lillian up to do what she did best: sell cars. She quickly became one of the top automobile salesmen in Orange County.

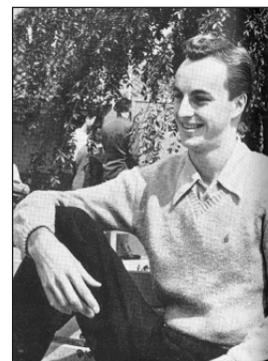
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## In Memoriam: Warren Bowen

Warren Bowen, long time Fullerton Heritage member and Board Member Emeritus passed away on February 16, 2017 at the age of 92. Warren was invaluable to Fullerton Heritage in so many ways and his delightful personality and exemplary volunteer work ethic are already sadly missed. We miss his wise counsel and knowledge of Fullerton's history as well as his infectious playfulness and wit. He was involved in many Fullerton Heritage activities, but was most instrumental in developing our historic walking tours and writing about Fullerton's rich



history. He was also involved in many other Fullerton organizations including St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Fullerton College Foundation Board, founding member and board member of the Friends of the Fullerton Arboretum and Fullerton Interfaith Emergency Service (Pathways of Hope). Warren served Fullerton City government as a Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Arboretum Commissioner and as a member of the Fullerton Bicentennial Committee.



Warren was a wonderful role model and mentor in the importance of community service and service to others. As we continue our work in the months and years ahead, we will miss him immeasurably and strive to carry on his legacy and make him proud.

<b>Day and Night SERVICE</b> Phone 110 or 64		<b>LILLIAN E. YAEGER</b> <b>Dodge Brothers Motor Cars</b>		<b>Day and Night SERVICE</b> Phone 110 or 64	
<b>SALES DEPT.</b> The following used cars at bargain prices 1930 Hummible, 5-pass. 1920 Ford, 5-pass. Starter and electric lights. 1921 Oakland Roadster. Like New 1917 Chevrolet Roadster.	<b>THE GARAGE</b> Towing and wrecking service day and night. Service car thoroughly equipped to handle any job, and we will go anywhere. Repairing and overhauling done by skilled mechanics.	<b>ELECTRICAL DEPT.</b> Expert electrical and ignition work done at a minimum of cost. Inquire about our MAC-DRY Battery—three year guarantee. <b>NO WATER</b> —Needs no attention, hence no battery worries.	<b>ACCESSORY DEPT.</b> We have a complete line of accessories. Lamp Bulbs, Head Light Lenses, Spark Plugs, Etc. What we do not have in stock we can get if it goes on an automobile. Stop Signals installed (this week only) for \$2.75.	<b>NIGHT SERVICE</b> Efficient night service. Large storage space. Car washing done at night as well as in the day time; also greasing and oiling. Crank case drained free of charge. We are always at your service.	
<small>A. B. Hays If You Have a Car, You Want to Sell It—See George L. Esmay, In charge.</small>	<small>Dodge work done at flat rate prices. Know what the job will cost before it is done.</small>	<small>GEORGE L. ESMAY Foreman GROVER CLEM Electrician</small>	<small>W. F. CHRISTIANER Stock Man</small>	<small>HAROLD TROELLEN Night Man</small>	

*A 1922 newspaper advertisement.*

## Yaeger

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Lillian also quickly determined that a number of companies, such as the Briggs-Detroit Motor Car Company, would not survive the competitive automobile industry. She made the propitious decision to support the Dodge Brothers in their new automotive manufacturing business. She approached a Dodge representative, who doubtful of her abilities, urged her to "go easy" at first and order one car. Lillian, however, had different plans and ordered a carload, selling all the cars before they were delivered. She quickly disposed of 125 more carloads of Dodge automobiles.

In 1919, Lillian hired Fullerton's only architect, Frank K. Benchley, to design a new Dodge dealership showroom and garage for her at the southeast corner of Chapman Avenue and Harbor Boulevard. At the time, Benchley, who would go on to design the Muckenthaler Cultural Center and the California Hotel (Villa del Sol), was constructing the new Masonic Temple, now the Spring Field Banquet Center, across the street from her business. It is not known whether Lillian or Benchley came up with the idea, but the gas station was angled so that cars could enter from both Chapman Avenue and Harbor Boulevard. Now a common feature of gas stations, the two entrances were a cutting-edge architectural feature at the time, and the first in the city. The \$35,000 facility included an expansive showroom with space for 50 cars and a repair unit open 24 hours. To increase her income, Lillian added a soda fountain and cigar and candy counters. The Automobile Club of Southern California also designated the new facility an "official" garage, which brought in additional revenue. In 1922, Lillian started a Blue Service Car taxi business which picked up and dropped off arrivals at the train depot. Five years later, she opened up a used "car park" at the corner of Whiting Avenue and Harbor Boulevard. She would eventually employ 24 men. Considered a good employer, she was one of the few business owners to provide showers and dressing rooms for her workers. Although Yaeger herself was breaking gender barriers, she refused to hire any saleswomen, declaring that "I'm afraid they would be women drivers of today."



