

FULLERTON HERITAGE

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Designer of Amerige, Hillcrest Parks

Fullerton's First Landscape Architect: J. G. Seupelt

by Debora Richey

While most Fullerton residents are familiar with the city's two oldest municipal parks, Amerige and Hillcrest Parks, very few know that both sites were designed by the same landscape architect—Bavarian-born Johann George Seupelt—an overlooked pioneer. Seupelt served as Fullerton's first Park Superintendent from 1918 until 1925, making a significant impact on the built environment of the City. To preserve Seupelt's landscape work, Fullerton Heritage has pursued National Register status for Hillcrest Park, Fullerton's only "great" park.

When Seupelt accepted the position of Park Superintendent on October 18, 1918, Fullerton's park system was in its early stage of development. The Park Commission, established in 1914, oversaw one city-owned park, Amerige (formerly Commonwealth) Park, and the library and grammar school



grounds. Park planning proceeded on a piecemeal basis until Seupelt took over. He quickly developed plans for Amerige Park, and then urged the City Council to purchase the land for what would become Hillcrest Park. When the City purchased 33-acres for Hillcrest Park, Seupelt promptly drew up plans for the city's first and only automobile camp, the Fullerton Municipal Auto Camp, located on the southwest corner of East Valley View and Harbor (then Spadra) Boulevard. By 1922, he had completed formalized plans for the entire Park, which were gradually implemented over the next few years. Seupelt entered his Hillcrest Park plans in a Southern California landscape competition where they won first prize and his renderings were subsequently displayed at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles and the Anaheim and Santa Ana Chambers of Commerce.

As part of his Park Superintendent responsibilities, Seupelt developed in 1918 a systematic plan for street tree planting. Over 2,500 trees were planted throughout Fullerton's thoroughfares. While Seupelt selected many common trees, such as the palm and elm, he also planted more exotic trees, including the breadfruit tree. He also completed the grounds for the Wilshire Avenue School (1914), Fullerton's second elementary school, in 1919. The results were so successful that city officials in Anaheim, Brea, and Placentia asked him to develop similar plans for their elementary schools. For his landscaping projects, Seupelt initially trucked in free plants and trees from Santa Ana

Reminders: Annual Meeting--Set for June 27 at 2 p.m. in the police station mural room. Watch your mail for details.

Dames at Tea--May 16, 1:30 p.m., Springfield Conference Center ; Free, members-only event; **RSVP required** to (714) 740-3051 no later than May 7.

Walking Tour--May 22; Departs Fullerton Museum Center at 9:30 a.m. . Free to members; \$5 for non-members

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Advocacy Issues

by Katie Dalton

Local Landmarks

We have disappointing news on the addition of Local Landmarks. Of the nearly 20 properties eligible and nominated, only the Fullerton High School buildings, including the two science buildings, the colonnade and Plummer Auditorium, were listed. None of the private property owners chose to have their properties recognized. This came as a surprise to Fullerton Heritage and we have tried to figure out why; one possibility is the inconvenient requirement that owners submit notarized paperwork (never before required) may have discouraged people who had, at one point, expressed an interest. We are pleased that the Fullerton Union High School District understands the importance of their buildings and the Landmarks Commission approved the additions at their meeting on January 14, 2004. It will likely be a long while before we visit this issue again, since it is such a cumbersome process and we have already pursued most of the eligible buildings not already listed.

Whiting/Stanford Preservation Zone

We are moving ahead with the process to establish the 1100 block of East Whiting and the 200 block of North Stanford as Fullerton's newest Residential Preservation Zone. An informational workshop was held on April 1, 2004 in the City Council chambers to present details to the affected property owners and answer any questions. Jay Eastman, Preservation Planner with the Development Services Department of the city did an excellent job of informing the property owners and conducting discussion of relevant issues. Those present support the changing of their neighborhood to a preservation zone, as do the majority of those who contacted Eastman by phone or e-mail. The process will now continue with the scheduling of a public hearing before the Landmarks Commission (projected for May) followed by a similar final hearing before City Council. We do not anticipate any difficulty with either hearing and by next writing we should have a new addition to our P zones, thus insuring further protection of our historic housing.

Design Review News

We continue to be the eyes and ears necessary to guarantee the enforcement of the design guidelines for historic properties.

When we noticed that a property owner in the College Park Preservation Zone was replacing the original windows of his California Bungalow in the 100 block of North Lincoln a quick call to the code enforcement department resulted in a halt to the project until the issue could be addressed. These errors continue, but are becoming less frequent as we continue to refine the system of enforcement with city staff. When owners in preservation zones or those with local landmarks or significant properties apply for permits to make changes, the computer system is supposed to red flag the property indicating that the design guidelines must be applied. Occasionally this doesn't happen and the permits are issued without proper review. As you can imagine this is a never-ending issue and we could use the help of all of you to notice when something inappropriate is happening to historic buildings around town, and either call the FH hotline (740-3051) or Jay Eastman at the city (738-6549) to report what you see. We would really appreciate your help with this important issue.

Minor development projects taken to RDRC in the past few months are better projects because of the process. Thanks to the committee members and Preservation Planner Jay Eastman for their good work.

