September 10, 2012

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

As was told last week, the first two section of the Riverside Junior College Quadrangle were completed in time for the start of the 1924 fall semester. After obtaining $200,000 from the passage of a 1926 bond issue, the Riverside School Board asked architect G. Stanley Wilson to submit plans and start talks on the next phase of Quad expansion. These talks resulted in the construction of the northwest and the southeast corners of the facility. The most prominent structure of the Quad’s northwest corner was the Auditorium. In the January 27, 1928 “Arroyo” student newspaper (below left), G. Stanley Wilson was quoted as saying: “Plans for the Riverside Junior College auditorium now in construction will make it equal in beauty to that of any educational institution in California”. The downstairs section was to hold 300 seats and the balcony built to hold some 180. Provisions were made to house a motion picture projector in the balcony and the wings at either side of the state were left open for the future installation of an organ. That addition did not take place until a Kilgren organ was purchased in 1935. A March 3, 1935 “Arroyo” newspaper article (below right) described the dedication. A packed Assembly witnessed Mission Inn organist, Newell Parker play a program of music and the RJC Assembly Choir sang a sacred cantata, “Hear My Prayer”.

In the spring of 1936, murals depicting early California history were painted by 14 professional artists in the foyer of the auditorium. This endeavor was funded by the WPA. Interior photographs are scarce, but the top half of the photo below (from the 1951 “Tequesquite” yearbook) shows a 1950 Football pep rally held in the Auditorium. By the 1960s, the safety requirements of the Field Act required that all buildings built before 1933 meet legislated earthquake standards. The estimate to “rehabilitate” the northwest corner of the Quad was $185,000. The cost to replace rather than repair was only slightly higher at $219,000. The Board decided to reconstruct the northwest corner and the Auditorium and the Outdoor Stage (to be discussed in a future “Countdown”) were knocked down in 1968. The color photo below was taken during the Auditorium’s demolition by Harry Bach (Associate Professor, College Librarian 1962-72). The structure that replaced the Auditorium, was itself flattened in the mid-2000s for the 2005-7 renovation of the Quadrangle.
The black and white photo (below) shows the Auditorium as it appeared in a November 18, 1933 “Arroyo” newspaper article. The color photo (below) shows the area as it appears today. Quad-140 (The Art Gallery) Quad-239 (Faculty Offices) and Quad 240 (the Earl A. McDermont Hall) now occupy the space where once stood the Quadrangle Auditorium. It is 3 years and 27 weeks until RCC’s 100th Anniversary on March 13, 2016.
The Riverside City College Instructional Media Center is bringing you this five year countdown to RCC’s 100th Anniversary. Our intention is to give everyone a weekly glance at the many people and events that have been a part of the college.

Our thanks go to the RCC Digital Library Archives and the District’s Office of Strategic Communications and Relations for allowing us to use their photo and newspaper collections. Thanks as well to all of the RCC students and Faculty Advisors that were a part of the yearbook and newspaper staffs. Thanks also to Tom Johnson and Gilbert Jimenez who wrote “the book” about RCC’s history. “Riverside City College 1916-1981- A 65 Year History” is available in the RCC Digital Library.

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