



FULLERTON HERITAGE

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Mission: Foster an appreciation for our city's cultural history and ensure the preservation of our historic architectural resources and environments.

Senate Bill 9 (SB9) Added to Municipal Code

By Ann Gread

On June 7, 2022, The Fullerton City Council approved an amendment to Fullerton Municipal Code Chapters 15 (Zoning) and 16 (Subdivisions) to incorporate the requirements for SB9 (two residential units per lot and urban lot splits). This followed Staff updating the code, and approval by the Planning Commission acting as the Landmarks Commission. The process took five months.

Fullerton Heritage followed the process carefully to make every attempt to assure our historic resources and Pres-

ervation Zones were protected. During the process, the State Attorney General sent notification to the City of Pasadena taking a very narrow view as to the definition of a Historic District. The Fullerton Heritage Advocacy Committee contacted Pasadena Heritage with the hope of gaining some insight into how Pasadena was going to handle the challenge. Rebuttal letters were sent by the Mayor of Pasadena as well a detailed legal rebuttal from the Pasadena City Attorney. Ultimately, the State revised their position. This was very good

news for Fullerton, as we can add our Preservation Zones to those properties exempt from the requirement of SB9, as are landmarks, historic properties and districts.

Fullerton Heritage will continue to monitor the implementation of State Accessory Dwelling Unit laws and Senate Bill 9. To date the City has chosen not to adopt Senate Bill 10, which makes it easier to convert zoning of industrial/commercial properties into residential zones.

Lois Weber: A Touch of Hollywood in Fullerton

by Deb Richey

When Lois Weber (1879-1939), the most important female director in American film history, moved into El Dorado Ranch in Fullerton in 1926, she hoped to relax, then start on her comeback. Just married to rancher and pioneer aviator Harry Gantz (1887-1949), Weber set up a sequestered writing studio atop a tower gatehouse on the 125-acre property set in the hills above Fullerton. Now the home of the president of CSU Fullerton, the magnificent property included a spacious Spanish Colonial Revival home, rose and cactus gardens, horse stables, a tennis court, a swimming pool, and acres

of orange, grapefruit, and persimmon groves. Although not aware of it, Weber's anachronistic and moralistic films had lost favor with the American moviegoing public, and her comeback would be a failure. In the 1920s, Fullerton remained largely a rural town, and the isolated ranch served as a retreat for Weber for five years.



Lois Weber

Weber initially pursued a career as a pianist, then as a stage actress. In 1904, she met and married Phillips Smalley (1879-1939), the manager of a road company in which she was acting. The couple had one daughter who died in infancy. In 1908, she took a job at the Gaumont Film Studio in Fort Lee, New Jersey. She began to produce, direct, star in, and author what were then known as "thought pictures" and never looked back.

The daughter of missionaries, Weber was a reformist who aligned herself with films that supported a moral stance. Fired by her zeal to tackle social problems, she took on the most

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Hunt Library Update

by Terry Galvin

The Hunt Library project is moving through the Plan Review process at the City and involves several sequential phases. The City has proactively kept Fullerton Heritage in the loop as the plans have evolved.

The first phase is roof replacement. The plans were approved and a contractor was selected in April 2022. Construction has been delayed due to long lead times for materials but should begin in June.

The second phase water and sewer line replacements has been completed. Phase 3 plans for building improvements which include restoration of historic elements are complete and have been approved by the Landmarks Commission.

The fourth phase will include reconstruction of the parking lot to meet current Fire Dept. standards, new security fencing, repairs to walkways and decking where needed, and a new trash enclosure. Fullerton Heritage sent a letter of support for

the project to the Landmarks Commission.

The letter urged that the fencing be moved into the third phase with the building improvements in order to protect the
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Fullerton Auditorium Project Update

by Terry Galvin

The Fullerton High School Auditorium project has proceeded steadily, although slowly. The project has been subject to the currently common construction delays caused by material and labor shortages. The planned June/July completion date has been extended to September/October.

One of the most visible features of the project, the clock tower, has been seismically retrofitted and repainted. The new addition on the Lemon Street side has suffered the most from
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Beckman Instruments Admin Building Wins Prestigious Historic Preservation Award

The Beckman Administration Building, a structure Fullerton Heritage had advocated for years to save, has won the 2021 Governor's Historic Preservation Award. Only seven projects throughout the state won this award so it's quite an accomplishment. The Beckman Instruments company was instrumental in Fullerton's growth and prosperity. The company



Pictured are (l-r) Lee Adams III, Chair of the State Historical Resources Commission, Fullerton Mayor Fred Jung, Julianne Polanco, State Historic Preservation Officer, and Armando Quintero, Director of California State Parks.

provided extensive employment and revenue to Fullerton, but equally significant, it became part of the social, cultural, and geographic landscape of the city. Always a good corporate neighbor, Beckman made generous donations to Fullerton groups, including St. Jude Hospital, the Boys Club, the United Fullerton Fund, and the Children's League of Fullerton.

