

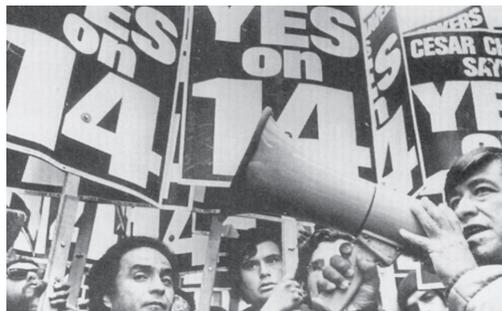
AGENT OF CHANGE

Honoring the Center of the American Farm Worker Movement

The rural California compound that served as the center of the American farm worker movement—synonymous with legendary labor organizer César Chávez—has come to symbolize the struggle for reform in the agricultural industry during the 1960s, a struggle undertaken by marginalized migrant workers against great odds. The just-designated national historic landmark—four brick and stucco structures known as Forty Acres—was the headquarters for Chávez, who emerged as the charismatic leader of the movement, the son of agricultural laborers who lost their land in the Great Depression, and an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi who similarly used the approach of agitation and nonviolence to great effect.

cause. As a Senate subcommittee looked into the matter, Senator Robert F. Kennedy went to California, returning in full support. He went on to become a Chávez admirer and ally.

IN 1970, THE GRAPE GROWERS FINALLY came to terms, signing the first contracts in U.S. history negoti-



ated by farm workers, who also began mobilizing in Texas, Ohio, and Wisconsin, where similar unions formed. The activism of Chávez and the UFW led to the first labor law for farm workers: 1975's California Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

Forty Acres holds additional significance because it is “part of a wider range of reform movements that helped define twentieth-century American history,” says the landmark designation.

To view the designation, go to www.nps.gov/history/nhl/designations/samples/CA/FortyAcres.pdf. The United Farm Workers web site has a wealth of historical information; go to www.ufw.org.

IN THE 1960S, THE RIGHTS OF FARM WORKERS LAGGED FAR BEHIND THOSE OF LABORERS IN OTHER TRADES. THE NATIONAL Labor Relations Act of 1935, which established workers' rights to organize and engage in collective bargaining, excluded agricultural workers. Powerful agribusinesses used intimidation to discourage organizing. Against this backdrop, California's rich central valley—with its largely poor farm workers, many Chicano and Filipino—became the scene of sweeping change, where Chávez emerged as an icon.

He was a community organizer in the 1950s, traveling throughout California with a Latino group that advocated for workers' rights. By the 1960s, he was deeply involved in the increasingly vocal farm workers' movement, co-founding what became the United Farm Workers. In 1965, Filipino American laborers struck against California grape growers, demanding better wages. Chavez and the UFW joined them, organizing an historic march from Delano, where Forty Acres is located, to the state capitol in Sacramento.

IN 1966, WITH ATTENTION GROWING ON THE PLIGHT OF THE FARM WORKERS, THE UFW PURCHASED FORTY ACRES FOR \$2,700.

The workers built the structures with the help of volunteers and other sympathetic unions. An administration center went up, followed by a service station, a health clinic, a hiring hall, and lodging for retired Filipino farm workers. Except for the administration building, the structures are in the Mission Revival style. Forty Acres was not just the headquarters of a national union; it was also built to meet the needs of the Filipino and Chicano community. The complex included a barbecue pit, a well with a pump, landscaping, a recreation area, and a grazing pasture. Farm laborers flocked to Forty Acres for health care and for information on their rights.

The grape strike became an epic five-year struggle, with the UFW convincing Americans to boycott the product. Chávez fasted in protest, holding out at Forty Acres' small service station, drawing media attention to the

Above left to right: The Brown Berets, young Latinos who served as César Chávez' security detail in the early 1970s; Chávez leading a San Francisco rally in 1976; Forty Acres, United Farm Workers headquarters. Right: Chávez in the 1960s.





Bungalow Heaven

Pasadena Arts and Crafts Enclave Joins National Register of Historic Places

A LARGE SECTION OF A PASADENA NEIGHBORHOOD, RARE FOR ITS ARCHITECTURAL integrity, recently joined the National Register of Historic Places. Bungalow Heaven, as the place is called, is a 16-block area rich with Arts and Crafts-style houses largely unaltered since their construction in the early 20th century. One of the largest intact concentrations of this type of housing in America, it is a veritable museum of the Arts and Crafts period.

The city has earned national renown for its tree-lined streets populated by classic California bungalows, a scene that transports visitors to another time. The low-slung roofs, spacious porches, decorative rafter tails, and simple rustic touches account for just a small part of a powerful sense of character.

The Arts and Crafts movement itself reflected the cultural changes of the time. In its spare and simple lines, its emphasis on natural materials and surfaces that appear to be hand-finished, the architecture is a repudiation of what was seen as Victorian excess. On a deeper level, the design was part of a larger reaction against industrialization, mass production, and the urban environment. Houses simple yet refined, with details that had the look of hand-craft, were intended as a return to a more virtuous, less complicated time.