By 1922, at the age of 34, Lillian felt that she had financially arrived. Up to that point, she had been working ceaselessly while living in an apartment adjacent to her business. She purchased Frank K. Benchley's home on Harbor Boulevard for \$15,000, a princely sum at the time, paying cash, and moved her mother and two sisters into the luxurious home. She also began to purchase properties around Fullerton, including the Marwood Apartments (later razed) for \$80,000 and a citrus ranch. She opened a gravel business, the Yaeger Rock Company, with her brother Fred W. Yaeger and her sister Minnie Curtis. In 1927, she opened the Mission Inn restaurant, adjacent to the Fox Fullerton Theatre, with C. Stanley Chapman, son of Fullerton's first mayor. By the 1940s, she had become a real estate broker, dropping all her connections

to her former life as an automotive dealer. She would spend the last years of her life managing her numerous properties.

Photographs of Lillian Yaeger in her business clothes show her wearing shirts, long skirts, and sensible shoes. At social events, however, she wore expensive jewelry and beautifully designed gowns. She was particularly fond of expensive dresses from the House of Worth. Lillian never married, but she did adopt two boys, Harry C. and Harvey H. Yaeger, both of whom would later move to Oregon.

In 1928, Lillian, then 40, met Emma M. Steeve (1903-1973), a registered nurse 15 years her junior. The two women quickly formed a close bond, and in 1935, Steeve left her rental home (123 North Berkeley Avenue) to move into Lillian's Spanish Colonial Revival home at 108 West Brookdale Place. With the death of her mother and the marriages of her sisters, Lillian had been able to custom build the home just for herself, hiring notable builder Arthur M. Thompson to design the home of her dreams. She would remain in the Brookdale Place residence the rest of her life.

Lillian and Emma Steeve agreed that neither would marry, and on September 2, 1939, the two women signed a written partnership agreement, acknowledging that they were equal owners of certain

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## President's Corner

by Ernie Kelsey

Hello and greetings Fullerton Heritage members:

Happy summer everyone. It is the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July as I write this update on what Fullerton Heritage has been up to since the last newsletter. Very peaceful right now, but I know that will change as the day progresses! Always a fun time of year for sure!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the passing of Board Member Emeritus Warren Bowen. Very sad news for us – and all of Fullerton. We have lost an incredible man who went above and beyond to contribute to our community. Thank you Warren for all you did!

Even with some sad turns of events, Fullerton Heritage continues to keep historical preservation moving forward. And believe me, we've been busy since the last newsletter. Our ongoing activities include monthly board meetings, City Council, Planning Commission, Landmark Commission and Design Review Committee meetings, walking tours, answering hot line questions and our continued (and relentless) advocacy for a premier historic presence in Fullerton. Over the last year, we created great newsletters, our Facebook presence grew and we've added 3 more properties to the Local/National Register. Like I said, it's been busy!

At our Annual Meeting on June 25, I gave a presentation that highlighted Fullerton Heritage's *Year in Review*. This is always a fun presentation to put together because it reminds me not only how much we accomplish, but also how fortunate I am to volunteer with such wonderful people.

We also recognized some fantastic people at the Annual Meeting. Cheri Pape from the Fullerton Public Library received the *Community Education Award* "in recognition of her exceptional service in the preservation and expansion of the City of Fullerton's historic collections, as well as for raising the awareness and value of the local history room". We also recognized Peter Beard as *Preservationist of the Year* "for his many years of work preserving Fullerton's historic properties and for his excellent leadership on Fullerton's Design Review

Committee". Both were in attendance at the annual meeting and are well deserving of these awards.

Our Annual Meeting guest speaker was Jason Shultz, Supervising Archivist, at the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. Jason gave a very interesting talk on what the National Archives and Records Administration does and what has been done out at the Nixon Library since they went through their remodel.