We're so fortunate to have City leaders and Staff that believe in historic preservation, and so lucky to have had Western Realco buy the entire site and ultimately sell the administration building to A. J. Kirkwood. Their detailed restoration and preservation of the building has made one of Fullerton's first examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture look young again. Your involvement with Fullerton Heritage is really at the root of this all being possible.



Weber

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daring themes of her day. *Where Are My Children?* (1916) spoke against abortion; *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1917) supported birth control; *Shoes* (1916) addressed child labor; *The Blot* (1921) deplored the low pay of teachers and religious leaders; and *The People vs. John Doe* (1916) attacked capital punishment. Her films were frequently banned or shut down by the police, but audiences flocked to her movies, breaking attendance records. Her high moral standing with the public often paid off and even allowed her to get away with having a young female nude, posing as *The Naked Truth*, flit throughout *Hypocrites* (1915), an indictment of religious hypocrisy. Weber was also quite capable of making spectacular feature films, with dozens of extras, such as *The Dumb Girl of Portici* (1915), which introduced ballerina Anna Pavlova to the screen. Initially, Weber and Smalley worked together, but she was the one with ambition and drive, and he eventually rode her coattails.

A terrific success, Weber, who wrote all the films that she directed, was given her own production company at Universal Pictures in Los Angeles, where she had carte blanche to make any films she wanted. By 1916, she was earning an astounding \$5,000 a week. By 1920, her success was unprecedented. Paramount hired her away from Universal with a \$50,000-per-picture contract and half of all profits. She would eventually direct over 100 feature films, pioneering such film techniques as double exposure and the split screen. (The one-reeler starring Weber, *Suspense on Youtube*, showcases her then cutting-edge split screen use.)



A 1921 advertisement for Lois Weber Productions

In the early 1920s, Weber's films began to decline at the box office. Audiences wanted lighter fare and were no longer interested in being preached to on sensitive subjects. Lois Weber Productions collapsed in 1921. In 1922, Weber, always very private, secretly divorced Phillips Smalley for "habitual intemperance". Overworked and depressed, Weber withdrew from the film community.

In December 1923, Weber was introduced to wealthy Fullerton rancher Harry Gantz at the premier of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* in Hollywood. After persistence on the part of Gantz, the couple wed in a civil ceremony at the Santa Ana Courthouse on June 30, 1926. Then 47, Weber would list her age as 38 (the same as her husband) on the marriage certificate. She spent a couple of days at El Dorado Ranch after her marriage, but quickly

returned to Los Angeles to finish up film projects before moving into El Dorado Ranch a few months later. She held on to her mansion on Ivar Avenue – later owned and moved by renowned director Preston Sturges – and the couple moved between Fullerton and Los Angeles.

Weber quickly set up a comfortable office with no telephones at El Dorado Ranch, and began to write screenplays, relying on her secretary to type up her work. Gantz, who genuinely supported his new wife's film career, was quickly hired as a technical consultant by Universal Picture for a series of Army comedies. By the time of her arrival in Fullerton, Weber was a national celebrity. Her silent films had been featured at both the Rialto Theatre and the Alician Court Theatre (now the Fox Fullerton Theatre) in downtown Fullerton, and she most likely influenced the premier of several important movies in the city.

The newlyweds regularly hosted guests from the film industry who would drive or take the train to Fullerton. Locals would often be agog when such silent films stars as Billie Dove, Leatrice Joy, Claire Windsor, and Jean Hersholt would visit the ranch, along with such well-known writers as the scandalous Eleanor Glyn, famous for the concept of the "It" girl. Frequent week-end visitors were Weber's best friend, Academy-award winning screenwriter Frances Marion (*The Champ*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Camille*, etc.) and her cowboy star husband Fred Thomson. Guests were often treated to a barbecue served on long wooden tables shaded by large trees.