A RETURN TO NATURE WAS ALSO A PART OF IT, WITH A VIEW OF THE OUTDOORS a source of inspiration and renewal. “Simplicity” and “honesty” are words sometimes used to describe the Arts and Crafts aesthetic,

Right: Homes in Pasadena’s Bungalow Heaven neighborhood, a recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places, displaying the bungalow’s chameleon-like ability to absorb local styles and building materials. Left: A meticulously kept classic.



AS AN ARTIFACT OF PASADENA’S HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, BUNGALOW Heaven reflects not only the growth of a large working class in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also how architectural style expresses the sentiments of its time. Pasadena at the turn of the century was transforming from an agricultural community to a largely residential one, with former citrus groves subdivided for housing lots. There was plenty of land and no need to construct tall buildings. All the houses in the district are either one or one-and-a-half story. According to the National Register nomination, “The neighborhood reflects the democratic ethic of the early 20th century where every workingman could own a home that espoused the themes of a pleasant, close-to-nature, modern place to live.”

and these concepts are very much at work here. It could be said that architectural form was a state of mind, the design intended to create an environment that stimulated artistic and intellectual growth. The houses feature river rock in foundations and hearths, a wealth of natural wood in interior finishes, exposed framing, and low, horizontal lines and massing in order to blend with their natural surroundings. In Pasadena, a signature California bungalow developed, incorporating redwood shingles and elements from the region’s Spanish and Asian heritage.

Pasadena began as a small hamlet in the early 1870s, with settlers from Indiana producing oranges, olives, and grapes in abundance, accumulating a fair amount of wealth. Throughout the 1880s, it continued to grow, developing a vital commercial center and a section

called “Millionaire’s Row.” With its mild climate and beautiful surroundings, Pasadena was discovered by the tourist industry, fueled by a national craze for the outdoors and a belief in nature’s restorative powers. In time, the city gained a reputation as a retreat for the wealthy. A thriving upper class meant jobs lower down the ladder in construction, agriculture, retail, and service occupations. This and a developing transportation system spurred growth. The first houses in the district were built in the 1880s, some of which still stand. The most striking characteristic, however, is the number of bungalows built from 1905 to 1920—of the 500 structures significant to the National Register listing, most are in the Arts and Crafts style.

Other styles contribute to the significance, too, like Queen Anne vernacular houses, built in the 1880s—one-story wood frame structures with narrow windows and large front porches with decorative

The Craftsman bungalow was a bit of a chameleon. An important element was its adaptability, and wherever bungalows went up, builders used local materials and adopted local character, proclaiming neighborhood identity whether in Pittsburgh, Memphis, Houston, or any place near a railroad siding where the pre-cut kits could be unloaded.

THE ROAD TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER STARTED IN THE 1980S, WHEN DEVELOPERS began tearing down houses to build apartment complexes. A particular challenge was homeowners who, as described by the neighborhood association, wanted to “bulldoze and cash in.” Residents mobilized, petitioning the city council for a zoning ordinance to prevent high-density development. There were many neighborhood meetings, hearings, petitions, and phone campaigns. The result was a perception of the place as something really out of the ordinary, with



Far left: The spread-out proportions give a relaxed look in the late afternoon sun. Near left: Evidencing the style’s adaptability, this bungalow alludes to California’s Spanish colonial heritage. Right: Interior of a 1911 bungalow, decorated with period furniture.

columns, brackets, and balustrades. The 1890s brought massed-plan vernacular houses to Pasadena, a “mostly unadorned” early form of the bungalow, says the National Register nomination. The Arts and Crafts period itself saw various styles, and combinations of styles.

WHILE THE HOUSES OF THE WEALTHY WERE DESIGNED BY ARCHITECTS—SUCH AS Charles and Henry Greene, whose 1908 Gamble House is a national historic landmark—the houses of Bungalow Heaven were constructed by local builders or made from pattern books. The one-story was suited to the climate. The deep overhangs of the eaves shade the interior, the large verandas encourage time outdoors, and plentiful windows provide ventilation. They were modest and affordable. Built-in cabinetry, a hallmark of the Arts and Crafts home, saved space.

In a paradox to some of the lofty ideas behind the style, bungalows were mass produced as ready-to-build kits. Sears Roebuck sold them, as did Montgomery Ward. The Ready-Cut Bungalow Company of Los Angeles did well during the period, selling kits for about \$650, delivered to vacant lots. Plumbing fixtures were extra.

“Bungalow Heaven” an apt description of what residents were trying to preserve. The city agreed to downzone the area, effectively ending the threat. But there were other issues to tackle. Preservationists realized that historic character could be destroyed a little at a time by aluminum siding, enclosed porches, and inappropriate additions.

A long campaign made Bungalow Heaven a city historic landmark—which complements the National Register honor—with the Pasadena preservation department now working closely with the neighborhood. Under local ordinances, any work that will alter a house’s character requires approval from the city’s cultural heritage commission. The neighborhood surveyed the most significant homes, providing guidance on CD to educate would-be remodelers.

For more information visit the Bungalow Heaven Neighborhood Association’s web site at <http://www.bungalowheaven.org/>. For more on the National Register of Historic Places, see <http://www.nps.gov/nr/>.

