LONG BEACH HERITAGE

Volume 25, No. 4, Fall 2015

A Victory for Preservation and Democracy

The Jennie Reeve house by Charles and Henry Greene (left) is a Long Beach Historic Landmark.

The Alamitos Branch Library designed by the City Engineer's Office (right) is proposed as a new Historic Landmark.

PHOTOS BY LOUISE IVERS

The Broadlind Hotel (above) is a designated city landmark.

By Louise Ivers

Long Beach Heritage won a recent preservation issue due to the combined efforts of leaders and members to reach out to the Mayor and City Council.

A streamlined version of the Cultural Heritage Commission Ordinance was presented by Development Services staff to the Commission at their June meeting. They refused to accept it because it contained a provision stating that "no landmark designation shall be considered without the authorization of the property owner." The Cultural Heritage Commission requested that the language of the original ordinance, which stated that "any interested group or individual" could nominate a building for landmark status, be kept in the new document. Property owners could still "petition to withdraw from designated status" if they followed the correct procedure under the original guidelines. Ultimately, the City Attorney who attended the Cultural Heritage meeting decided to send the two versions to the City Council for their decision.

Long Beach Heritage embarked upon an email letter writing campaign to the Mayor and City Council members. We were joined by the Los Angeles Conservancy and the State Historic Preservation Office, as well as our former Long Beach Historic Preservation Officer, Ruthann Lehrer. The volume of

(Continued on page 5)

A Great New Tool for Historic Preservation

By Karen Highberger

At long last, the City of Long Beach has announced staffing and a phone number to call for suspected unpermitted construction work on Saturdays.

This is wonderful news for Historic Districts in Long Beach. In all Historic Districts a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for any construction work on your home, including changing windows and exterior painting. Most of us have seen the contractors roll into the neighborhood late on a Friday afternoon and work furiously all weekend to install vinyl windows, incorrect fences and hardscape, to name but a few violations.

It is frustrating for residents who follow the rules and respect the ordinance of our Historic Districts to see violators skirt the rules and chip away at the historic fabric of our beautiful neighborhood.

There is also the problem of substandard construction work that is not up to code, since no inspections occur. Now we have a telephone number, (562) 570-0000, that we can call on Saturdays from 7 a.m.

(Continued on page 6)

Historic District Meeting at Bembridge House

In the past, Long Beach Heritage has facilitated meetings between the various historic districts and city staff. On August 8 approximately thirty-five people representing eleven of the seventeen historic districts met at the Bembridge House for a "State of Historical Preservation" meeting co-hosted by LBH and the office of First District Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez.

Three representatives from the city of Long Beach Development Services Department, Amy Bodek, Director; Linda Tatum, Planning Bureau Manager; and Christopher Koontz, Advance Planning Officer, answered questions from the group. Both Linda and Christopher are fairly new to the Department but were very knowledgeable and informed. Their candor and honesty were very much appreciated.

Three items that have been the biggest complaints from historic districts for several years are the lack of a Historic Preservation Officer; deactivation of the Mills Act; and lack of code enforcement on the weekends to stop illegal work.

Staff addressed all of these issues and spoke about the recent reinstatement of the Mills Act; buildings that have been nominated for landmark status; and the hiring of a code enforcement officer who will work on Saturdays to help prevent unpermitted work done on weekends without Certificates of Appropriateness. In addition, staff reported that interviews have been completed for the hiring of a Preservation Planner and hope that the position will be filled within the next few months.

Long Beach Heritage's goal is to have quarterly historic district meetings and the next one is scheduled for early November. Leaders of the historic districts will be notified by LBH of the details.

By working together, the historic districts have a stronger voice with the city in regards to preservation issues.

Miner Smith Project

By Steffi Hands

The Miner Smith Project is a historical research and preservation effort that celebrates the life and work of this Long Beach artisan builder. The project is sponsored by The Belmont Heights Community Association (BHCA) and received a grant from the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association.

Miner Robert Smith (1877–1965) built at least two dozen wonderful houses in the Belmont Heights area of Long Beach in the early 1920s that were originally advertised as "bungalow mansions." Smith's houses are local architectural icons that are easily recognizable from the outside by the niches in the porch columns, where he placed concrete planters shaped to resemble tree trunks. On the inside, Miner Smith houses are remarkable for the spectacular quality of their craftsmanship, which includes ornate molding, intricate fireplaces, clever built-ins such as shoe-shine stands, and even some plein air paintings. Two of the bungalow mansions were featured on this year's Great Homes Tour.

