



NEWS

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MTA ARCHAEOLOGISTS MAKE ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT DISCOVERY AT METRO RED LINE SUBWAY STATION IN UNIVERSAL CITY

Archaeologists hired by the MTA have discovered the remnants of long forgotten "fast food" restaurants at the Universal City Metro Red Line station that were patronized by Universal Studios employees — possibly even movie stars — and area residents, during the Golden Age of Hollywood.

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

In addition to plates and cutlery, artifacts, which number in the hundreds and date back to the 1920s and before, include cups, glasses, sundae dishes, salt and pepper shakers and even the fragments of beef cuts discarded by Foster's Cafeteria and other restaurants. At the time, the burying or burning of certain types of refuse was allowed because there was not a centralized trash pickup system.

Foster's Cafeteria and several other restaurants that dotted the area appeared to specialize in Blue Plate specials, coffee and pastries and were believed to have been demolished back in the early 1960s.

"On their way to catch the next train at the Universal City 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 MTA Environmental Compliance Manager Jim Sowell. "It's really quite fascinating."

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The swath of artifacts is 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.

The finds are described in a new study being prepared by the archaeological firm of Greenwood and Associates. Highlights include photos of the cache 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, "Archaeological Investigations at CA-LAN-2804H: Universal Station Park and Ride Facility," which will be published next month, also alludes to several other unidentified restaurants next to Foster's, believed built in the 1919-1924 period, shops, gas stations and a onetime "island" community of homes called Orchard Acres that was surrounded by the meandering Los Angeles River.

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

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

note to editor: *To view the artifacts and arrange an interview with the archaeologist beginning Monday, December 18, call Gary Wosk at (213) 922-2712.*

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