We also have some things coming up you can watch for. This includes the City Council examining the Mills Act which allows for tax incentives for the renovation and maintenance of historic properties. A Resolution of Intent was recently recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and will be considered by the City Council on August 1, 2017. If the Resolution of Intent is approved by the Council it will direct staff to study application of the Mills Act in Fullerton and present a proposal to the City Council for their approval. This is very important for historic preservation and something Fullerton Heritage will be promoting and watching closely. We also have three applications for Local Landmarks in the works, and some for the National Register too. Watch for your 2018 Fullerton Heritage calendar and don't forget to renew your membership if you haven't done so already. Remember, membership doesn't cost a lot and it makes a great gift too!

Thank you to all the donors that help make our restoration projects successful. Thank you to all the members for appreciating and supporting preservation in Fullerton. Fullerton Heritage is here to preserve our past so we can enjoy it in the future. We couldn't do it without all of you.

With my warmest regards and sincere thanks,

– Ernie

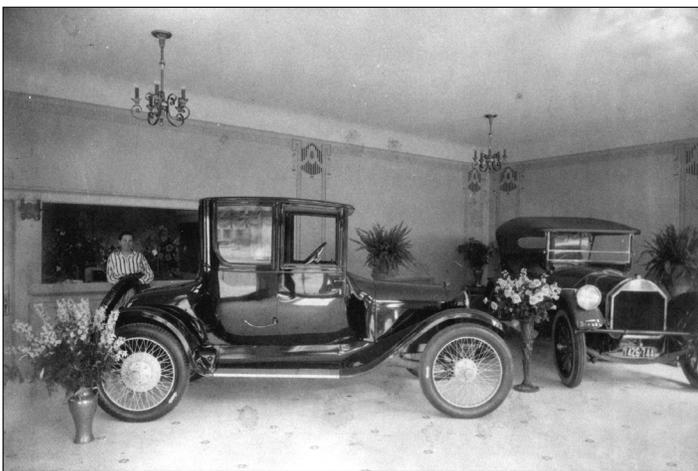
### Welcome New Members

Raymond and Kitty Sly, Carl and Georgia Jones, Brydon and Beverly Shirk

## Yaeger

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Fullerton properties, and that they intended to own and operate the properties as equal owners. The two women would list themselves as partners in the 1940 Census. By 1944, Lillian had tired of the relationship, and on August 10, 1944, she drove Emma, who was ill, to the office of her attorney, where Emma was asked to sign papers terminating the partnership and signing back properties to Lillian. With no prior knowledge of the meeting, Emma was surprised and hurt, and balked at signing the papers, but agreed when Lillian offered her a life estate and half the future rental income from the properties. Both women agreed that they were entitled to \$100 from the rental income each month. Lillian remained in the Fullerton residence, and Emma left for Los Angeles, where she had a nervous breakdown. Lillian would pay Emma's \$1,100 medical bill and mail her a \$100 check each month, along with some rental income. In June 1947, Emma married David D. Heber (1882-1962), and Lillian stopped sending her money in January 1948. Lillian also sold some properties, using the funds to pay down mortgages on her other properties. Believing that she would be financially taken care for the rest of her life, Emma sued Lillian, and the court finally affirmed, on October 26, 1956, that Emma was due \$27,000, plus half of any future rental income. The loss of the rental income remained a sore point to Lillian as she was responsible for maintaining and running the rental properties, as well as the bookkeeping, and some of the unprofitable properties were eventually sold off. Lillian did have other sources of income and purchased additional properties outside the partnership with Emma that she would manage until her death in 1978. In 1977, one year before her death, the City of Fullerton paid her \$49,999 to acquire property she owned at Gilbert Street and Olive Avenue for the development of the Olive-Gilbert Minipark. She remained active in local civic affairs and supported a number of charitable organizations and causes. She was still active until only a few months before her death.



Yaeger's showroom

## Fox Theatre Update

by Tom Dalton

The Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation is close to finalizing an agreement with AMS Planning and Research to act as a consultant to evaluate the operations and business plan for the Fox Theatre. We expect to have their recommendations within the next few months. This will be very important as we get closer to being able to present regular programming in the theatre.

Also, Dick Hamm of Pelican Communities gave the Fox board of directors a brief overview of the presentation he plans to deliver to the Fullerton City Council in August. Last year Pelican Communities was chosen by the Council to investigate the development possibilities of the Fox Block and since that time Dick has met with several groups who have a direct interest in the area including the neighbors, schools, business owners and the Fox board to determine what will best meet the needs of the community. Included in the plan will be at least 200 parking spaces that the city is contractually obligated to provide for Angelo's & Vinci's Ristorante. The Fox Block includes the area between Pomona Ave. on the east, Harbor Blvd. on the west, Chapman Ave. on the south, and Ellis Pl. on the north.



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