



CIRCA 1920s-Guests arriving at Foster's Cafeteria across from Universal Studios left behind artifacts from "Blue Plate Specials" for MTA archaeologists. PHOTO COURTESY OF GREENWOOD AND ASSOCIATES

## **MTA Archaeologists Make Significant Discovery at Universal City Station**

By GARY WOSK

Archaeologists hired by the MTA have discovered the remnants of long-forgotten "fast food" restaurants at the Universal City Metro Red Line station. The restaurants were patronized by Universal Studios employees  $\frac{3}{4}$  possibly even movie stars  $\frac{3}{4}$  during the Golden Age of Hollywood.

The finds, made last March as construction workers were readying land on the northern half of the station site for a park-'n-ride facility, consist mainly of dishes and silverware.

In addition to plates and cutlery, the artifacts  $\frac{3}{4}$  which number in the hundreds and date back to the 1920s and before  $\frac{3}{4}$  include cups, glasses, sundae dishes, salt and pepper shakers discarded by Foster's Cafeteria and other restaurants. At the time, burying or burning certain types of refuse was allowed because the city had no centralized trash pickup system.

"Generally when restaurants close their doors for good and are razed, nothing is left behind," said lead archaeologist John Foster of Greenwood and Associates. "The discovery of such an extensive array of serving ware and other interesting items was an archaeological jackpot. It opens another window of understanding on what life used to be like in the Southland."

### **'Blue Plate' Specials**

Foster's Cafeteria and several other restaurants believed to have been demolished in the early 1960s appear to have specialized in "Blue Plate" specials, coffee and pastries.

The cache of artifacts was found close to the historical Campo de Cahuenga where Articles of Capitulation were signed in 1847,

effectively ending California hostilities in the war between the United States and Mexico.

"On their way to catch the next train at the Universal Metro Red Line station, people should pause for a moment and try to imagine what life may have been like on the very ground they're standing on decades ago," said Jim Sowell, manager, MTA Environmental Compliance. "It's really quite fascinating."

The new finds are described in a study being prepared by Greenwood and Associates. Highlights include photos of the restaurant artifacts as well as 1920s era aerial views of the area, which lies adjacent to the 101 Freeway and Lankershim Boulevard, across from Universal Studios. There is even a section in the study that focuses on how the area has developed since the 1700s.

The study, which will be published in January, also alludes to several other unidentified restaurants believed to have been built in the 1919-1924 period ¾ shops, gas stations and a onetime "island" community of homes called Orchard Acres that was surrounded by the meandering Los Angeles River.

The Los Angeles County Natural History Museum and San Bernardino County Museum have been contacted by the MTA and Greenwood and Associates about curating the collection.

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