

Mystic Dharma Temple

Church landmark over 50 years old

(Editor's Note — This is the sixth of a series of articles on local cultural landmarks and organizations to be saluted during Highland Park's cultural festival May 18-20. This week, the Mystic Dharma Temple is examined.)

Housed in a large, charming Romanesque style building which was designed over 50 years ago as a church is the Mystic Dharma Temple, corner of Avenue 52 and N. Figueroa St.

Mystic Dharma Temple is one of the largest Chinese Buddhist temples in the country and also has one of the largest Buddha statues in the United States.

The Buddha measures 81 inches high and weighs 2½ tons. It was carved out of white marble and the garment carved on the statue is flecked with gold. The

statue was made in Burma 13 years ago and came from a temple in Hong Kong according to Rev. Sik Yuk Long, abbot and Buddhist master.

The statue, seated in meditation, is in the 5000 square foot meditation hall where one can come to withdraw quietly from the hustle and bustle of the everyday world.

The cornerstone of the original building was laid March 1, 1924 by the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientists who owned the building until it was purchased in August of 1979 by Rev. Long. Architects for the building were Meyer and Holler and it was designed in the Italian Renaissance motif. The building contains over 18,000 square feet. The first service was held July 13, 1924 and

adhering to their policy of not dedicating their church buildings until they are completely paid for, Fourth Church dedicated the building on Dec. 2, 1928.

Mystic Dharma Temple will be participating in the Highland Park cultural festival May 18-20 and will host an open house and tea Saturday, May 19 from 2 to 5 p.m.

Much effort and expense has gone into the restoration and renovation of the building which had fallen into neglect and abandonment. Oriental art and furnishings grace the temple's interior.

The Buddha statue arrived in May of last year in time for the temple's grand opening Sunday, May 15, 1983 which was a close date to Buddha's bir-

thday. since then, Mystic Dharma Temple has offered to all those interested an opportunity to learn something of the ancient teachings of Buddha or "Enlightened One," which can lead to the perfection of human character.

According to Rev. Long, "Our teachings are in harmony with the most recent discoveries of modern science and the Buddha's teaching goes beyond mere science to disclose the ultimate nature of reality and the simple path, 'The Middle Way,' by which we can attain realization."

Mystic Dharma Temple also offers free instruction in the ancient techniques of meditation regarded as the natural way of calming the mind and restoring its natural purity.

Weekend meditation retreats are held on the last weekend of each month presided by visiting meditation masters.

"Of special interest," Rev. Long said, "is the upcoming retreat and celebration at the end of May which will commemorate the first anniversary of the temple's public opening and the birth of Buddha over 2500 years ago."

Inquiries are welcome and those interested in more information can call the temple at 258-2330.