



# FULLERTON HERITAGE

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## Foster House Gets Extensive Restoration, Preserving Historic Features, Architecture

by Bliss Ehrlich

**T**he story of 524 East Commonwealth Ave. is the history of a family as well as a property. Last year, their son Edwin Foster decided to return to his childhood home, and an extensive restoration and renovation project began.

This family story began in 1920 when Albert Foster and Gladys Humphry married. In 1923 the first structure, a garage, was built on the 14,700 square foot lot. In 1926 Edwin Foster was born. In 1928 Albert Foster, with the help of carpenter Fred Humphry (Gladys' father) began work on a 7-room 2-bath residence.<sup>1</sup> The site also became the home of the Foster Sand and Gravel business in 1930. The business addition to this location was marked with a steak bar-b-que for 100 members of the Orange County Builder's Exchange.<sup>2</sup> Albert Foster was very active in this organization, eventually being named President in 1932. In 1942 a triplex was added on to the east of the main house. The business prospered and moved to 915 South Sprada (now Harbor Blvd.) in 1948. The family built and moved to a home in Sunny Hills, but returned to 524 East Commonwealth Ave. in 1953. The main house was remodeled, including an



expansion to the kitchen.

Edwin Foster attended Chapman School, Wilshire School and Fullerton Union High School (class of 1945). He continued his education at Choinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. Hawaiian Punch employed him as a flavor-maker for 30 years.

Many of the Foster family buildings were held in the Albert Foster Trust. Trustee Julie Candelaria had begun

working on the renovation of some of the business properties, and was approached by Edwin with the idea of restoring 524 East Commonwealth as his residence. Julie took on the imposing task of renovating the property to be comfortable with modern amenities, while maintaining the historic character of the home. The renovation began in May 2001. Julie Candelaria and Edwin Foster have taken

(continued on page 2)

# Advocacy Issues

## Local Landmark Plaquing

Fullerton Heritage started our Local Historic Landmark Plaquing Project with local Landmark # 1, Chapman Park followed by the historic First Methodist Episcopal Church (currently the Church of Religious Science) at Pomona and Amerige. We next plan to honor Local Landmark # 11, Fullerton Library (Fullerton Museum Center) and # 4, Amerige Brothers Realty Office located on the grounds of Amerige Park. We have also prioritized a list of landmarks to be honored in the future. In addition we are pleased to announce the beginning of efforts to plaque the many private residences in Fullerton that have local landmark status. We will be extending this option to the owners and ordering plaques as appropriate. The first private home to be honored is Local landmark # 65, the Gober House (610 W. Valley View Dr.) currently owned by the Noble family.

## National Register Nominations

The historic Fullerton Odd Fellows Temple (currently the Williams Building) at 112 E. Commonwealth Ave. was nominated by FH and has been approved by the State Office of Preservation (2/4/02). The nomination is now being reviewed by the National Park Service. We are hopeful and look forward to word of final approval. Fullerton Heritage board member Deb Richey continues to work on the nomination application for the historic City Hall (currently the Fullerton Police Station). What shall we nominate next? So many choices, so little time.

## Elevation of Significant Properties

Fullerton's Historic Building Survey includes several categories: National Register buildings, Local Historic Landmarks, Historic Districts and Historically Significant Properties. This last category includes buildings that are eligible for Local Historic Landmark status but are not yet listed, usually because of lack of owner approval. FH will be working with Bob Linnell (City preservation planner in the Development Services Dept.) over the next few months to pursue additional Local Landmark listings from eligible properties. We will contact owners, send letters of information and intent, and hold educational workshops to encourage property owners to agree to the elevation of the

properties to Local Landmark. We will then make a presentation to the Landmarks Commission requesting the changes. We'll keep you posted on our progress. Listing as a Local Historic Landmark affords each property additional protection from demolition or inappropriate alterations.

## Foster House

(continued from page 1)



extraordinary steps to preserve this Spanish Colonial Revival home. When the old features were not restorable, Julie researched what was available to find the closest match possible.

The original cowboy stained-glass window highlights the street-front appearance of this home. "Dad was driving around Beverly Hills in the early 1920's when he spotted a cowboy stained-glass window," Foster recalls his father saying. "He liked it so much he had one especially made for our Fullerton home."<sup>3</sup> Another stained glass window has been added to the rear of the home, featuring a bullfighter. Interior stained glass had to be added, but matches the front side panes with colored corner accents.

Inside the home new utilities had to be installed. These modifications required holes to be cut in the interior plaster walls. In addition the ceiling plaster had been poorly patched and was cracking. John Smith Plaster did all of the plaster restoration. Not only has he done a fantastic job matching the old plaster style, but he also noticed some interesting areas around the fireplace. He discovered a nook centered above the fireplace that had been covered over, and he reopened it. He also noticed that tiles around the fireplace had been repeatedly painted. Julie had him remove approximately 18 coats of paint, exposing beautiful tiles that were original to the home. Noted artisan Jose Luis Gonzales of Goetz Studios has replicated tiles missing from the hearth, as well as matching the stained glass. The pictorial tiles are thought to be the San Juan Capistrano Mission.<sup>4</sup> Tiles that were broken during the restoration were

(continued on page 4)

## President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

As you can see by reading this newsletter, Fullerton Heritage is working on some very exciting projects. Board member Debora Richey, after completing all of the reams of paperwork required to get the Odd Fellows Temple (Williams' Building) placed on the National Register of Historic Places, is now working on the same process for the Fullerton Police Station, our former City Hall. This is the fourth project of this type that

Deb has undertaken and, I think, demonstrates a remarkable level of dedication. It is working with talented, energetic people like this that makes my job as FH president so enjoyable.

