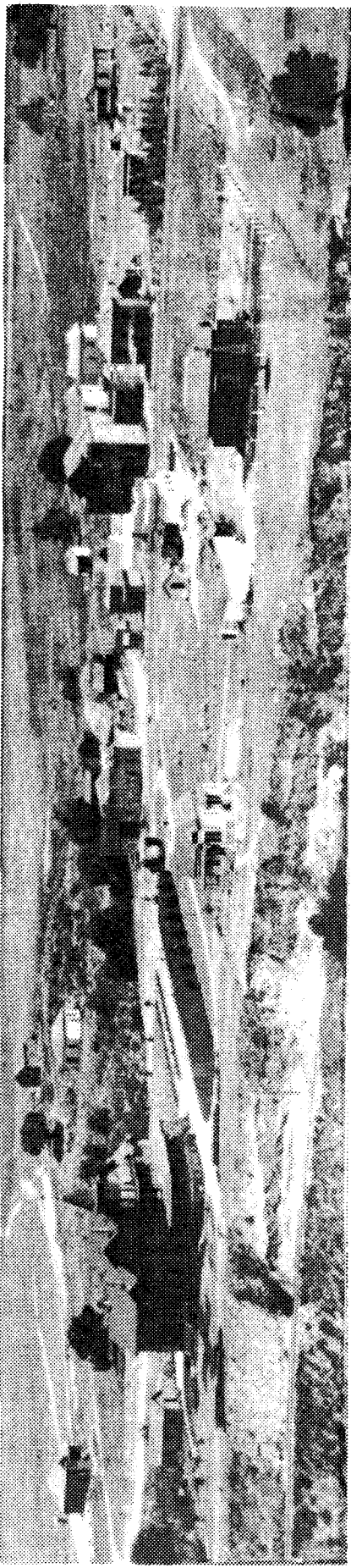


Historic Miller's Hall . . .



HIGHLAND PARK'S WILD WEST In the 1880's looked like this on York Blvd. between York junction at far left and Ave. 64 to the far right. Garvanza Hotel at left later burned down, but Miller's Hall, tall building at right center, survived until 1959 when it was demolished for a parking lot.

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of periodic historical articles about people and places in Northeast Los Angeles in commemoration of the city's bicentennial celebration.)

By Roger Swanson

Miller's Hall was a victim, a casualty during a time some 20-odd years ago when newness counted and anything old could be discarded without a moment's notice.

Go into any antique store and discover shelves full of the same tools and utensils and bric-a-brac that people commonly threw out 25 years ago.

Unfortunately, many old

buildings were also victims during that time when demolition was favored over rehabilitation.

If it could have survived

to the present time, it is probable that historical societies would clutch it to their bosoms, holding off the wrecking ball and bar.

Perhaps it could have been moved to Heritage Square where it would surely fit in, making more historically accurate a

northeast area neighborhood as it looked in the late 1800s.

Miller's Hall, the first business building con-

structed in Highland Park, was demolished in August of 1959. Built in 1885 what is now on York Blvd. near Avenue 63, the two-story

building was not crowded by other buildings in its early years.

Homes and feed stores

and milliners and other merchants were added to the growing landscape of buildings but Miller's Hall continued to dominate when the street was still unpaved and guests resided in the grand Garvanza Hotel across the street, almost on the edge of the Arroyo Seco.

The two-story rooms that comprised the first floor of Miller's Hall served as the community trading post, offering shovels and bustles and nails and bolts of yardage and probably pickles in a barrel.

In 1890, a section of the hall was converted to Highland Park's first library. The reading room had 50 books, a stereoscope viewer and a subscription to "Harpers Young People" magazine. Several years later when Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Zuber contributed a collection of 800 volumes, the library was moved to Avenue 64 and Garvanza.

The hall also served as a lodge building and site of Highland Park's first post office.

The community continued to grow, streets were paved, cars replaced the horse and buggy and more and more buildings crowded Miller's Hall.

Just shy of its 75th anniversary in 1959, the city's building and safety department condemned the historic structure.

Before the wrecking crews went to work, passersby looking up at the weatherbeaten building saw that the molding of the big gable that jutted out from the center of the wooden floor was crumbling. Wood siding was beginning to buckle as nails popped out. The rain spout was crumbling.

was victim of progress

owned the structure, guided a tour through the creaking building.

Up 24 wide steps from the front door a broken skylight illuminated the landing. A turn to the left from the landing was the large hall, dusty from being closed for two years. The windows facing York Blvd. were covered with yellowed drapery that filtered light into the room.

"The lights still work find," said Mrs. Watt 22 years ago as she flicked a switch in the hall, bringing into view an old upright piano, pictures along the wall of former lodge officers, a silver trophy in a glass case, a Noble Grand more than 100 years ago, spindlebacked chairs and some half-filled ash trays.

A door across the room led to the dining room and behind that was the kitchen where exposed water pipes led to the wooden sink. A cylinder shaped Hoyt gas heater hung from the wall. The cloak room off the kitchen ran along the back of the building where a barricaded rear door led outside to wooden steps.

Shortly after that final

tour, the building was razed, giving in easily to the wrecking bar.

The site was paved to serve as a parking lot for the Odd Fellows Lodge.

Today the Dollarsaver Discount Store and its parking lot occupy the block between Avenue 63 and 64.

Plaster was falling off the inside walls and an expose gas pipe system snaked its way across the kitchen walls. A wash tub had been placed under the broken skylight in case of rain.

Just prior to the building's demolition in August of 1959, Mrs. Martha Watt, president of the Rebekah Lodge, auxiliary of the Odd Fellows Lodge which