

## 'PROMPTION' FOR PATRIOTISM

# Occidental's History Of Plans and Promises

By DON ENGDahl

The remaining memorial in Sonoma County's 18-year-old program of stimulating patriotism has been left an embarrassing number of times at the budgetary altar.

Which is not to say there haven't been a great many proposals.

The site is in Occidental, a community of some 400 souls, and now another set of preliminary plans are completed for a building estimated to cost \$100,000.

The first set of plans were drawn in 1948 (about \$65,000 was estimated as the cost then) and along the line a model was even made of a third design.

The \$100,000 is on hand, left in this year's county spending plans in the face of some harsh words from the Sonoma County Taxpayer's Association, among others.

The SCTA called the whole program "one of the most ridiculous... in the history of the county, that has made us the laughing stock of the rest of the state."

In recommending the \$100,000 be cut from the budget the SCTA estimated the population of Occidental at "about 150."

Actually, the 1960 census didn't break population down to that small a unit, but in the 18 square miles of the "enumeration district" containing Occidental the federal nose-counters found 704 men, women, and children.

Estimates from that place the permanent population of the immediate Occidental area at from 300 to 400 persons.

### Land Purchased

To original road department land owned by the county, supervisors added about an acre in two purchases—in 1948 and 1958—at a total cost of \$7,543.

The location is between East Front st. and Bohemian Highway, the parcel lying south of the Graton-Occidental rd.

Always in the running among the shifting priorities for memorials, Occidental kept drifting behind until it finally came out last.

Except in planning and land purchase. Official records show a total of \$9,776 of county tax money has been spent so far on those two items for the project.

After the original set of plans by architect Clarence Felciano were approved in 1948, the never-clear unofficial system of supervisory priorities kept it in the background.

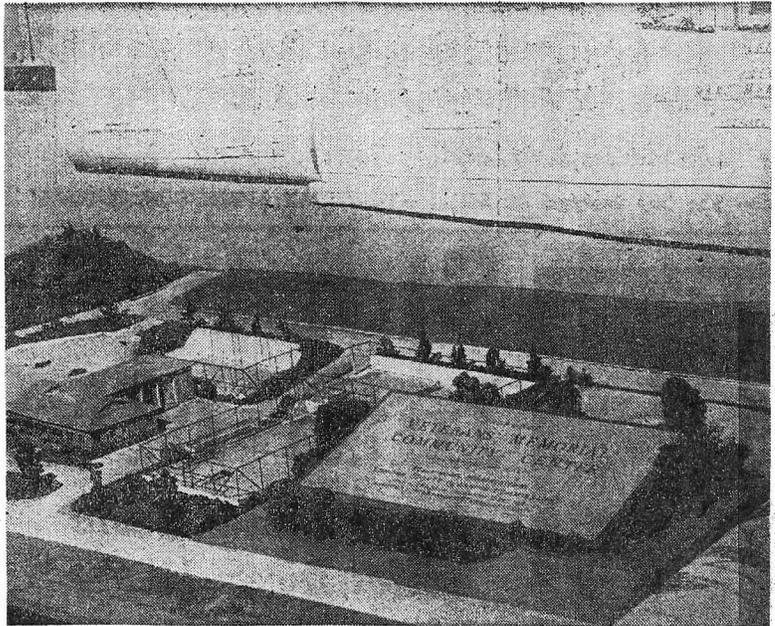
Then—seven years later — the board asked the Planning Commission for a recommendation on the memorial idea at Occidental.

The planners came up with a recommendation to build, and included a staff-produced set of plans and a model of the multi-purpose auditorium proposed on the site.

Supervisors adopted the somewhat-after-the-fact recommendation in December of 1955.

### New Plans

Three years later, in November 1958, they asked Mr. Felciano to whip out another set of plans. Now completed the preliminary designs on that, and has told



— Staff Photo by John LeBaron

## THE MEMORIAL THAT ALMOST WAS IN OCCIDENTAL Now A Dusty Model In County Memories

The Press Democrat that they'll be ready for supervisory scrutiny in the near future.

They meet, he said, with the approval of the Occidental veterans.

The latest preliminary plans show an 82 by 40 foot building with a 17-foot-wide porch all around it.

In one end of the building is a 40 by 55-foot recreation hall, with a kitchen, small meeting room, storage and rest rooms taking up one end of the building.

On site, the rustic-motif building would be flanked by play and picnic areas and a 33-car parking lot, with a playfield designated as the site of a future swim pool and bathhouse.

### How Soon?

What are the chances of supervisors actually building the Occidental building this year?

A review of the history shows that it's always been shunted aside, but now there are no other memorial construction projects in line—unless some aggressive planning and use is made of the new Healdsburg land (if it is legally acquired).

The SCTA suggestion this year that the Occidental proposal be dropped (at a saving of better than 3 cents on the tax rate) met with vigorous opposition from Supervisor E. J. (Nim) Guidotti, in whose district the memorial would be built.

When another board member

suggested considering deletion, he reacted with thinly-veiled anger to the effect that whether the memorial program is a good one or not, the other communities have their "memorials" and Occidental is not to be left out in the cold.

Whatever other parts of the program have produced bitter wrangles at the supervisory level, one hasn't. The determination that Occidental is to be the end of the program.

### Expansion Trend

But some observers see in the \$61,000 Healdsburg memorial expansion a possible precedent of something that might continue this

incredible saga: The expansion of present memorial facilities.

Aside from repairs to the Healdsburg dam and some of the buildings, there haven't yet been major expenses in improving the memorials.

Countering fears in some circles that the memorializing might continue is the socio-political explanation of the whole fantastic episode in official Sonoma County's uneven career:

There is no question that the "promption of patriotism" was a strong factor in the initiation of the program; there was a community desire to memorialize the sacrifices of those who took part in the Second World War.

But only one supervisor is left of that original five; the remainder merely inherited a program that was underway.

And once a program had started, the inter-community jealousies and rivalries were more than strong enough to keep it rolling and were sufficiently strong to keep the supervisors, even if they had had an interest in such a move, from stopping it.

Whether those rivalries will keep the program on the increase remains to be seen.

Tomorrow: The Headless Monster.

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