Weber did produce and direct films in the 1920s, but as the industry

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Weber

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transitioned to sound in 1927-28, she found it increasingly difficult to find work. Although not suited to the role of homemaker, she did attempt to be more of a homebody while at El Dorado Ranch. She made her first appearance before a local organization, the Fullerton Ebell Club, on February 17, 1928, insisting to the women present that “I want to be one of you” and fielded such questions as “How can we make moving pictures clean?” from the audience of homemakers. Gantz had developed a spectacular succulent garden at his ranch, often featured in newspapers and gardening magazines, and Weber, an avid gardener, devoted time to the ever-expanding landscaping. She also remained active in the Los Angeles Plant, Flower and Fruit Guild. She continued to support Los Angeles charities, including the Girls’ Studio Club and the Los Angeles Assistance League, and served as the chief hostess for Hollywood fashion shows held in conjunction with the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

It has been speculated that Harry Gantz married Weber because he hoped to persuade her to invest in his financial schemes, but Gantz was wealthy in his own right, having obtained millions in his 1921 divorce from heiress Beatrice Wooster Miller. What the couple did share was an interest in investing in properties throughout Southern California. In the early 1920s, Gantz began carving out land from the southern section of his then 140-acre El Dorado Ranch, a land-holding that ranged between Harbor Boulevard and Richman Avenue, to develop the Malvern-Jacaranda Subdivision. The tract encompassed Malvern Avenue, Jacaranda Place, and the 100 and 200 blocks of Brookdale Place (260 lots). In the mid-1920s, Weber had begun to use her considerable wealth, estimated to be around \$2 million, to purchase property in the Los Angeles area, including the six-story, 65-unit Park Lane Apartments (1927), located at New Hampshire and 4th Street in Los Angeles, in 1929. Gantz and Weber invested in the heavily promoted Castellammare Subdivision near Santa Monica, designed to be modeled after the quaint Italian town. The two hoped to build a palatial home in the new development but pulled their funds when the pipedream project failed to materialize.

What the couple did develop together in 1926/27 was another Fullerton subdivision called Brookdale Heights that encompassed the 300 and 400 blocks of West Brookdale Place.

Each provided part of the financing, with Gantz taking over the advertising and selling of the lots and Weber overseeing the street design and construction of the first homes. Corner lots sold for \$3,000, with interior lots going between \$1,800 and \$2,400. The cost of an average house ranged between \$8,000 and \$10,000, a comparatively expensive price at the time. Unlike Gantz’s first middle-class development, Brookdale Heights was intended for “refined people” with advertisements noting that the lovely neighborhood was “Beautifully Located – Carefully Planned – Rigidly Restricted”. An article in the April 6, 1927 issue of the Fullerton News Tribune (“Miss Weber’s Success Helps Fullerton to Be Successful”) touted her support for the growing town. Weber announced that she personally would be overseeing the building of two “spec” or speculative bungalows in Brookdale Heights, but she completed only the Spanish Colonial Revival home at 329 West Brookdale Place, with Gantz overseeing the dwelling at 344 West Brookdale Place.

During the 1930s, Weber continued to write screenplays, but none were produced, and she took on other roles in the industry, including screen tester, talent scout, and script doctor. In 1930, her Ivar Avenue home was burglarized four times while she was at El Dorado, and she was robbed of \$25,000 worth of jewelry, furs, and other valuables. In 1931, after selling off some of their property, Weber and Gantz sold the Fullerton ranch to C. Stanley Chapman, the son of Charles C. Chapman, Fullerton’s first mayor, and moved to Los Angeles.

In 1933, she was given one last chance to direct a film by the Seven Seas Corporation, her first talkie titled *White Heat* (now lost). The first movie shot on Kauai, the racially charged *White Heat* told the story of an illicit love affair between a white sugar plantation foreman and a native Hawaiian woman. The film crew – with Gantz along for moral support and to sign checks – left for Hawaii in August 1933. While the reviews were not terrible, the film did nothing to jumpstart Weber’s career. She and Gantz separated, then divorced, and Weber moved into a modest apartment.

In 1937, Weber became a board member of a start-up company called the Hollywood Screen Test Corporation, continued to look for film work, and started her autobiography, presumed lost today. In November 1939, she checked into the Good Samaritan Hospital for a stomach ailment

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(Just in Time for Summer Break) Historic Walking Tours Are Back

by Ernie Kelsey

Since our last newsletter we've had several walking tours including our historic downtown, historic Hillcrest Park and a special Storybook Ranch tour in conjunction with the City of Fullerton. We also led historic downtown tours for two different groups of third graders.

Speaking of third graders, watch for Fullerton Heritage's participation this Fall with tours for third graders studying Fullerton's great local history. This is going to be a fun project and Fullerton Heritage is excited to be involved.

