1918 – 1925: 
NON – RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

In this period the City experienced new commercial construction with major buildings that largely define the Central Business District today. Spadra Road (Harbor Boulevard) was the focus of much of this construction, but less important industrial and service structures filled the side streets, in particular West Santa Fe Avenue.

The brick commercial structures dominate by the end of this period, and a few major public buildings date to these years as well, designed in the preferred Spanish Colonial Revival style. However, the city’s premiere commercial structure that was built at this time, the Chapman Building, does not reflect a Spanish design but an architectural style typically used for high-rise buildings in business districts of large cities.

List of Properties

- Pacific Electric Depot, 1918
- Ellingson Building, 1920
- Masonic Temple, 1920
- Christian Science Church, 1920
- 125 West Santa Fe Avenue Building, 1921
- Fullerton Dye Works Building, 1922
- California Hotel, 1922
- Fullerton High School, 1922
- Farmers & Merchants Bank, 1922
- Chapman Building, 1923
- Union Pacific Depot, 1923
- De Luxe Hotel, 1923
- 719-723 South Harbor Boulevard Building, 1923
- Alician Court Theatre, 1924
- Elephant Packing House, 1924
- Amerige Block, 1925
- Grumwald’s Tin shop, 1925
The Pacific Electric Depot provides an architectural transition from one age to another. While the basic style belongs to the first two decades of the twentieth century, the reduction of the Mission Revival style to the barest essentials hints at the functionalism of the 1920s. The decorative brackets supporting the protective overhangs and the parapet feature are the only true stylistic elements in this building’s design.

The Pacific Electric Railway came to Fullerton in 1917, as an extension of the line from La Habra at a cost of $425,000. The Depot was constructed soon afterward in 1918, at a cost of $10,000. Although passenger traffic was never lucrative, the large citrus industry provided significant freight revenue. Passenger service was discontinued in 1938, while freight traffic continued into the late 1940s. Around 1950, the depot began a new life as a Greyhound bus depot, which lasted until 1976.

The rehabilitation and reuse of this property became a key component in the planning for the Fullerton Transportation Center. This concrete building was fully rehabilitated for use as a restaurant in 1981, and it has been a privately operated eating establishment ever since. It is true to its original design, with even the wood trusses in the interior still exposed and unaltered.
This building was designed originally for use as an automotive dealership and garage. As was typical of brick commercial structures in Fullerton in the early 1920s, the building has a simple rectangular shape and a decorative parapet is part of the front façade, which in this instance appears to be a blending of the storefront format and a Mission Revival roof line.

The building was used as a garage until the mid-1940s. The Ellingson family first leased the space from the owner, Hugh Warden, for use as a machinery shop in 1946, and later purchased the building in the 1960s. The building continues to be owned by the Ellingson family, who has retained the appearance of the original storefront to the present day.
Masonic Temple
Spring Field Banquet Center
501 N. Harbor Boulevard
Spanish Colonial Revival
1920

NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTY

Historical Landmark
This building was the second Masonic Temple in Fullerton, taking the place of the much smaller facility at the northwest corner of Harbor Boulevard and Amerige Avenue. Rectangular in shape and three-story (though multi-leveled) in height, it was constructed of hollow clay tile on a poured concrete foundation. Its Spanish Colonial Revival style is not ornate but is rather clean-lined and eclectic. For example, parts of the building have a flat roof with Mission Style parapets at the north and south sides. At the same time the front portico, with its elevated entrance, has a Neo-Classical treatment.

The east façade is the primary elevation; it is symmetrical except for an extension at the south end. At the center is a pedimented portico that is supported by two columns with unadorned capitals, arrived at by a double set of stairs. Marble cornerstones are under each column, with the Masonic emblem and date of the building’s construction etched in the north one.

There are other distinguishing architectural features: the uniform placement windows, the treatment of the upper balcony on the north side and the decorative roof rafters on all building elevations. The interior spaces, especially the main meeting room on the second level with its wood paneling and detailing, are equally important features. Frank Benchley, the son of Edward Benchley and a prominent local architect, designed the building.

The Masonic Temple was the first of the major buildings to be constructed in the prosperous decade following WWI. Construction lasted nearly a year, and the final cost totaled $115,000 for the structure and its fixtures. The groups that were associated with the Masons grew in the years following the building’s completion, and for a time Fullerton had more lodges and chapters than any other community in Orange County.