Save the Fox

As you all know FH handed over stewardship of preserving the Fox Theatre to the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation, and we have offered them our support as they move forward with this very difficult and ambitious goal. They have accomplished major milestones recently and now need all of our help more than ever before. They managed to get the city to commit to a matching grant of \$1.65 million if the Foundation can raise that amount before November to purchase the building. While that is an amazingly daunting goal, they are committed and enthusiastic, so now is the time for our entire community to step up to the plate and contribute to this effort. Fullerton Heritage has given a generous donation on behalf of our organization, as have many of our board members. Please consider a generous tax deductible donation to save the Fox. If all of us who have said that we want to again see this historic treasure preserved would contribute now, we can successfully return the Fox Fullerton to its rightful place as the cultural gem of our historic downtown. Watch for notices about upcoming fund raising events and/or contribute directly through the Foundation by contacting them by e-mail at FoxFullerton.org or

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President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

As we celebrate the anniversary of our City's 100th year of incorporation, I think it is appropriate that we take a look around us and see how much we have to be proud of. In addition to the 14 buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places we have numerous others that have the potential to be placed on that esteemed list. Debora Richey, one of our long-time board members, has personally been responsible for getting the First Methodist Episcopal Church (currently the Church of Religious Science), the City Hall (currently the Police Station) and the Odd Fellows Temple (currently the William's Building) placed on the register. She is currently working to get Hillcrest Park through the long and

arduous process and we expect it to be accepted in the next few months. Additionally Fullerton Heritage, through the generous donations of the Fullerton Rotary, has placed National Register plaques on 10 of the 14 National Register buildings and we hope to have a ceremony real soon to plaque the William's Building. When you walk around the historic downtown (checking out the beautiful Centennial banners) you should be proud of what we have accomplished as a city. We have protected a downtown that has become a destination point for visitors throughout Southern California mainly because it offers something our neighboring cities have lost; that feeling of home. So, let's pat ourselves on the back and have ourselves a happy 100th birthday party. We're going to be having Centennial events all year long but the official Centennial bash is going to be on July 14th at the Sports Arena as part of the Concert in the Park. It will be free to all and should be a great family event. We hope to see you there.

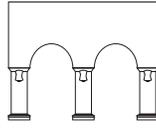
Why Do We Need Preservation Zones?

by Tom Dalton

Many of you have seen the unfortunate remuddling project currently being inflicted on the once-beautiful home in the 300 block of W. Brookdale Place (see accompanying photos). It is particularly sad because that block has some of the best examples of historic architecture our city has to offer. The house that is being built there now is not necessarily bad looking; it just isn't in character with the rest of the neighborhood. If you want to

build a huge mansion, build it in a neighborhood where it won't destroy the historic ambiance that has been established over the years. Fortunately, the 100 and 200 blocks of Brookdale are in the Jacaranda – Malvern Preservation Zone and are protected from this type of insensitive destruction. We hope that this latest incident will encourage the residents of the 300 and 400 blocks to get together and petition the city to join up. We will do everything we can to help them.





Architect

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and other nearby cities, but by 1920, he had established a city nursery that provided many of the plants needed for public landscaping. In addition to his landscaping projects, Seupelt also designed four electric city signs for the Chamber of Commerce in 1924. The lighted signs were placed at the principal gateways to Fullerton. Beverly Hills city planners liked the electric signs so much that they asked Seupelt to design similar ones for their city entrances.

Like many newcomers to Fullerton, Seupelt was an immigrant. Born and college educated in Bavaria, Seupelt arrived in Baltimore in 1904 at the age of 27. He served as a horticulture instructor at Washington State Agricultural College in Pullman from 1906 to 1908, then as Spokane's City Forester from 1908 to 1915. During this time, he wrote articles and delivered speeches on tree planting and management. In 1908, Seupelt became the first postgraduate student at Washington State Agricultural College to receive a Master's Degree in horticulture and landscape architecture, then a new field in America. He became a United States citizen in 1909. In 1917, he moved to Los Angeles to assist the great California landscape architect Paul G. Thiene, who was then establishing a private practice. Also born and educated in Germany, Thiene specialized in designing Italian and Spanish gardens of great size and intricate detail for the rich and famous, most notably the grounds for the Doheny or Greystone Mansion (1928) in Beverly Hills, now a public garden. After his services with Fullerton were discontinued in 1925, Seupelt, who was then living at 520 West Amerige, opened a successful

landscaping business in downtown Fullerton (109 North Harbor). He completed plans for residences around Orange County, as well as designs for the Fullerton Hospital, the La Habra Women's Club, Whittier College, and the Montebello City Park.

In 1926, Seupelt returned to Spokane where he worked privately and as the consultant landscape designer for the cities of Chewelah and Colfax, then as principal landscape designer for the notable architectural firm of Whitehouse and Price. Seupelt, who never retired, continued to complete projects for the firm, which designed hundreds of buildings throughout the northwest, until his death in 1961. His most significant project during this period was landscaping the landmark Spokane Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, an elaborate Gothic Revival church constructed over a 24-year time span and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Eminently qualified for horticulture and landscaping work, Seupelt was in the unfortunate position of being employed in government positions during World War I when anti-German sentiment was high. The onset of World War I brought a backlash against German culture in the United States. The names of streets, foods, schools, and towns were changed, music written by Wagner and Mendelssohn was removed from concert programs and even weddings, German-language books were burned, and German-language newspapers were run out of business. German American businesses and homes were vandalized, and German Americans accused of being pro-German were tarred and feathered, and lynched. While living in Spokane, Seupelt was attacked by the editor of the *Hunters Leader*, a weekly newspaper, for being "un-American" and later had his house vandalized. When Seupelt was not reappointed as Fullerton Park Superintendent in 1925, his German ancestry played a primary role. He did, however, continue to consult with the Fullerton Park Commission and perform specialized city landscaping projects. After leaving Fullerton in 1926, he returned ten years later and expressed delight in the changes that had been made to Hillcrest Park. He remained a lifelong opponent of discrimination, frequently lecturing on patriotism.



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Advocacy

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check out their website at www.SaveTheFox.org. Their phone number is 714-607-0884. With your generosity and a lot of hard work, we'll see you at the movies!