The Miner Smith Project leaders, Norbert Schurer and Steffi Hands, have been busy researching the life and work of this extraordinary builder. They traveled to interview members of Miner Smith's family, who presented them with his original sketchbooks, vintage photos, and marketing materials. Volunteers also interviewed current owners and residents of Miner Smith homes and established an inventory of Smith's unique houses and their features. Norbert Schürer will write an illustrated booklet on Miner Smith based on the interviews and original research. Finally, The Miner Smith Project will curate an exhibition open to the public at the Historical Society of Long Beach, which will open Friday December 4 and run until February 12, 2016. For more information, or if you have any additional information about Miner Smith, please contact Norbert Schürer at (562) 985-4213 or online at nschurer@csulb.edu.

Miner Smith (1877–1965)

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The Role of the Psychic Temple in Long Beach History

PHOTO BY LOUISE IVERS

The newly-restored Psychic Temple was originally built In 1905 by William C. Price as the headquarters for his New or Practical Psychology group— the Holy Kiss Society.

By Stanley Poe

While driving east on Broadway in the 200 block on Friday, August 24, you might have seen the red carpet rolled out in front of a newly restored brick building in the Romanesque architectural style, where guests mingled and photographers snapped photos for the open house of the Psychic Temple LBC.

In 1905 William C. Price built the Psychic Temple as headquarters for his New or Practical Psychology group, the Holy Kiss Society. By 1908 in an attempt to collect unpaid stock purchases as funds to support the cult, Price filed lawsuits against his own followers. One of his enemies, Anna Sewell, purchased the Psychic Temple for $2,910 and turned it into the American Hotel. It operated with single room occupancy on the upper two floors, and the first floor had commercial uses.

When I was a member of the Cultural Heritage Commission, I discussed its historic significance and how dilapidated the Psychic Temple had become with Ruthann Lehrer, the Historic Preservation Officer. The building was in such disrepair that it might be torn down and we needed to move quickly. In 1989 the Psychic Temple became a historical landmark in the city of Long Beach. In 2000 the City of Long Beach purchased it, but it remained vacant. Prior to the dismantling of the Redevelopment Agency by the State of California, an exclusive negotiated agreement with JR van Dijs, Inc. was negotiated. After a year JRVD was given approval to restore the Psychic Temple. The building was sold for $1 to van Dijs and Julia Huang, owner of Imprint Lab and interTrend Communications, Inc., which now occupies space in the structure.

The building's exterior is beautifully restored while the interior is repurposed for the 21st Century. Huang collected art work from around the world to hang in the Psychic Temple. The library was designed with wood carvings by James Jean at the back of each shelf. Wide staircases or an elevator take you from one level to another. A kitchen area is available to all who work there. The basement is set up as an area for relaxation of the employees, but was used a an Pan Asian market for the Open House with many choices of food including Peking Duck and a drink of Shirley Temple's Holy Kiss. Music by Yuna seemed to fill the open spaces as the guests strolled around the area. Congratulations to JR van Dijs and Julia Huang on the reopening of one of downtown Long Beach's oldest buildings.

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Summer Musical Magic on the Green at Santa Anita Race Track

By Maureen Poe

In the cool interior of a limousine bus on the evening of July 25, 50 Long Beach Heritage members and guests were chatting as they were whisked away to Santa Anita for the second annual trip to hear the Cal Philharmonic Orchestra at beautiful Santa Anita Racetrack which sits at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. During the summer break when the horses aren't racing, Santa Anita becomes a concert venue for the public to dine, hear jazz provided by Pasadena Entertainment and then move into music that inspires you from Cal Phil with a wide variety of musical selections.

Once our group left the bus, we followed the walkways up to the event area where tables with white tablecloths were set on the green lawn. Volunteers from the local high schools dressed neatly in white and black escorted the group to our section and helped to seat us at a delicious dinner by Teak Catering of Long Beach. As the sun began to paint the sky with a touch of orange to deeper shades of blue, Maestro Victor Vener stepped up to the platform and engaged the audience in a discussion of the words and meaning of the National Anthem. After stumping the audience on several points, he moved into a discussion of the evening's musical pieces, which included Lloyd Webber's *Music of the Night*, *All I Ask*, and *Masquerade from Phantom of the Opera*. The symphony orchestra was joined by the Cal Phil Chorale with the voices of Tracy Miller Schell, soprano, and Darren Ritchie, baritone.

Mary Ellen Mitchell and Javier Gonzalez are responsible for the organization of this successful event and are presently planning next year's Long Beach Heritage trip to the Cal Phil "Classical Rock" event on July 23, which will include great music by Abba, Queen, Wagner and Mozart and the Cal Phil Rock Band. There will be more information about this concert in a future newsletter.

Save the Date!

