



HISTORIC BUILDING — The 76-year old Meridian Child Care Center, which originally served as the Ruby Lane Elementary School, is scheduled to be replaced and may be razed if money to the move the structure to Heritage Square cannot be raised. The school district has announced plans to build a \$250,000 child care center on the site.

76-year old school building faces demolition next year

by Charles Cooper

A building which has served children of Northeast Los Angeles since 1897 may be in danger of demolition, unless arrangements are made to move it to another site. Northeast Newspapers has learned.

The Meridian Child Care Center, located at 6537 N. Figueroa St., will be replaced by next summer with a modern, \$250,000 building to house some 125 children of working and student parents who meet the income requirements.

When the new center is constructed, current plans are to demolish the existing building, which was first in use as an elementary school in 1897 and was, for a brief time, part of

the Luther Burbank Junior High School campus.

Some community members have expressed the hope that the existing building could be modernized and used on the same site; but the school district has ruled this out.

REHABILITATION

A spokesman for educational housing said it would cost con-

siderably more to rehabilitate the building than to construct a new center from the "cookie cutter" design adopted for children's centers through the city.

If the building cannot be preserved on the site where it has stood for 76 years, next

choice would seem to be to move it, possibly to Heritage Square.

Ilana Welch of the Cultural Heritage Board said Heritage Square is in need of a school building, and she said she would mention the Meridian Center to the Heritage Square committee of architects and historians.

Problem would be, said Mrs. Welch, getting the money to move the center if it were accepted by the CHB. Major cost for Heritage Square projects has been the Water and Power's fee for raising lines to accommodate buildings higher than 15 feet.

Mrs. Welch said it would be ideal if some community group wanted to stage a fund raising campaign to come up with all or part of the cost to move the building, again if it is acceptable for inclusion in Heritage Square.

Problem of timing exists, she went on to say, as the CHB has no jurisdiction over school district property, and so could not declare the building a historical monument.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Few turn of the century school buildings exist in Los Angeles at the moment. Eagle Rock historian Henry Welcome said he knew of the Castelar Street School as one, in Chinatown; and other sources have indicated that the old Farmdale School building, now in use on the El Sereno Junior High campus, would date from the same era.

Mrs. Welch said when possible, the CHB likes to preserve historical buildings on the same site, moving them as a last resort; but it does not have a revolving fund to respond to immediate needs.

The school district building office estimated the Meridian project would go to bid in about nine months.

Some \$10,000 would be needed to demolish the building, and community members have suggested this could be available to help finance a move. School district was non-committal on this.

The school building was originally called the Ruby Lane Elementary School. The name was later changed to Meridian Elementary. It currently has 95 children two-years-old to sixth grade, and a staff of 21, including teachers and non-teachers.