

5124 De Longpre Ave.

by Lauren Everett

The author was the initiator of the campaign to save Bukowski's Bungalow at DeLongpre Avenue. She succeeded in convincing the City of Los Angeles to claim it a Historic-Cultural Monument.

It began as just another in a series of sure to be unrealized schemes, devised as I was trying to fall asleep. I had read earlier that day on a local blog that Bukowski's old haunt at 5124 De Long Pre in East Hollywood was vacant and for sale on Craig's List, being advertised as ready to tear down. All it needed was a buyer and a plan for the future.

The street was only a five minutes drive from my house, so after work I stopped by to see it one last time. The grounds consist of two mission style duplexes which run perpendicular to the street, a wooden bungalow behind them, and a two story four-plex at the back of the lot. Décor is pretty sparse, and the common area is a cracked cement lot littered with leaves and the occasional piece of trash. I ended up chatting with a neighbor for a few minutes. He was an older Eastern European man and told me he remembered the days when Bukowski lived in the apartment and would have to sneak out the back door to avoid fans waiting on the porch. He described Bukowski as quiet but nice, and said that many people have come by over the years to get a glimpse of where the famous writer spent some of his more notorious years.

Like so many buildings in Los Angeles, you are often lucky to get a chance to pay even last respects before they disappear, and it becomes difficult to remember what stood in that square of dirt. Having grown up in the city, my list of the missing was long and sometimes significant only to me; Las Palmas Mexican Food, the ruins of Houdini's mansion, Hollywood Star Lanes, Johnnie's Broiler, The Ambassador Hotel, The Red Garter, and on and on. Beyond those there were places I'd only seen in pictures, like the old Bunker Hill. It seemed that the city had experienced so many lives, and few people would ever know anything of them. Of course I know that no matter what, Bukowski's work isn't going anywhere. However, it seemed a

shame that such an iconic residence, still perfectly in tact, could be lost forever.

The next day at work I went back to the blog post and followed a link to the source, which was a website run by Richard Schave. Richard and his wife Kim operate an unconventional line of tour buses called Esotouric, which specialize in everything from Raymond Chandler to Reyner Banham. I hesitated for a moment before emailing him. It seemed insane to think that there would be more than a handful of people who would care to see the old bungalows stick around. Even fans of his work, I reasoned, might not be able to see the value in the local itself.

I had been attending some preservation group meetings and I knew that most preservation efforts (successful ones at least) were based on architectural merits. I had also studied a lot of the city and state law on the subject over the previous year, and knew that one of the possible qualifications for a property could be that it was the home of a famous resident, although that was rarely invoked as there are so many famous people who have lived in Los Angeles. In the end I decided Bukowski's writing has meant so much to me over the years, that perhaps others who felt similarly to me would appreciate this physical remnant of his life here. The apartment was to me a testament to his struggle to remain human and retain that which was most important to him in the face of the inherent inhumanity of life. To keep the flame burning, so to speak.

After I emailed Richard things got moving pretty quickly. He was obviously a person who knew how to get things done and had a lot of helpful connections, and he immediately put me in contact with Chris Nichols of Los Angeles Conservancy's ModCom, Ken Bernstein of the City Planning Office, and (District 13 Councilman) Eric Garcetti's office. Kim used the database at UCLA where she works to help me with research on the property. In the process we learned that "Los Angeles' Richest Paperboy" had lived and died at the address, and that the back house was bought as a kit from Pacific Ready Cut Lumber - the first company to mass-produce surf boards. The wealth of information on just that one address was an indication of the millions of stories lost and buried in the city's past, which became a reminder of why the project was important.

Due to the nature of the situation (possible eminent demolition), Office of Historic Resources manager director Ken Bernstein made it a priority to include on the agenda of the next meeting, which took place on September 20th. The owners were not present. Richard Schave and I presented some background on the time line of Bukowski's life, and why the property was important in its context. My primary point was; not only was the apartment the local of many poems and stories, but it additionally served as the location where Bukowski wrote Post Office (in three weeks!) after his life-changing offer from John Martin, thus switching his focus over to writing full time, and possibly saving him from working/drinking himself to death. Another strong point is that the place looks pretty much the same as it did in the late 60's/early 70's when he lived there. The item concluded with a unanimous motion to further investigate the merits of the property, which was done via site-visit.

The media interest for the preservation effort built up at a somewhat shocking and surreal velocity. While I had assumed this would barely register on anyone's radar, Kim Cooper's PR genius somehow landed the story in TIME online, and from there other publications and blogs picked up on it as well. Preservation organizations also started voicing their support, beginning with Robert Nudelman of Hollywood Heritage, who told CBS, "When you look at this building, you see a nice little Spanish bungalow, which is usually associated with the happier times of L.A., and then to think from that building came what Charles Bukowski was saying ... shows an interesting metamorphosis of Los Angeles' architecture and its literary history binding together to come out of that one place." His views perfectly encapsulate the importance of this modest structure. Designed as pleasant little homes to attract new residents to the "paradise" of California and the dream of Hollywood living, these bungalows sprung up all over the city in the 20's and 30's. Eventually they came to be emblematic of the realities of working class life in Los Angeles, where the majority of residents live their lives in un-glamorous anonymity. To designate it "important" is almost absurd, and I think that absurdity kind of appealed to me in a strangely poignant way.