As a social institution, Masonic membership was predominantly made up of high-status individuals and entrepreneurs – almost always men -- until the 1940s. The lodges were social groups that had ritualistic meetings, social events like dances and picnics, and game room activities. Other functions that attracted members included moral guidance, support groups, and charitable care for orphaned children and the elderly. The Fullerton Masonic Temple had all of these functions.

The Masonic Temple was the center of social activities and charitable events in Fullerton, particularly during the years before the advent of television. Many of the City’s prominent men belonged to this organization, with membership remaining well over 400 until its decline starting in the 1950s. In 1993, with membership dropping below 200 and no money available for needed improvements to the building, the Masons sold the property. The current owner completely rehabilitated the building in 1995 – and in the process restored it exterior – as part of a conversion for its use as a banquet hall and reception center.
The corner site of this Mission Revival church is an important part of the building's dramatic effect. Erected in 1920, the structure was originally a Christian Science Church and was not dedicated until November 1929, when the $35,000 debt had been paid. It now serves as an important landmark in Fullerton, both architecturally and culturally.

The structure, one of six major Mission Revival buildings in Fullerton, is distinguished from the others by its elaborate relief decoration as well as its inviting setting. The wings seem to embrace the corner, providing a warm reception to all whom wish to visit the church.

This brick commercial building, with its plastered front façade, is another good example of the type constructed in Fullerton during the early 1920s. In this particular instance the connection with the wooden storefront format with the use of transom windows seems to come through particularly clearly. The height of the parapet and its coping is noteworthy. The west facing exposed brick wall features a series of arched window openings with fine detail work.

The building was originally used as a blacksmith shop. Several other types of businesses have occupied the building, but it has had a warehousing function for the last 25 years.
This one-story brick building, built in 1922 for $4,500, originally housed a "cleaning and dyer" business owned by John Noonan. Additions in 1928 and 1929 to the west brought the structure to its present size, and Mr. Noonan continued his dry cleaning operation here until 1936.

This building’s current disorganized façade reflects the piecemeal development and is the result of alterations to the original storefronts. For example, the initial building (at the east end of the present structure) once had a continuous transom window over a storefront with windows and a recessed entry.

Unlike most other brick commercial structures of the time, this example lacks a distinctive parapet.
The building presently called Villa del Sol was formerly the California Hotel, constructed by the Fullerton Community Hotel Company led by Charles Chapman. The original plan of the hotel was a U-shape with an open courtyard facing Spadra Road (Harbor Boulevard). The 3-story building contained 22 apartments and 55 hotel rooms with some shops on the ground floor. The building’s Spanish Colonial architectural style, designed by the local architects Frank Benchley and Eugene Durfee, included rectangular windows, a flat roof, and two towers at the ends of the wings fronting the street. When completed at a cost of $136,000 in 1922, the hotel was “the place” to stay when visiting the area, and the Fullerton News Tribune published regular reports on who was registered there.

This building lost some of its effect when it was converted to its current commercial use in the 1960s. As part of this conversion, the one-story addition was built across the front, enclosing the courtyard. At the same time, tile roofs were added to the courtyard and second story balconies, the turrets that were located on the towers were removed, and other modifications to ground floor openings were made in order to accommodate retail uses.

The building was extensively rehabilitated in 1995. With this rehabilitation some of the former detailing was restored, and the work done in the 1960s was altered to better fit a Spanish Colonial architectural style. While the removal of the one-story addition along Harbor Boulevard would have restored the building to its original design, this option was impractical for economic reasons.
The present Fullerton High School campus is actually the third site for the City’s initial high school. The Fullerton Union High School District was established in 1893, at which time all grades attended the same building for classes. This first brick school building stood near the corner of Spadra Road (Harbor Boulevard) and Wilshire Avenue.

Shortly after 1900, a new complex was erected on Commonwealth Avenue where Amerige Park is presently located. In 1911, a fire destroyed the main building, and the school was moved again, this time to its current location on East Chapman Avenue.

