Product of Attractions

By Jeffrey Nelson
Patriotism

Mount Vernon, preserved 1853 by The Mount Vernon Ladies Association
Above: Henry Ford with the Model T1

Left: John Rockefeller
REVITALIZATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

Above: Fox Theater - Exterior

Left: City of Pomona – Historic Districts
Colors Indicate Different Districts
Above: First National Bank

Below: Pomona Mall
Above: Pomona Mall 1984 Antiques
Left Upper: Pomona Mall China Closet Antique
Left Lower: Pomona Mall, Pomona
April 23, 1931 Daily Progress Bulletin reprinted for Reopening April 18, 2009

Above: Page 3, Section 2

Left: Front Page
LANDSCAPE OF CHANGE

Above: 2nd Street Arts Colony

Right: Pomona Fox Theater Current
Below: Rocking Crab, new in 2015

Above: Glass House Pomona Art Walk
Above: Downtown Pomona From the Fox
Left: Fox Theater from 2nd Street
IMAGE CREDITS: ORDER OF APPEARANCE


- Pomona Mall. Pomona Landmarks, Pomona Public Library, Pomona.


- "$300,000 Fox Theater Open Doors at Noon Tomorrow." *Progress Bulletine*(Pomona), April 23, 1931, XXXIII ed., sec. 2.


- Art Colony, 2nd Street and Garey Ave. Personal photograph by author. February 27, 2016.

- Rocking Crab, 2nd Street and Garey Ave. Personal photograph by author. February 27, 2016.


- Fox Theater from 2nd Street, 2nd Street and Garey Ave. Personal photograph by author. March 1, 2016.

- Downtown Pomona From the Fox, Garey Street Pomona. Personal photograph by author. March 1, 2016.


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ASSOCIATED SPEECH

Historic preservation in America has been occurring since the early 1800’s. Notably there have been three trends. The most recent of these trends has been to revitalize and redevelop while preserving the built environment. What has received little academic review over these years is how much the Historic designation is actually influencing the landscape of the area, or if it is the attractions geographically located in close proximity of the historic district. Along this line Pomona is a case study of this idea at work.

Sociologist Diane Barthel notes that the earliest and most effective historic sites in America are ones with a patriotic motivation behind its preservation. These sites were preserved by both private groups and public interests. The New York state legislative committee in 1849 argued for the preservation of the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh, through public purchase for its history of use as George Washington’s headquarters late in the revolutionary war. Most often however private groups would come together to preserve a single building that was typically used as their societies headquarters. These early organizations, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and The Mount Vernon Ladies Association have preserved locations dotting the eastern coast of America harking back to our patriotic past.

The second trend comes about in the later part of the 1800’s, industrialists began to become interested in preservation. Men like John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford preserved buildings and districts as museums to early American culture. The most notable of these industrialist models of preservation was the backing of Rockefeller in the rebuilding of colonial Williamsburg laying a ground work for many other colonial villages to follow in their preservation and revitalization.

In the last few decades this idea has once again shifted. It is no longer to build edifices to early American culture. The most notable of these industrialist models of preservation was the backing of Rockefeller in the rebuilding of colonial Williamsburg laying a ground work for many other colonial villages to follow in their preservation and revitalization.

The current trend of Historic preservation for revitalization is being put to use in Pomona, but it is not the only way to set aside a site for historic value, local municipalities regular vote to preserve areas of historic significance but economically distressed areas, expresses commitment by local government to revitalize those areas, and gives the community greater prestige in the competition for investment dollars.

Pomona, CA is one of these local municipalities that has heavily invested in the historic preservation to revitalize idea. 1995 marked the greatest single historic preservation act in Pomona setting aside major sections of the city as both residential and commercial historic zones, including the largest of these districts, the residential Lincoln Heights Historic District. This was not their first preservation activity, in 1982 the Fox Theater was added to the National Historic Registrar and in 1986 the Edison Historic District was set aside. All of these together have been seen as a way of preserving the built landscape as well as the rich history of Pomona.

The commercial Historic District of Pomona Consists of the 2nd street walking mall and the Edison Historic district located east and west of Garey street. These districts are found within blocks the Fox Theater. The district was set aside to preserve what was the first pedestrian walking mall on the west coast when Western University of Health Science bought the property to the east of Gibbs Street.

This area had been floundering for decades at this point, the landscape of financial institutions and high end retail that once occupied the street had been replaced by ‘antique stores’. The Fox theater had closed its doors as a regular purveyor of films during the 1970’s and the entire area had taken a dive. The population shifted, along with the economics of the area as those who could, exited the city.

The Fox Theater was originally constructed in 1931, a testament to the early influence of Pomona as over $300,000 dollars was poured into the initial construction two years into the great depression. But the upkeep had waned in the following years as the patronage shrank and the closing of the theater was merely the punctuation to the long drawn out fall of the city’s prestige.

This continued to persist through the 90’s and the early 2000nds. It was not until 2009 that the fox theater got the revitalizing attention it deserved. On April 18th, 2009 the Friends of the Pomona Fox, a local group of activists, reopened the theater as a new venue for entertainment in the city. This has sparked changes in the community’s landscape that is spreading from the Fox Theater. New institutions are coming into the area and old institutions are getting new life from the increased foot traffic that the theater brings in.

The areas to the west of Garey along 2nd street what is known as the Pomona Art walk is being inundated with new eateries and bars that are being patronized by people both before and after the shows at the Fox. Along this stretch the Glass House and a number of art galleries have come in replacing or displacing the antique stores. The part of the district that is still being dominated by antique stores is beginning to transition as well, currently a new State Farm agency is being installed while the antique stores fill up with unpurchased inventory.

The Fox Theater has had the greatest impact on the landscape of Pomona’s Downtown historic areas by being the catalyst for change throughout the area. With the closer of the theater came the initial shift in area that was only redirected through the reopening of the same major attraction.

The current trend of Historic preservation for revitalization is being put to use in Pomona, but it is not the districts designation that is spurring the landscape transition. It is the Fox Theater and its patrons that are shaping the landscape. The redevelopment of the entire downtown area of Pomona is flourishing from the Fox Theater.