Victorian Christmas at the Bembridge House

December 6 from 12:00 PM–4:00 PM

The enchantment continues once again! The Victorian Christmas event at the Bembridge House for 2015 will be held on the first Sunday afternoon in December from noon to four.

As in years past, the splendor and magic of the holiday traditions will be celebrated at the historic house. Every year, volunteers from Long Beach Historic Neighborhoods, Community Groups, and Heritage itself "deck the halls" and transform the Bembridge House into a Christmas wonderland. Visitors enjoy being dazzled by the decorations and learning about the old-time customs as they tour the home. This year's theme is "Visions of Sugar Plums," so lots of sparkling and shimmering creativity will be on view. The family-friendly event is open to all, members and guests. Refreshments and crafts for children will be in the Carriage House. Of course, Santa and the South Coast Chorale singers are being invited to add to the festivity.

Reservations for Victorian Christmas at the Bembridge House are $10 and may be ordered through PayPal at www.lbheritage.org. Hope to see you on December 6!

Long Beach Heritage Volunteer of the Year

By Chris Hogan

Sherron Leno was awarded Volunteer of the Year at Long Beach Heritage's annual meeting in July at the Villa Riviera. Of course, it is always difficult to choose just one recipient when there are so many wonderful people who give their time to serve our organization. In Sherron's case, the award was certainly well-deserved!

Sherron has been a hard-working volunteer for many years. She is a docent at the Bembridge House, handling tours both inside and outside the home. A former Carriage House Quilter, her handiwork with the team of ladies can be seen throughout the House.

Sherron is also the longest-serving LB Heritage Historic Walking Tours docent. Her wealth of knowledge and expertise on local history and architecture makes taking one of her tours an interesting and memorable experience. As countless people can attest, Sherron's walking tours are lots of fun, too.

Sherron developed the newest Long Beach Heritage Walking Tour of Willmore City. She wanted to spotlight her beloved, and often overlooked, neighborhood. She enjoys guiding people through Willmore City and sharing the various architectural styles found there. Sherron even includes her own home and offers delicious baked goods before the end of the tour.

Because of all that she has done, Sherron has truly enhanced Long Beach Heritage.

Thank you, Sherron Leno, Volunteer of the Year.

PHOTO BY JACQUELINE CASE

Bembridge House docent Sherron Leno receives the Volunteer of the Year award from Chris Hogan at the annual meeting.

A Victory for Preservation and Democracy *(Continued from page 1)*

letters to the City Council convinced the members that the original language would further the success of preservation in Long Beach. Council Member Suja Lowenthal made a motion to accept Version A (CHC approved) of the ordinance and Council Member Rex Richardson seconded it.

However, Council Member Stacy Mungo added a "friendly amendment," which stated that the property owner of a landmark proposed by another individual or group would have the opportunity to speak to his/her Council Member to prevent the building from being designated before the matter would go before the CHC.

Version A, along with the amendment, was passed unanimously by the Council. Unfortunately, the amendment adds a proverbial "sticky wicket" to the ordinance because a property owner who does not understand the historic significance of his/her structure might have it demolished before Development Services staff or Long Beach Heritage can explain its importance.

So we must remain proactive, speak to our Council Members about educating prospective landmark owners, and be constantly on the lookout for abandoned historic buildings or ones with green fences around them.

We won the battle, but the war may not be over.

Membership Report—September 2015

Preservationist members and above

BENEFACTOR
The Ackerman Family
RMS Queen Mary

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Kevin & Ana Maria McGuan
Melinda Roney & Walter Wojak

ASSOCIATE
Bob & Nancy Latimer

PATRON
Mike & Andrea Burrous
Kathleen Bursley
Rick & Bradley Hobbs-Seeley
Marsha Jeffer
Geraldine Knatz
Mary Lou Martin & Chris Byrne
Patty Moore & Jean Shapen

CONTRIBUTOR
Lynn Brandt
Betty Chaney
Joyce & Robert Crawford
Dawna & Gary DeLong
Liz Handley
Chris Hogan
Louise Ivers & Allen Guerrero
Maureen Neeley & Dan Roberts
Roxanne Patmor
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Susan Bradley & Richard Barta
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Catherine Campion
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Sherry Cragg
CJ & Dave Crockett
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Paul Dusckett
Judy Edson
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Kathryn Gregory & Richard Roth
Joan Gustafson
Steffie Hands
Terry & Jeanne Harmon
Wendy Harn & Sasha Witte
Karen Highberger & Lou Gaudio
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Tom & Elaine Marks
Janeice McConnell
John & Dianne McGinnis
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Liz & Harry Minor
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Marco Pizzo & Jeff Mallin
Sharon & Ken Pleshek
Roger Peter Porter
Richard Powers
Tim & Maria Price
Marshall Pumphrey & Roxanne Fitzgerald
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Catherine Raneri
Gary Roderick
Chrisry & Gary Roeber
John Royce & Kent Lockart
Lesley Scheller
Paul & Judy Schmidt
Norbert Schurer & Susan Carlile
Iris & Dick Schutz
Pamela Seager
Renee Simon
Julie Stindt & Jim Meznek
Michael Stugrin
Nina Taweepong
Stella Ungar
Jan & Kirstin VanDijs
John & Patricia Walker
Steven Wan
Joan Wells
Sharon Westafer
Zieba Builders