An initial group of wood of frame bungalows was replaced in 1922, when thirteen separate buildings were erected in a quadrangle on twenty-two acres. In 1930, the construction of Plummer Auditorium continued the Spanish Colonial architecture on the campus. Subsequent buildings have been less successful to adhering to this style.
Farmers and Merchants Bank
Landmark Plaza Building
122 N. Harbor Boulevard
Beaux Arts Style
1904; redesigned in 1922
The Farmers and Merchants Bank building, initially constructed in 1904, received its beautifully detailed beaux-arts façade in 1922. Frank Benchley, a local architect, designed this embellishment. Accented with ornate classical motifs, this two-story building is the only example of the Beaux-Arts style in Fullerton.

A dramatic diagonal corner entrance, crowned with a decorated parapet, provides the focus for the front (north and west) facades. The use of shields, recessed panels, faux stone, molded trim, and classical floral motifs provides the decoration for the exterior of these building sides. The facade of the first floor appears much as it did after the remodel in 1922. Glazed terra-cotta tile in a rich honey color forms the pilasters and cornice of the first floor. Light gray granite is used on the bulkhead below each window and at the bottom of the pilasters. When the building was extensively rehabilitated in 1989, the windows on the second floor were removed, and a wrought iron railing was installed between the openings. The floor plan of the second story was redesigned so that a perimeter corridor now provides the access to numerous tenant spaces. One difference may also be noted on the first floor: the building no longer has a central entrance at the south end along the west façade.

The Farmers and Merchants Bank – the forerunner to the Bank of Italy and later the Bank of America -- played a significant role in the economic development of the city. It was the first bank in Fullerton and was founded and continually managed by the area’s most prominent citizens of this era: Charles C. Chapman, Attilio Pierotti, Samuel Kraemer, E. K. Benchley, August Tousseau and others. Indeed, there was a direct connection between the bank and the citrus industry. All of the men gained their fame and wealth with their involvement in the citrus and packing house industry, and all owned large ranches. The list of directors and officers of the bank were the same men who shaped the city during the first three decades of the 20th century.

After the Bank of America vacated the building in 1944, the Fullerton Music Company occupied it for over 40 years. The building was completely rehabilitated in 1989, when it was converted for use as a multi-tenant commercial building and given the name Landmark Plaza.
Chapman Building
110 E. Wilshire Avenue
Sullivanesque / Classical
1923
Designed by Anaheim architect M. Eugene Durfee, the Chapman Building is Fullerton’s most outstanding commercial structure. Its design is a combination of the Chicago School of skyscraper architecture, as developed by Louis Sullivan, and a Southern California ethic.

The building is five stories in height with a basement; the basement extends approximately four feet under the public sidewalk on both Wilshire Avenue and Harbor Boulevard and is partially lighted by glass blocks in the pavement. The ground floor is open for retail space and includes a mezzanine level. A stairwell and elevator from the north entrance that is protected by a small marquee provide access to the upper floors. The design of the west and north façade of the building’s upper levels – a classic placement and treatment of windows, the highly decorative cornice, and the use of masonry (terra cotta) for the exterior – reflects the Chicago School style. The east and south facades are painted brick with no ornamentation.

Constructed for Charles C. Chapman, Fullerton’s first mayor and a well-known businessman, the structure’s 65-foot height was the tallest in Orange Country when built in 1923. The 1920s in Orange Country were prosperous, and the Chapman Building was the result of the unbounded optimism of the times. The original plans called for a three-story structure for a department store and offices; these plans were revised to add two more floors.

The Chapman Building is a good example of how commercial architecture in California in the early part of the 20th century reflected the background of its transplanted property owners. Instead of developing a native style, the architecture was usually imported from other parts of the country, just like much of the population. Charles Chapman began his entrepreneurial career in Chicago in the 1870s, leaving for California in 1894, when the Chicago Skyscraper style was at its peak. When the opportunity arrived, it was natural for Chapman to attempt to recreate this architecture in Fullerton. In using the style of Louis Sullivan, Mr. Durfee evidently “borrowed” some of the detailing from Sullivan’s Bayard Building, constructed in New York in 1897.

