

FULLERTON HERITAGE

Spring ❁ Volume 12 ❁ Number 2
April 2006

Tools to Answer the Question: *How Old Is My House?*

Have you ever asked yourself this question, but didn't know where to go to find the answer? If so, the following information will help guide you in your research.

Step 1: Observation

What architectural style is the building?

Is it an 1890s Victorian, a 1920s Tudor Revival, or a 1950s Ranch House? Fullerton's neighborhoods are filled with architectural styles reflecting periods of local development, and the style of your home can be a clue as to the age of the dwelling. Knowing the style is helpful in establishing the general date of construction as well as fleshing out the building's history.

The Fullerton Heritage website has a guide ([http://www.fullertonheritage.com](#)) that will assist you with identifying your home's style. The Fullerton Public Library also has books on specific styles (e.g., *Victorian Architecture*, *Tudor Revival Architecture*, etc.) and helpful identification guidebooks, such as *How to Identify Old Houses*, *Old House Encyclopedia*, and *Old House Encyclopedia*.

Some familiarity with architectural styles can also alert you to possible changes, such as the removal or addition of porches, changes in windows and doors, etc., that have occurred over the years. Examine the house closely for evidence of additions or alterations, remembering that a building may have a long history of rebuilding and modernization over the decades.

Searching your house for physical evidence

may yield a construction date. Check to see if there are any identifying dates on or near the building. The building may have a date stone or other type of inscription set into an exterior wall. Look in closets or other places where the contractor may have stamped his name. Also check the sidewalks or pavements in your neighborhood for these stamps.

Careful inspection of the building's construction materials, design concept, and construction methods may also yield clues. The attic and basement usually are good places to investigate since features often remain exposed in these areas. Trained investigators can date a house by studying the wood, mortar, plaster, or paint.

Where is the house located in Fullerton?

Is your house near the old center of the city or is it part of a later expansion? If your house is located in the original townsite, it was most likely constructed between 1880 and 1920. If your house is located south of Bastanchury, north of Rossl Lynn, and east of Raymond, more than likely it was constructed after World War II. If your house is part of a tract or subdivision or part of a preservation or potential preservation zone, it may be possible to place it within a specific construction period.

Step 2: Ask Around

Frequently there are people in the community who will remember things about your home and its past owners that will provide useful clues about its history. Talk to your neighbors, previous owners, survivors of previous owners, longtime residents of your area, the mail carrier, local carpenters and plumbers, and anyone else who might know something about your house.

(continued on page 2)

**Save the Date
Annual Meeting**

June 25, 2006

Watch your mail for details

Library Acknowledges Fullerton Heritage Gift

The library gratefully acknowledges and thanks Fullerton Heritage's recent donation of funds to purchase books that reflect architectural styles found in Fullerton. This gift was the result of a recent survey by the group to document and identify Fullerton's architectural styles. This survey document will soon be available on Fullerton Heritage's web site. As you will see from the booklist below the city has a varied and rich built environment. The library appreciates this community support not only with funds but with information that enables the library to stay abreast of community interests and provide a collection that meets the needs of our community. All of the books circulate; however, these titles have proved to be quite popular. You may have to place a reserve to get a hold of a copy. There is a 75

cent charge for reserves but they can be reserved from home to be picked up, when available, at the library by going to the library's web site www.fullertonlibrary.org, and then choosing the catalog.

The Art Deco House: Avant-Garde Houses of the 1920s and 1930s by
Adrian Tinniswood

*The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial
Architecture* by Richard W. Longstreth

The Cape Cod House by Stanley Schuler

The Colonial Revival House by Richard Guy Wilson & Noah Sheldon
(continued on page 4)

How Old?

(continued from page 1)

Someone might have an old photograph, a bill, a diary, a genealogy, or written correspondence that will help place your house in the correct time period. Try to verify the anecdotes or stories you hear.

Also, experts on local history will know of research materials that may contain relevant information about the building and its relationship to Fullerton history.

Step 3: Building Permits

Building permits will tell you when a house was built and identify the builder, cost of construction, and building type. On occasion, an architect may be identified. The first date "FOO.O.K." indicates the footing inspection or beginning of construction. Make a note of the measurements, number of rooms and stories, since changes in these features will signal an alteration.

In Fullerton, copies of building permits are kept at the Development Services Department in City Hall (2nd floor, 303 W. Commonwealth). Older permits are on microfiche. There is a small charge for photocopies of permits.

Step 4: City Directories

Historical city directories can help you to establish an approximate date when your house was built, and they are an excellent resource for learning more about the people who lived in your home. Fullerton

city directories, usually published annually, are divided into two sections. The *resident section* includes an alphabetical listing of people living in the city, and lists of the head of household, place of employment and/or occupation, and name of spouse. Earlier directories may also include the names of children. An asterisk (*) following a name indicates that the occupant owned the building. The *address section* is arranged alphabetically by the name of the street, and lists residents by address. By following the city directories from year to year it is possible to trace a succession of occupants. The first listing for a building may indicate the year of construction.

Fullerton city directories will be found in the Launer Room of the Fullerton Public Library (353 W. Commonwealth). When using the directories, watch for street name changes and house number changes.

Step 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Fire insurance maps are an important source for building information. Fire insurance maps produced by the D. A. Sanborn Company from 1876 to 1970 depict residential and commercial sections of cities in the United States. Each map illustrates the site, size and shape, building materials, and use of homes, commercial buildings, and factories. Starting in 1890 for Fullerton, the Sanborn Maps show the footprint of every structure on a street.