Meanwhile, as we had been busy trying to build support and work on our case for the upcoming CHC hearing, the owners of 5124 De Longpre had become aware of the situation, and were planning to bring in the heavy artillery. Some background; the owners had

purchased the property in 2003 for 450,000. As of July 2007 the property was completely boarded up and on Craig's List for 1.3 million dollars. The lot is very narrow, and is situated in a neighborhood which doesn't have a lot of new development, and while in close proximity to the main part of Hollywood, still retains its seediness in full force; dead bodies in the dumpster behind the liquor store, and median strips strewn with condoms, mismatched loafers, tattered religious tracts, and other ephemera. As such, the property had been on the market for a while.

A few days before the November 15th hearing, I received a call from Edgar Garcia at the City Planning office. He informed me that the owners had hired a lawyer who had conducted some highly sophisticated research (Google, I'm assuming), and planned to make the case at the hearing that Bukowski was in fact a Nazi. Yes, a Nazi. His angle was; in addition to the general unacceptability of aligning one's self with an anti-Semitic ideology or political party, the owners where in fact Jewish, and moreover had ancestors who had been interned in concentration camps. One of the owners even went so far as to call Bukowski a "second Hitler". In light of this jaw-dropping development, and due to some other technicalities the lawyer had discovered, the CHC had decided to postpone the hearing until November 29th.

With the help of some of the members at Bukowski.net, it became apparent that pretty much all Nazi accusations could be traced back to one source; Ben Pleasants. Further research revealed that Pleasants was a former acquaintance of Bukowski, who bore an obvious grudge and had penned an inflammatory and sensationalistic article delving into Bukowski's secret life as a Nazi. Well Kenneth Anger he is not, and Pleasant's claims were extremely easy to disprove using a combination of quotes from Bukowski's writing and good old fashioned logic. In the weeks leading up to the hearing many community leaders voiced their support for the nomination, which rendered the Nazi claim even less credible. Advocates included Mike Buhler of the LA Conservancy, Robert Nudelman of Hollywood Heritage, The LA Times editorial board, The East Hollywood Neighborhood Council, and City Council president himself, Eric Garcetti. I was pleasantly surprised and impressed that these civic leaders had such a progressive view on historic preservation, and in

that sense I feel very optimistic for the future in terms of saving more of Los Angeles' historic structures.

In the end, the CHC made it clear at the hearing that they gave no credence whatsoever to the Nazi claims, and sent the flustered lawyer back to his seat. Mary Klaus-Martin retorted that "...he was the poet laureate of the poor. He started in Hollywood and now has his archives at the Huntington. If I thought that any of the claims were true, in no way would I consider this." The CHC voted to recommend landmark status to the Planning and Land Use Management subcommittee of the City Council, who approved it unanimously. Councilman Jose Huizar even expressed his enjoyment of Barfly at the hearing, much to my amusement. At the time the property was in escrow, and as the owners no longer had any financial stake in the property they were not present at the hearing. I was not able to attend the City Council meeting but I understand that the landmark motion passed without debate.

An interesting side effect of the whole controversy was when the buzzword "Nazi" caused the AP story to get picked up by national and even international media outlets. The subsequent debate about not just whether or not Bukowski was a Nazi, but whether one could separate someone's creative work from their life was really fascinating. It was really wonderful to see so many people rallying behind Bukowski's work, which has been dismissed or derided by journalists and critics in the past. I was almost as if his legacy had been put to the test, and it was a true indication that it still resonates and it relevant. So often these days any kind of association real or imagined with those kinds of taboos is quite a challenge to live down, but to my knowledge the "Nazi question" hasn't been mentioned since.

Currently the apartments are being renovated, and will be rented to new tenants upon completion. People move in, people move out, 85 years of lives, one of them remembered. Such is life. In the end all I can really hope for is that life resumes once again at 5124 De Longpre Ave., as it has been in this modest corner of Hollywood, in all its anonymous glory. The building is not a shrine; it is not sacred. But it is important as all things are, and that's the point.



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January 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
Room 395, City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

ATTENTION: Barbara Greaves, Legislative Assistant
Planning and Land Use Management Committee

CASE NUMBER: **CHC-2007-4270-HCM**
BUKOWSKI COURT
5124 WEST DE LONGPRE AVENUE

At the Cultural Heritage Commission meeting of November 29, 2007, the Commission moved to include the above property in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council.

