

Students Hope to Save Old House From Wrecker's Ball

74-Year-Old Structure Sought for Use as Campus Center at Pitzer College

BY URSULA M. VILS
Times Staff Writer

The house, crafted of native stone and shingles, hugs the landscape, belaying its size. It stands, somewhat forlornly now, at the end of an impressive two-lane entrance divided by a grassy, geranium-flowering parkway lined by palm trees that are almost 80 years old.

In another time in Southern California the house would have been doomed to the wrecker's ball. But times are changing, and Claremont's Zetterberg house may survive because of two disparate factors:

—Young persons with a new respect for old craftsmanship.

—Older folks who, though seemingly unable to stir their fires on a Bicentennial level, are finding excitement in discovering the history of their home communities.

Willing to Donate House

In brief, Pitzer College students would like to move the Zetterberg house from its present location at 721 Harrison, Claremont, onto the campus, where it would serve as a multi-purpose student center.

Pilgrim Place Foundation, a Congregational retirement community, is willing to donate the house to the college. The foundation plans to build a hospital on the site of the house.

That leaves only the matter of raising \$50,000 for the costs of moving and restoring the house.

But the Pitzer people are undismayed.

"We have bookends. We have the first \$10,000 and a promise of the last

\$10,000," said Dr. Barry Sanders, Pitzer associate professor of English. "We'll find the \$30,000 in the middle."

Sanders teaches a class in the Arts and Crafts Movement in America, and finding an old home suitable for a student center was a project for his class last fall. The Zetterberg place was chosen.

"We did a long search for houses," said Cathy Curtis, a senior anthropology major at Pitzer who took Sanders' arts and crafts class. "We called planning commissions and demolition crews for tips. Then we heard that Pilgrim Place wanted to move the Zetterberg house but couldn't afford to do so."

High Attrition Rate

Sanders said that experts estimate it would cost \$280,000 to duplicate the house's space in new construction for a student center—without really solving the problem.

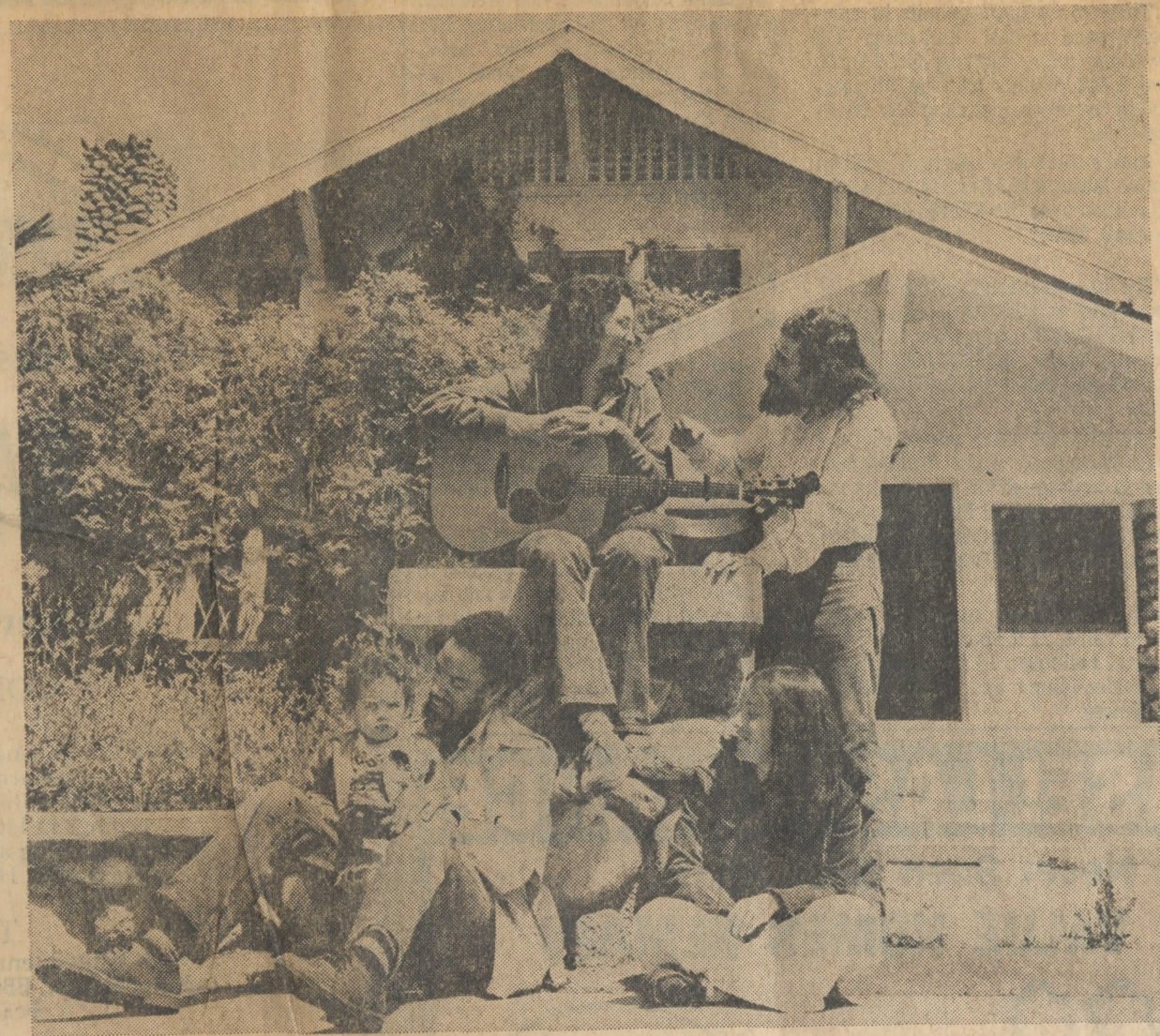
"We have a high attrition rate at Pitzer," he said. "In questioning students who leave, we find they are unhappy with the social life, the quality of life, at Pitzer."