The Fullerton Museum Center will be hosting our annual meeting on Sunday, June 23. This is an excellent opportunity for you to meet the hard-working folks on the board of directors and to give us your input on what preservation efforts you would like to see us pursue. We would love to see you again or meet you if you have not yet had the opportunity to attend one of our events.

## Veterans Remembered in Hillcrest Park

by Warren Bowen

Hillcrest Park is a significant part of local history; its preservation and improvement is important, and recent pronouncements by the Mayor and City Administrator about its ongoing redevelopment are good news indeed.

With a city of barely 5,000 inhabitants, the 1920 City Council had the foresight to purchase 33.3 acres of hillside land for about \$68,000. The place was named Hillcrest Park. While not in the center of Fullerton, it comes reasonably close and is now certainly an extension of the venerable downtown area, which is itself experiencing much new development.

The park's stonework, including roadside pillars, steps and the upper picnic grounds area was a WPA project in the 1930s, and provided considerable employment where it was badly needed; in those days, some 12% of men willing and able to work could find little of it. Among structures which made the park a busy place were the log cabin Izaak Walton League lodge, the American Legion Hall on Lemon, the lighted fountain on Spadra Road (now Harbor Blvd.) side of the park, and the city park headquarters and police pistol range near the Brea Blvd. cutoff. The fountain has long been capped off, the victim of vandalism, but the stone work remains. The building right on Harvard Ave. (now Lemon St.) was moved in later, having been the original childrens' library. In the park, it became the Girl Scout House and is now the Red Cross Building. The top of the park contains a large reservoir which supplies much of the town with water.

The park is also home to three veterans' memorials: all differ in

design, size and placement. The oldest is in front of the former legion hall, now a city recreation department building, just off Lemon. This

memorial was erected to honor those killed in World War I. A small concrete unit with an inset plaque, it dates to the early 1930s. At the top of the next hill to the west, behind the reconstructed log cabin, is a slab of giant California redwood with the names of those lost in WWII. It was hauled down by a few

members of the "Ikes," as the Walton League was known, including Oscar Freek, Clark Lutschg and others. The names are carved into the slab and include all known men and women from Fullerton who died from Pearl Harbor through the end of that conflict. The names here recall fellows who were well-known to this writer from boyhood scouting, YMCA, school, church or other contacts when Fullerton was a city of 10,000 and one knew most all.

The newest monument is on the Harbor Blvd. side of the park, near the old stone fountain. It was erected by the Emblem Club and has the names of all known Fullerton people who were killed up through its construction time which, I believe, followed the war in Viet Nam. As you may imagine, this is a more imposing structure. All of these monuments are a part of our city's history and it is hoped, will continue to be preserved and maintained. It is difficult to imagine why anyone would vandalize these tributes to veterans, but it has happened.

The ongoing rehabilitation of Hillcrest Park will bring more visitors to the venerable green area. Go there and look around. You'll find it worthwhile.



## New Members

Fullerton Heritage is proud to welcome the following new members:

Judy Allen	Maggie & John Lee
Maxine & Ray Broderick	Mr. & Mrs. John McCarthy
Karen & Paul Dudley	Ralph Moran Family
Shirlee Ferry	Jay Seidel
Bob & Zelma Halstenberg	Gale Whitnell
Monica Henry	

## Good Contractor, Handyman or Supplier? Share Them!

We are working on a Restoration Resources Guide to aid owners of historic properties in their improvement projects. If you have any "tried and true" craftsmen, contractors, supply/hardware resources etc., please send their names, addresses, and phone numbers to Fullerton Heritage, P.O. BOX 3356 Fullerton, CA 92834, or call the Hotline to leave the information at (714) 740-3051.

Coming . . .

### Annual Meeting

June 23, 2002

2 p.m. Fullerton Museum Center. See enclosed ballot/flyer

### Docent-Led Walking Tour

July 13, 2002

Tours meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Museum Center, Pomona and E. Wilshire. The walk takes about one-and-one-quarter hours. There are a few (optional) steps. This is an opportunity to gain some new insights into our city's lively past. The tour is free to members of Fullerton Heritage, with a \$5 per family charge for guests. Anyone may join Fullerton Heritage at the beginning of the tour.

## Foster House

(continued from page 2)

removed, and new ones were created to match the originals. This took several firings and the tiles were re-set by Artie Gonzalez. It is difficult to tell the newer ones from the originals.

The conical tower windows had been replaced with aluminum framed windows. Julie not only had them restored to wood, but special ordered them to match the original architectural style and the interior oak. The exterior trim paint was restored to its original dark red/burgundy color, by examining the Mariola Apartments next door. Albert Foster had also built these apartments, and to his later regret had sold them in the 1950's. Luckily, these apartments still have the original exterior finishes and color scheme.

The exterior courtyard restoration includes the re-capping of the original brick wall between the main house and the triplex. Peterson Brothers Corp. (PBC) did all landscape and hardscape restoration. They also installed the courtyard pavers. Mr. Muth, the owner of Orco Block, was a good friend of Albert Foster, and donated the exterior pavers to the project.

Julie Candelaria worked closely with Don Hart of Transcraft Builders Group, to make this excellent example of renovation and restoration a reality for Edwin Foster and his family. Julie's company "Client Aid" acts as a court approved trustee, B2B collection agent and permit administrator. Take a Sunday drive and see for yourself, this beautiful Spanish Colonial restoration.



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<sup>1</sup> 1979 Historic Resources Inventory

<sup>2</sup> Fullerton News Tribune, December 16, 1932

<sup>3</sup> Fullerton News Tribune, November 29, 2001

<sup>4</sup> Fullerton News Tribune, November 29, 2001