In the building’s early years, a department store occupied the first floor and the upper floors were offices. Starting in the 1950s, the property suffered a 30-year decline in use and maintenance with much of the building remaining vacant. In conjunction with the construction of a public parking structure at its rear, the Chapman Building was completely restored in the 1980s with a bank becoming the major tenant on the ground floor. In 1997, the building was upgraded again to meet seismic safety standards without compromising the exterior facade.
Union Pacific Depot
*Old Spaghetti Factory Restaurant*
109 W. Truslow Avenue
110 E. Santa Fe Avenue
Mission Revival
1923
The Fullerton Union Pacific Railroad Depot was originally constructed at 109 W. Truslow Avenue on the opposite side of Harbor Boulevard from its current location. The Union Pacific Railroad was the third to lay tracks through Fullerton and to build a depot, which firmly established the city as the regional rail center for northern Orange County.

In addition to being prototypical of the depots for the Union Pacific Railroad from the early 1920s, the structure represents one of the six important examples of the Mission Revival style in Fullerton. The structure was composed of two sections – one for passengers and another for freight operations. By far the more decorative, the passenger section consisted of an eight-sided domed drum topped by an unusual round cupola. A Mission style parapet occurs at the two ends of the main gabled roof. An arched arcade with a Mission tile shed roof is situated on both sides of the main entry. The stepped parapet at the main entry is a deviation from the typical Union Pacific Depot design, offering an unusual combination of Zigzag Moderne and Mission Revival styles. The freight house section was a much simpler design with its flat-pitched gable roof supported by exposed wood trusses. A wooden loading platform once skirted both sides of this section of the building.

To avoid its demolition, the Redevelopment Agency successfully moved the building to its present site in 1980, and it was subsequently rehabilitated and converted for use as a sit down restaurant. Some additional construction was needed in this conversion, but all of the character-defining features of the structure’s original architecture were retained.

Along with the Pacific Electric and Santa Fe rail lines, the Union Pacific Railroad played a major role in the development of the city. The tremendous growth in population and agriculture in north Orange County in the early 1900s attracted the Union Pacific Railroad to place a line through Orange County as part of the connection between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. Its first attempt failed, primarily because of resistance from the Santa Fe Railroad; after World War I, the power and influence of the Santa Fe Railroad had diminished, and the Union Pacific Railroad finally obtained the right to establish its tract. The depot in Fullerton was built in 1923, and a competition with the Santa Fe Railroad commenced. In 1930, the Santa Fe Railroad demolished its old wood-framed structure and built its impressive Spanish Colonial Revival depot. The depots of the three rail lines remained active until the late 1970s.

The relocation and preservation of the Union Pacific Depot in 1980, brought all three historic depot buildings together as part of a planned transportation center, which has become a regional hub for a urban transit system.
Constructed of un-reinforced masonry walls in 1923, this rectangular building was typical of many brick commercial structures of that era. The front façade has gold and tan wire-cut brick, framed in wide bands of cream-colored glazed brick. The second story features five identical double-hung windows, recessed in arched openings with projecting sills.

When first built, a 20-room hotel (De Luxe Hotel) was situated on the second story and the ground floor was leased to other commercial businesses. The name of the hotel was changed to Hotel De Luxe in 1934 and to the Allen Hotel in 1945. Most local people refer to this building as the Allen Hotel, because it retained that name for over 40 years, until closing in the 1980s.

In its early years, the hotel played a role in the expansion of the city’s rail and transport industries located nearby. Beginning with the city’s major growth in the 1950s, the hotel slowly declined; the building’s appearance and usefulness was severely compromised during the 1980s, when part of the ground floor was used as an adult business.

This building was extensively rehabilitated in the early 1990s as part of a Redevelopment Agency-assisted plan to develop the site as a mixed used project. Key architectural features were restored or replicated on the front façade; the structure’s brick walls were repointed or rebuilt; and new construction was placed at the side and toward the rear of the building to keep the original design as visible as possible. Now part of a 16-unit rental complex, the building has six apartments on the second floor and two additional units on a new penthouse level.
After deciding to demolish the St. George Hotel in 1918, George Amerige constructed a series of commercial buildings or blocks on the land where the hotel stood. This one-story commercial block represents the second in the sequence of construction during the 1920s.

The structures are typical of Fullerton business buildings in the use of brick and glazed tile. Characteristically, the surface decorations include the use of at least two different colors of brick above, with the glazed tiles below at street level. Only one of the ground story storefronts has been altered, and every one retains its parapet that varies in outline but seems to be intended as an echo of the wood storefronts of an earlier day.

