



ANACHRONISTIC ARCHITECTURE—The 1902 Zetterberg house had to be cut in half

to be moved to Pitzer College by school's class in the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Times photo by George Rose

ART SEIDENBAUM

Saving a Beloved Anachronism

The glue holds after 75 years, invisible behind woodwork and stonework and curving roofs.

People call the place the Zetterberg house although Charley Loop built it in 1902, when the Arts and Crafts Movement was in flower and a Claremont California bungalow could be as big as 12 rooms.

Lawyer George Hamilton bought the property nearly 10 years later and did some redecorating to better house his five children. When Hamilton sold in the Depression, he advertised the citrus grove and the combination barn-garage and a new "alcove lavatory" with orchid tile floors.

The Arvid Zetterbergs took over 286 Valencia orange trees and the palm-lined driveway and the built-in benches. Attorney Stephen Zetterberg grew up in the house; he remembers the way his father whistled to the

birds and how the birds appeared; he remembers the solar heating system already installed for the laundry; he remembers walking through the five-acre grove to high school. He remembers sweet smells and deep quiet.

But the crash wrecked the orange business and the Zetterbergs sold portions of the grove to the Quakers and the Christian Scientists for separate houses of faith, keeping the home itself for more than four decades.

Pilgrim Place, the Congregationalists' community for retired missionaries, later bought the remaining Zetterberg property to build a health center. The pilgrims wanted the land, not the residence.

The big bungalow would have been razed and about forgotten if this were the usual California story—another teardown of yesterday in the dubious name of develop-

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A Beloved Anachronism

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ment. The Zetterberg house was no architectural astonishment, after all, but a sturdy reflection of its time. New times, new needs.

New indeed, so suddenly different we have now begun to spare space for history.

Enter, in the later months of 1975, a whole fresh cast of characters who would keep the old Claremont glue.

The Plan to Save the House

Pitzer College English Prof. Barry Sanders was teaching a course in the Arts and Crafts Movement. His students began wanting to handle history, not just read about it. And Pitzer needed a students' center, a place to fold in from the contemporary concrete on the rest of campus.

Sanders' students looked around and saw the Zetterberg house as ideal: the right age, the careful construction, the nostalgia of a home they hadn't had.

In came South Pasadena architect Ray Girvigian to consult. Girvigian is a veteran of preservation wars, scarred in the mid-'60s when he and Esther McCoy, now a state advisory board member on historic buildings, couldn't save the Dodge House in West Hollywood. Girvigian consulted and then stayed to plan moving the house across town to the campus: "I got carried away by the students," he allowed two years later.

In came local historians and residents who remembered along with Stephen Zetterberg. The campaign, on and off campus, began. Louis Richards Mead wrote the Pomona Progress-Bulletin about her childhood visits to the luxurious home built by the Loop family. Ursula Vils wrote a View story for The Times (May 16, 1976) about the old house as a down-home, grass-roots Bicentennial project.

The Money is Raised

The school and the citizens raised \$50,000 to cover relocating costs. Pilgrim Place agreed to sell the house for \$1. In came Thomas House Movers to execute the big switch down the railroad right-of-way. The house was too big to transfer in one piece; it would have to be cut in half and carried in two trips. The house was too big to haul in busy daylight; it would have to go between midnight and dawn on successive Saturday nights. The house was too big to fit under utility lines; lines would have to be taken down, put up, taken down and put up again before the job was done.

None of it was easy. The stone chimney had to be dismantled for transfer. The roof was bowed from four layers of shingles. A new foundation had to be poured to anchor the house on campus.

But the switch was done and the effort, like the house, never came apart completely. A brand-new student center of similar size might have cost Pitzer about \$300,000. The Zetterberg will be refurbished as well as relocated for about \$70,000.

The economy of respecting history is real. So is the present preservation ardor. But more than a beloved old house has been put back together.

The campaign itself rallied students and community, brought together age groups and professionals and the rarest of all Cali-

fornia feelings—a sense of continuity.

Continuity, I confess, was the last thing I thought about on first sight of the transplanted Zetterberg. The house squatted at its new location next to a modern concrete clock tower designed by Ed Killingsworth of Long Beach. The geometry of now above the slats of then. Mutt and Jeff, perhaps, partners but opponents.

Ted Criley, architect for Pitzer's dorms and classrooms, saw the relationship as healthy: "Having a little bit from the past on campus is good." Pitzer is only 14 years old. It can use a few footings from another time.

That's sensible. The two landmarks can be tied together with color if not form. The enthusiasm for opening something old among the students is a deeper case for continuity.

And now the staying power of the house works still wider. Pitzer is sponsoring a two-day conference this spring on the "Politics of Preservation," inspired, in part, by the school's success with Zetterberg. The California Council for the Humanities in Public Policy is picking up a piece of the tab. The old house is scheduled to be the centerpiece of seminars, a case study and working conference shelter.

I expect the proceedings will be covered by attorney Stephen Zetterberg in his avocational role as local architectural critic for the Claremont Courier. All the parts come together so solidly, with glue set 75 years ago.