Our last tour before summer was in June. We'll take a summer "break" and start tours again in September 2022. It's fun to be out walking again!



Weber

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that had plagued her for years. Friends and family remained with her until her death on November 13, 1939 from a bleeding gastric ulcer at the age of 60. Three hundred Hollywood friends and colleagues attended her funeral later in the week. Although it would later be reported that Weber died alone and broke, that was not the case. She left her still considerable estate to her sister.

Although Weber's extensive contributions were overlooked by film historians for decades, she has increasingly been the

subject of intense research. Fullerton Heritage has donated resources – books, photographs, DVDs – on Weber to the Local History Room of the Fullerton Public Library, available to anyone interested in learning more about this film pioneer.

Hunt

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expensive new window replacements from damage before the next phase is started. The Landmarks Commission agreed with this request and made a further request to the City Council that the fencing be moved into the first phase roof replacement phase because of the substantial damage that has already occurred to the building and the valuable original glass panels. The City plans to move the fencing to its own Phase so that it can be expedited.

The project will be up for City Council approval soon. Upon approval, the remaining phases of the project will go out to bid.

Auditorium

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the material and labor delays, but is now back under active construction with the electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems in process. Metal studs are being attached to the interior concrete walls to provide surfaces for the drywall connections in the corridors, bathrooms, ticket room, and lobby. The exterior door and window openings are being framed in preparation for the plaster application.

The auditorium interior has several complex issues to be resolved, including leveling out a portion of the floor for wheelchair seating, coating the columns with a seismic resisting material, and replacing the capitals and plaster finishes. The lobby ceiling must be replaced to meet current seismic standards, and that work has not yet begun.

Finally, the auditorium rafters were required to be connected to the roof. Some roof tiles have been moved away from the edge so that steel plates could be installed to make the connections. This work is nearly completed.

President's Corner

Summer 2022 Edition

by Ernie Kelsey

Happy Summer! Here we are, mid-way through the year already. Get ready for some hot temperatures. There's a lot going on and Fullerton Heritage is on top of it all.

Fullerton Heritage is certainly enjoying celebrating our 30th Anniversary. From house "happy birthday signs" to our new logo, we're proud to have flourished over 30 years and feel good about the next 30 years!

The Fullerton Historic Theater Foundation Board recently had some sad news and setbacks. But they've come through and are continuing with Phase II of their fundraising and restoration efforts. We look forward to the Fox welcoming guests again.

Fullerton Heritage is once again so proud to be a recipient of the 2022 Fullerton Rotary Community Investment Award. We are a multi-year recipient of this \$500 award and use the funds to help purchase plaques for historic properties within the City. We plan to use this year's award for placing plaques on the Fullerton Auditorium. Thank you Fullerton Rotary!

We're very excited to welcome John Estrada to the board as of April 2022. He's our newest board member and is very excited to join this great organization. John was born in Hollywood and raised in Rosemead. He received his degree in Landscape Design from Cal Poly Pomona. John is a resident of Rosslyn Park in Fullerton and has lived in his home for almost 20 years. When he's not working, John can be found in his garden – doing what he loves. Welcome John! We're lucky to have you. We also want to thank Jordan Byers for his

two years of service on the Fullerton Heritage Board. Jordan is busy raising a family and working so he's going to step back from the board. We all wish Jordan good luck in his future endeavors.

If you haven't, please renew your Fullerton Heritage membership today. You can do this by check or online at fullerton-heritage.org. I can't tell you how busy we've been meeting with City staff on various topics. With the state's new housing laws our historic neighborhoods are open for development, and we need more citizens to be involved. Contact us if you live in a historic neighborhood and want it to become a Preservation Zone. We'll help you get it done.

Thank you for your ongoing support and Happy Summer!

Sincerely,
Ernie

Welcome new members:

Frances Blake, Tiffany Bos, Cheri Brenner, Marie Estes, Allen-Fields Family, Justin Soo Ho, Sue Huynh, Hugo Lepe, William Leung Family, Kristine Marquez, Eloise Smith, Jamie Yoo, Kent Morris, Streitberger Family, and Diana Veloz



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Membership Renewal

Support from members is essential to our continued efforts protecting Fullerton's historic resources and environments for the future. If you have not had an opportunity to renew your membership please do. You can do so online at fullerton-heritage.org/join or you can email us at membership@fullertonheritage.org or call the Hotline at (714) 740-3051 and we will mail you a renewal form. Thank you in advance for your continued support of our preservation efforts. Your membership strengthens our voice in the community.

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