Building
719 - 723 S. Harbor Boulevard
Brick Commercial
1923

This one-story brick commercial building differs in form and decoration from others of the type in Fullerton: the building is designed without a parapet; there is a selective use of two colors of brick; and the cast concrete rosettes near the roofline are a more refined embellishment. There is no indication of major alterations, although presently, a large sign hides a transom window along the building’s front façade.

Amerige Block
109 - 123 E. Commonwealth Avenue
Brick Commercial
1925
Constructed by prominent local businessman C. Stanley Chapman (the son of Fullerton’s first mayor, Charles C. Chapman), this building was designed as a combination vaudeville/silent movie house flanked by a one-story retail wing and a two-story café. The original lines of this building are now obscured by the many later renovations and additions, including the subsequent construction of the building at the northeast corner of Harbor Boulevard and Chapman Avenue.

The brick and concrete building was designed by the notable theater architects, Meyer and Holler, Inc., an influential firm noted for its opulent commercial and theatrical structures, one being the Grumman Chinese Theater in Hollywood. Central to the design is the recessed entry courtyard, which provided the theatre with a dramatic approach of forced perspective as well as a space that could be exotically decorated to transpose people to another world. Various features of the Italian Renaissance-inspired design can be seen with relief decoration above the courtyard space.

The facility was named Alician Court Theatre, in honor of Alice, C. S. Chapman’s wife, but as ownership changed over the years so did the theatre’s name. The movie house operated as the Fox Fullerton Theatre starting in 1930, until its closure in 1987.

Other significant features associated with this building include the six painted canvas murals applied to the inside walls of the theatre (subsequently painted over) as well as the “Fox Fullerton” roof top billboard sign, a landmark in its own right. All remain to be restored with a future rehabilitation of the facility.
Elephant Packing House
201 W. Truslow Avenue
Mission Revival
1924

NATIONAL
REGISTER
PROPERTY

Historical Landmark
This building is one of the last remaining packing houses in Fullerton, where at one time as many as ten such plants lined the railroad tracts. It exemplifies the importance of the citrus industry in the growth of the city.

Constructed by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1924, the building was regarded as a very modern facility utilizing a conveyor system. It was initially leased to the Elephant Orchards of Redlands, Ca., which used the facility to pack its Valencia oranges under the Elephant Brand label. Later, in 1932, the Chapman family subleased the facility, and for over 20 years the Chapman’s Old Mission Brand Valencia oranges were packed there. With the decline of the citrus industry in Orange County in the 1950s, the building ceased to be used as a packing plant; starting in 1957, the building has been used by a number of businesses for warehousing and manufacturing activities.

The building is one story, elevated over a full basement, which features a total of 23,500 sq. ft. of floor area. It is constructed of poured concrete posts and headers with hollow concrete tiles filling the spaces between spans. The exterior design of the building reflects the Mission Revival style that was so popular for non-residential buildings of that period. It consists of a parapet wall with Mission tile trim and a decorative firewall as architectural appendages. The most detailed design feature on the exterior of the building is the main entrance located near the southwest corner of the structure. Inside the structure wooden post and truss construction supports a saw-tooth roof design with skylights and ventilation on the north side — the most identifying feature of the building.

The original hardwood plank flooring remains unaltered and is in good condition. The eight rectangular basement windows on the south and north sides of the building are presently boarded. An addition on the west side was built in 1971, but it blends well with the original building.

This building’s past association with the packing, shipping, promotion and selling of the Old Mission Brand Valencia orange is extensive. The Valencia orange was the prize citrus product of Orange County and particularly Fullerton; indeed, the citrus industry was instrumental in the city’s development and prosperity during the first half of the 20th century.

Charles C. Chapman played a major role in the development of the citrus industry. He was called the “father of the Valencia orange industry.” This building is the only remaining structure directly connected with the business that made Chapman so well known. His home, ranch and first packing house have long been destroyed.
Grumwald’s Tin Shop
341 E. Commonwealth Avenue
Brick Commercial
1925

Now a market, this small building was originally a tin shop built for and owned by Gus Grumwald. It is a good example of the type of commercial structure that flourished in Fullerton in the 1920s. The present coat of paint conceals the use of two colors of brick that would have been left exposed for decoration in 1925.

The original appearance of the building has been lost with a 1980s addition of the gable roof. The building’s original design featured a flat roof with a stylized parapet to break the simple cubical shape. The storefront appears to be unaltered, however.