



# Old Riverside Foundation NEWS

Spring 2009

## President's Message

The Old Riverside Foundation for Historic Preservation is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year, and it is proving to be one of our busiest ever. Activities began with our annual Twelfth Night progressive dinner on January 9 and 10. The event was a complete success despite a troubled economy and the necessarily late calendar dates.

On March 29, the Foundation recognized structures, people, and programs involved in historic preservation—this event was attended by over 75 people and was held at the Riverside Woman's Club [the summer edition of this newsletter will have an in-depth wrap-up. –Ed.]. We appreciate this opportunity to recognize those who have made significant investments in time and cost to preserve the physical elements of local history.

Planning is well under way for our annual Vintage Home Tour on May 16. The homes have been selected and the committee is busy preparing program information and promoting the event (see page 6).

Of additional interest are two homes that can be acquired for one dollar each to someone willing and able to relocate them. One of these homes was on last year's tour: the Cooper House at 3690 Adams St. is still available. Also available is a farmhouse on Riverside Avenue across from the Marie Calendar's restaurant (see page 11).

The local historic preservation cause has reached the courts this year. Our lawsuit (Old Riverside Foundation vs. City of Riverside et al) was tried in front of Judge Mac Fisher on April 3. At this writing, a ruling has not been made by the court. Whatever the outcome, these significant historic resources, located in the heart of the downtown historic district, needed to be defended using every asset at our disposal. Some modest procedural changes have been put into effect by the City already as a result of criticisms raised

by the Foundation; however, the policy of demolition as a first resort is still in effect.

Similarly, the Foundation has supported the efforts of the Save Our Chinatown Committee in its lawsuit (SOCC vs. City of Riverside and Riverside County Office of Education et al), and we also are grateful for the support the Committee has provided in various ways to the Foundation. What began as cases that appeared to be very dissimilar relative to existing historic resources instead have evolved into very similar examples of insensitivity to how we recognize and respect our area's past. The SOCC case is scheduled for trial on June 29 (see page 2).

Our traditional approach to advocacy continues as we draw your attention in this issue to buildings that have a common historical and/or architectural context. We begin this new series with fire stations that are no longer in service, but have been adaptively reused for other purposes (see page 4). It is important to remember that adaptive reuse can and has happened repeatedly in Riverside! Other contextual building groupings will be featured in future editions of the newsletter.

We thank all of you who have joined or renewed your memberships, who have donated to our legal or operations funds, who have attended our events, and who pass along wisdom about the issues of the day. As with any organization operated by volunteers, we need your assistance. We are expanding our awards program from a seasonal effort to a year-round one and we need volunteers to serve on the awards committee. We also need to make greater use of the internet for communications. If you have never received an email from us, chances are we don't have your email address. Please go to our website at [www.olderiverside.org](http://www.olderiverside.org) and email us about your interest in helping with awards or to provide your email address (or both).

Old Riverside Foundation  
P.O. Box 601, Riverside, CA 92502  
(951) 683-2725

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## Chinatown Update Or: Riverside's Own Valentine's Day Massacre

### Background

In our last newsletter, Kim Coons-Leonard wrote about the development pressures on Riverside's old Chinatown site, which is a listed site on the National Register of Historic Places. The developer, Doug Jacobs, has proposed a three-story, 65,281 square-foot medical office building on about four acres of this historic site, with associated parking lots.

After the Riverside City Council approved the project and EIR, the Save Our Chinatown Committee (SOCC) filed suit to overturn this decision, challenging the City's approvals of a Design Review, a Certificate of Appropriateness, an Environmental Impact Report and associated variances. Specifically, the SOCC suit challenged the adequacy of the City's environmental analysis. It also challenged the Riverside County Office of Education's (the current landowner) decision to sell the property a) without conducting a review of the environmental consequences of its actions, and b) without complying with its own long-standing resolution for the protection of the site. The SOCC argued for situating the building in another portion of the property so as to preserve much of the site's archaeological resources. Instead, the project was approved directly upon the historic Chinatown site.

Much of the Chinatown site was intentionally buried decades ago in order to preserve the archaeological artifacts remaining from the days the property supported the city's Chinese community. It is the last remaining major Chinatown archaeological site in California. It was the principal center for Chinese immigrant labor in the citrus industry in Riverside. It contained the remains of a temple, business district and residences.

On Valentine's weekend, members of the Old Riverside Foundation joined the Save Our Chinatown Committee (SOCC) to observe a massive grading operation at Riverside's Chinatown site. An armada of heavy construction equipment worked from sunrise to dark on Saturday, February 14. They did not finish that day, and, contrary to the City's noise ordinance, resumed grading on Sunday the 15th. By noon, the site had as many city staff persons present as construction workers, but the illegal grading continued unabated. It was left to the Old Riverside Foundation and SOCC to contact the police and have



Contractor getting citation

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A field day for earthmovers



A number of city staff members were present



Remains of old Chinatown bricks under the machines



Demolishing a wall

CHINATOWN UPDATE continued from page 3

the contractor issued a citation. Unfortunately, this still was not the end to the activities: under pouring rain on Monday the 16th, a Federal holiday, grading continued. Again, it was left to the Old Riverside Foundation and SOCC to contact the police and have the contractor issued another citation, even though the area's city councilman, the city attorney, the planning director, and two historic resource employees were present. As darkness fell, grading and site preparation were completed.

Archaeologists always recognize that any subsurface excavation, even when carefully conducted, will destroy the archaeological context of the area that is dug. That is why valuable resources often are left in situ under a parking lot or as parkland.

The grading on Valentine's weekend was delicate surgery using an axe.

### Recent Events

Here is a chronological summary of what has been happening to the Chinatown property since our last newsletter:

#### January

- 29 The City Council's Land Use Committee denies the SOCC appeal of the December 27, 2008 Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) Archaeological Treatment Plan.

#### February

- 10 The full City Council votes to uphold the Land Use Committee recommendation. It denies the SOCC's appeal of the CHB decision.  
The City Council approves and adopts the Archaeological Treatment Plan.
- 13 Johnson & Sedlack, Attorneys at Law for the SOCC, file for a Temporary Restraining Order against all onsite work. The court sets a hearing date for later in February.

#### (February, continued)

- 14 - 16 **Despite the pending court hearing**, the developer orders the use of heavy earth-moving equipment, which begins before 7 a.m. on Saturday and continues Sunday and Monday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. (in violation of the City noise ordinances against work on Sundays and national holidays).

- 24 Judge Sharon Waters, Department 10, approves the Temporary Restraining Order.

The SOCC has a silent protest demonstration at City Hall. Ten community members speak at the evening City Council meeting during the public comment session and present the Council with a "Scroll of Shame." Council Member Frank Schiavone publicly vows to donate to the SOCC any and all of the campaign monies given to him by developer Doug Jacobs. True to his word, he later disburses to the SOCC a \$250 donation received from Mr. Jacobs.

#### March

- 20 Judge Sharon Waters approves SOCC's request for an injunction against the project. This injunction puts the project on hold until the court date, which is set for June 29, 2009. During this time, the developer cannot alter the property in any way, even if he had the owner's approval (the Riverside County Office of Education).

#### June

- 29 The SOCC case is to be heard by Judge Sharon Waters, Department 10, Riverside County Courthouse. *All who are interested in the preservation of Riverside's historic Chinatown site are urged to attend.*

— Kim Coons-Leonard, Jean Wong, Judy Lee, Jim Youden and Dave Leonard contributed information and/or photos to this article.



Photo left: Dropping earth and old building bricks in a pile.

Photo below:  
It's a laughing matter for some folks.