"So we got the idea last summer of finding some place that might be a student center, a place where kids could study or sit around and talk and drink coffee or play the guitar."

But will the 74-year-old structure fit into Pitzer's contemporary architecture?

"No," said Cathy Curtis. "It doesn't fit in at all. That's why we want it."

Please Turn to Page 19, Col. 1



ZETTERBERG HOUSE—Faculty members, students working to move residence, rear, built in 1902, to Pitzer College campus in Claremont, include, from left, Leonard Harpel, dean of student activities,

with son Peter, 2; students Cathy Curtis and Laura Weinstein, and Dr. Barry Sanders, associate professor of English and teacher of arts and crafts movement class, which located house.

Times photo by Mary Frampton

OLD HOUSE

Continued from First Page

The house was built in 1902 by Charley Loop, son of the Rev. Charles F. Loop. According to Stuart G. Wheeler, an unofficial but knowledgeable Claremont historian, Mr. Loop and A. R. Meserve bought 2,000 acres of land—at \$8 an acre—in 1873 from the pioneer Palomares family.

The home's architecture reflected the trends of the time: a California bungalow style utilizing native materials, such as the rock that forms its chimneys and front porch and the stone in the living room's curving fireplace, and also making use of skilled craftsmen who had gravitated to California.

These artisans provided the two-story house with leaded glass windows, brass fixtures and hand-carved wood details, in addition to the extensive stonework.

In 1911, George N. Hamilton bought the house and planted an orange grove. He also improved the 12-room house, which he sold in 1930 to the Arvid P. Zetterberg family, who lived in it for 45 years.

Over the years changes were made, largely to accommodate roomers, perhaps spawned by the academic community that grew up around the Claremont Colleges.

After an exhibition of Claremont history sponsored in March by Pitzer College at the Zetterberg house, several early residents of the area wrote recollections of the place in the early days.

Louise Richards Mead of Stanton recalled the furniture in the Loop house.

"It was all Chinese, of heavy carved teak wood, imposing but not uncomfortable," she wrote. "Golden Chinese dragons, ivory bibelots, huge green ceramic elephants and countless oriental throw rugs adorned each room . . ."

"Mrs. Loop's bedroom on the second floor spread from the east side of the house to the west and had a fireplace. In front of the hearth, on the hardwood floor, lay a giant white polar-bear rug, its stuffed head a fine place for a little girl to sit, its eyes and claws and big white teeth gleaming. To me this was the height of opulence . . ."

The opulence faded over the years. The fireplace in Mrs. Loop's bedroom was boarded over, for reasons un-

A project that will serve as a catalyst for other historical projects in the community

known now. An outdoor entrance to the second-floor room was added, and worst of all, one wall was converted to an ugly make-shift kitchenette.

Downstairs, the veranda that rims the house on two sides was glassed-in, except for an area to the left of the entrance that is covered by an ancient wisteria vine. It was there that students gravitated to hear Cathy Curtis play her guitar.

Pitzer students have held various events at the Zetterberg house to test its adaptability to campus life. An art show was held Saturday.

"We didn't assume it was a good idea because it started with students, nor that it wasn't," said Leonard Harper, Pitzer's dean of student activities. "It's good to practice having things here."

"Pitzer is not unique in terms of student attrition; we also have a high number of students transfer into Pitzer from other institutions. But our idea is to try to make the situation better."

Dr. David Cressy, assistant professor of history, who is interested in preserving historic Claremont, sees the Zetterberg house project as beyond merely saving one old place.

"It's a splendid house, a citrus grove house, built before Claremont was incorporated," Dr. Cressy said.

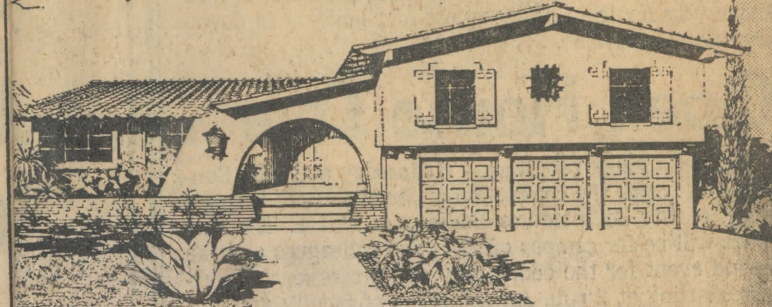
"Pitzer's interest has been a catalyst, and my principal interest is a project that will serve as a catalyst for other historical projects in the community."

"The exhibition of local historical material built an unusual amount of good will between the college and the community. We had 350 visitors, mostly from the non-college community, and the written response has been wonderful.

"Now, if we can just save the old Santa Fe Railway Station, too . . ."

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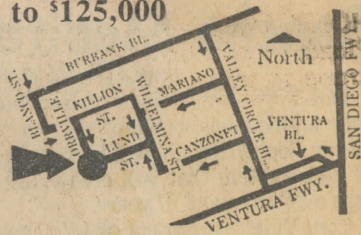
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