A Great New Tool for Historic Preservation *(Continued from page 1)*

to 5 p.m. to report any suspected unpermitted work. The report is anonymous. You just need to provide an address and the type of work that is happening. This number and service will supplement the regular Code Enforcement. During the week, you can call (562) 570-CODE (2633) or go to the website at www.lbcode.org. If Code Enforcement finds that no building permit or C of A was issued, they will issue a Stop Work Order to halt any construction immediately. If the violator fails to comply, he will receive administration citation fines and possible referral to the City Prosecutor's Office.

You can find out more about obtaining building permits and Certificates of Appropriateness online at www.longbeach.gov or telephone (562) 570-6194.

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Bembridge House News

By Chris Hogan

For you numbers-minded people, the fiscal year for Long Beach Heritage ended July 31. Looking back, 2014–2015 was the best year ever for the Bembridge House financially—twelve months of superlative statistics! The Bembridge House hosted its most numerous and diverse series of functions and events. A few of the more recent happenings at the home included a children's piano recital, an evening of filming for a "short," and the Historic Districts Leadership Meeting. The commercial filming last fall was the greatest money-maker of the year, but weddings, luncheons, and the play production were lucrative as well. Go Bembridge House!

Despite the recent record-breaking heat spells, the new tropical shade garden is almost complete. Even with some new screens and plants, the volunteer gardeners managed to keep costs low by moving, re-purposing, and replanting much of what was on the property already. Naturally, the new plantings are drought-tolerant. The Asian-inspired theme of the garden is also appropriate to Victorian times. The gardeners have plans to create more of these "outdoor room" spaces. The tropical shade garden will become a beautiful and tranquil addition to the Bembridge House that everyone must visit.

Because of our hard-working grant committee and our positive financial balance, two long-needed projects have been finished at the House. The wrought iron fence in the front of the property has been repaired and repainted. With the help of the City of Long Beach's Neighborhood Partners Program (NPP) matching grant, new security LED lights are being installed on the property as well. Located on the ground, the lights are designed to shine up on the buildings, making them even more magnificent at night. Lastly, the Bembridge volunteers will plant new drought-appropriate grass and landscaping for the front.

More projects are planned, but, as everyone knows, maintaining an historic property is expensive. Sadly, we cannot rely on winning grants, getting filming contracts, or doing well financially. If anyone would like to donate to the Bembridge House to help with its future, your gift would always be extremely appreciated.

TREASURES of the 20s and 30s

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25TH FROM 2:00 TO 5:00

This special walking tour includes an autographed copy of LONG BEACH ART DECO coauthored by our tour guide JOHN THOMAS with special access to the historic Lafayette Hotel Lobby and museum followed by HORS' DOEUVRES AND A COMPLIMENTARY GLASS OF WINE at DISTRICT WINE

TICKETS $50 – LIMITED TO 35 PEOPLE

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Calendar

Bembridge Barbeque	October 3
Cal Heights Home Tour	October 18
Treasures of the 20s & 30s	October 25
LBH Executive Committee	October 26
LBH Board	November 23
Victorian Christmas	December 6
Jennie Reeve House Salon	April 10
Great Homes	June 5

Walking tours

Downtown on the 3rd Saturday at 9:00 a.m.
East Village on the 2nd Saturday at 10:00 a.m.
Willmore City on the 4th Saturday at 9:30 a.m.
Bembridge Tours—Every Tuesday and the 4th Saturday at 1:30 and 2:30 p,m.

Long Beach Heritage

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LBH Membership

Long Beach Heritage is a non-profit education and advocacy group promoting public knowledge and preservation of significant historic and architectural resources, neighborhoods and the cultural heritage of Long Beach. Dues are due on May 1st each year.

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- ❑ Call me with information on how I can participate in LBH as a volunteer
- ❑ Heritage Student/Senior $ 45
- ❑ Heritage Friend $ 60
- ❑ Heritage Household $ 75
- ❑ Heritage Preservationist $100
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- ❑ Heritage Associate $750
- ❑ Heritage Sustainer $1,000
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