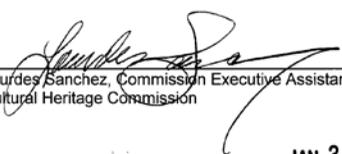
As required under the provisions of Section 22.171.10 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Commission has solicited opinions and information from the office of the Council District in which the site is located and from any Department or Bureau of the city whose operations may be affected by the designation of such site as a Historic-Cultural Monument. Such designation in and of itself has no fiscal impact. Future applications for permits may cause minimal administrative costs.

The City Council, according to the guidelines set forth in Section 22.171 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, shall act on the proposed inclusion to the list within 90 days of the Council or Commission action, whichever first occurs. By resolution, the Council may extend the period for good cause for an additional 15 days.

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject modification to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments upon adoption by the City Council.

The above Cultural Heritage Commission action was taken by the following vote:

Moved: Commissioner Carlisle
Seconded: Commissioner Klaus-Martin
Ayes: Commissioner Barron, Dake
Absent: Commissioner Lehrer
Vote: 4 - 0


Lourdes Sanchez, Commission Executive Assistant I
Cultural Heritage Commission

LES:les

Attachment: Staff Report with Findings

c: Councilmember Eric Garcetti, Thirteenth Council District
Victoria Gureyeva and Aleksandr Konovalov, Owner
Lauren E. Everett, Applicant

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Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

CASE NO.: CHC-2007-4270-HCM

HEARING DATE: November 29, 2007
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 5124 W. De Longpre Ave
Council District: 13
Community Plan Area: Hollywood
Area Planning Commission: Central
Neighborhood Council: None
Legal Description: Lot 13 of MB 4-33, Culver's
Hollywood Park Tract

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
BUKOWSKI COURT

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

APPLICANT: Lauren E. Everett
1047 Hyperion Ave. #7
Los Angeles, CA 90029

OWNER: Victoria Gureyeva and Aleksandr Konovalov
7309 Franklin Ave. #405
Los Angeles, CA 90046

**OWNER'S
REPRESENTATIVE** Joseph Trenk
7136 Haskell Avenue, Suite 126
Van Nuys, CA 91406

RECOMMENDATION

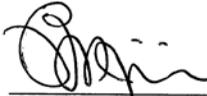
That the Cultural Heritage Commission:

1. **Declare** the property a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.7
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP
Director of Planning

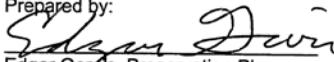


Ken Bernstein, Manager
Office of Historic Resources



Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:



Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: August 15, 2007 Historic-Cultural Monument Application

FINDINGS

The property is identified with an historic personage, as the home of internationally recognized novelist and poet Charles Bukowski from 1963-1972.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

SUMMARY

Built between 1922-26 and located in the Hollywood area, this property consists of two one-story Spanish Colonial Revival Style residential buildings, a one-story California Bungalow-style residential building, and a two-story Spanish Colonial Revival style residential building arranged in a linear courtyard housing configuration. All buildings appear to be rectangular in plan. The two first buildings have flat clay tile roofs, stucco finish, aluminum sliding windows, and entrances with open porches and square columns. The bungalow-style building is currently not visible from the sidewalk. The back building has a flat clay tile roof, stucco finish, aluminum sliding windows, and centered entrance.

The proposed Bukowski Court historic monument appears to have been built by the Los Angeles-based "Pacific Ready-Cut Homes" company. From 1908-1940, the company sold ready-to-assemble homes based on their own plans, ranging from Revival styles to Craftsman.

The subject building is significant for its association with noted novelist and poet Charles Bukowski (1920-1994). Bukowski resided in the complex from 1963-1972 during the most prolific period of his literary career, writing his first novel *Post Office*, his column *Notes from a Dirty Old Man*, as well as *South of No North*, *Mockingbird Wish Me Luck*, *The Days Run Away like Wild Horses*, and *Factotum*. The property is also the setting for his novel *Women*. In one of his last poems in 1992, he wrote to a friend, "and thank you/ for locating me there at/ 5124 De Longpre Ave/ somewhere between/ alcoholism and/ madness."

Alterations to the buildings include the addition of aluminum sliding windows.

DISCUSSION

The Bukowski Court property successfully meets one of the specified Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it is identified with historic personages, as the home of internationally recognized novelist and poet Charles Bukowski from 1963-1972. As a building that once housed a renowned literary figure influential in the cultural life of Los Angeles, the property qualifies for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument based on these criteria.

Apart from housing Bukowski during the most productive period of his literary career, it is at the subject property that Bukowski transitioned from a postal worker to a writer, completing his first novel, *Post Office*. The subject property also figures prominently in his work as a setting and is directly alluded to in his poetry.

The staff of the Office of Historic Resources recognizes that Bukowski remains a controversial figure both for his personal life and the subject matter of his writing. Recommending designation of the subject property is not an implied approval of his social views or political leanings, nor a negation of these controversial aspects of his life. Nonetheless, his literary accomplishments and his influential role in the cultural life of Los Angeles render the subject property eligible for Historic-Cultural Monument designation.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of September 20, 2007, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the application under consideration. On November 1, 2007, the Cultural Heritage Commission toured the exterior of the subject property.