The Launer Room of the Fullerton Public Library has maps of the original townsite for 1890, 1894, 1900, 1907, 1911, 1917, and 1927. No photocopying privileges are allowed for the maps. Later maps up to the 1940s can be found in the Fullerton Development Services Department in City Hall (2nd floor, 303 W. Commonwealth).

President's Corner

by Tom Dalton

A few weeks ago the City Council discussed changes to the Amerige Court project in the downtown. As originally approved, the concept was to build 4 to 5 story buildings on both sides of Amerige Ave. between Malden and Harbor, with commercial uses on the ground floor and condos above. Parking was to be located behind, below and within the building areas. The design was meant to reflect the Harbor Blvd. appearance with the large buildings broken up so as to resemble buildings built at different times and compatible with the 1920's and 30's era of the downtown. Open spaces and plazas provided pedestrian scale places of interest for sitting, eating or walking though. The scale of the development was to be compatible with the downtown, which was primarily 2 story but with scattered 3 to 5 story buildings. From the surrounding streets the 4 to 5 story buildings would barely be seen until entering the Amerige area.

The discussion at the City Council meeting was to be for transfer of the City parking lots to the Redevelopment Agency and for approval of the development agreement between the City and the developer. Most of the meeting, however, was devoted to discussing and justifying changing the original concept from buildings the size of the Wilshire Promenade to buildings 8 stories high with a separate 6 story parking structure. No longer were the parking and buildings to be integrated and gone were the pedestrian scale open spaces.

Construction of 8 story towers was justified with claims that the Chapman Building is equivalent to that height, that it is too expensive to build subterranean parking, and that there would be more open space. The Chapman Building may be that high to the top of its equipment screen but it is not an 8 story building. Every parking structure in the downtown has at least a portion below grade, with the Wilshire Promenade, City Pointe, and Pinnacle having full below grade levels. The open spaces surrounding tower developments are seldom pedestrian scale, have no interest except from an airplane, and are not functional as part of a mixed use development. Go to any of the surrounding towns and see what their tower developments really look like up close.

Eight story construction is much more expensive than 4 to 5 story projects. The savings could be used for subterranean parking. The scale of an eight story tower development is out of character with the downtown core. How do you make a tower architecturally compatible with anything except another tower? The developer is not a

tower developer. He was chosen because of his proposal to build a compatible development for Fullerton like he has done in other communities. Why would the City want to make a good developer build a bad project?

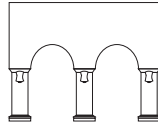
The decision is not yet final. The public needs to keep track of this one and be at the various public meetings that will occur as the project goes through the review process. A bad precedent is being established here. Eight story towers should not be built in the center of our downtown but on the perimeter, as was expressed by the vast majority of the Fullerton citizens who spent their time attending the public workshops last year.

Walking Tours Set

Thanks to Fullerton Heritage board member Warren Bowen, we have been able to continue the tradition of providing walking tours of our beautiful, historic downtown. On Saturday, March 25th Warren once again conducted one of his now-famous tours for a group of 14 Fullerton residents eager to learn more about the history and architecture of our city (see photo, below). If you haven't had the opportunity to participate in one of these expeditions, mark your calendar for Saturday, July 22. The tour is free to all Fullerton Heritage members (\$5.00 for non-members), starts at about 9:00 am in front of the Fullerton Museum Center, and lasts about 2 ½ hours. Bring comfortable walking shoes, a hat and a water bottle.



Warren Bowen (center, wearing a cap) discusses the mural in the Commonwealth Post Office during the March 25 walking tour.



Book Gift

(continued from page 2)

Colonial Style: Creating Classic Interiors In Your Cape, Colonial, or Saltbox House by Treena Crochet

Courtyard Housing Los Angeles: A Typological Analysis by Stefanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood, James Tice, & Julius Shulman

Deco Landmarks: Art Deco Gems of Los Angeles by Arnold Schwartzman

Eichler Homes: Design for Living by Jerry Ditto, Lanning Stern, & Marvin Wax

Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream by Paul Adamson, Marty Arbunich & Ernest Braun

Monterey Furnishings of California's Spanish Revival by Roger Remick, Michael Trotter, & Douglas Congdon-Martin

Tudor Style: Tudor Revival Houses in American from 1890 to the Present by Lee Goff & Paul Rocheleau

Cathy Thomas
Fullerton Public Library

Consider giving a friend a gift membership in Fullerton Heritage

Yes, I want to support Fullerton Heritage in preserving Fullerton's historic cultural and architectural resources. Please check one:

- \$10 Student
- \$15 Senior (65 & over)
- \$20 Individual
- \$25 Non-profit
- \$30 Family
- \$50 Small Business
- \$100 Friend
- \$250 Corporate
- \$500 Patron
- \$1000 Benefactor
- \$_____ Additional Contribution

I would like to be active in Fullerton Heritage, and am interested in the following activities:

- Restoration Resources
- Historic home tours
- Downtown walking tours
- Historic Survey Update
- Other interests (please list): _____
- Advocacy/Issues
- Programs/Education
- Newsletter
- Publications
- Landmark Nominations
- Fundraising

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE (H): _____

(W): _____

E-MAIL/FAX: _____

DATE: _____

- Renewal
- New Member
- Gift Membership

Send your check along with this form to:
Fullerton Heritage / P.O. Box 3356 / Fullerton,
California 92834-3356



Board of Directors 2005-2006

Warren Bowen / Tom Dalton / Katie Dalton
Terry Galvin / Ann Gread / Bob Linnell
Jim Powell / Michele Powell / Debora Richey
Dave Temple / Cathy Thomas

Newsletter layout & design by Jim Powell

Fullerton Heritage / P.O. Box 3356 Fullerton,
California 92834-3356
Hotline: (714) 740-3051
www.fullertonheritage.org