

## Restoration in Montecito Heights: One Couple's Story

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

After many years of living in their small hillside apartment in Echo Park near Elysian Park, Heather Parlato and Jason Brown were finally ready to buy a home. Having been around older homes and buildings for most of their lives they had gained an appreciation for period design and architectural details, and finding a home with character (or at least the potential to add character details) was a non-negotiable factor in their search for the right home.

Already familiar with the geography as natives of Los Angeles, they began their search with a broad map of old neighborhoods but very quickly they focused on the flats of Montecito Heights where the exteriors of many historic homes are protected by the Highland Park/Garvanza HPOZ. Unfortunately for them, the local real estate market had recently heated up and the buzz surrounding Highland Park and Northeast LA had already begun to spill over into Montecito Heights, causing bidding wars and intense competition for even the most dilapidated properties.

Despite their willingness to take on major issues like plumbing, electrical, roofs, and even foundations, they were still outbid

on numerous occasions by cash funded house flippers using a formula for adding trendy cosmetic fluff (often removing historic details in the process) while projecting ever higher resale prices. Finally, after six months of searching and numerous written

offers, one offer was accepted on a house on Berenice Avenue; a house that needed a lot of help.

Originally built in 1921, this colonial revival bungalow had seen better days. Overgrown trees and shrubs and piles of trash surrounding the property made it difficult to see the house from the street. What was visible had become a neighborhood eyesore. The property had also become a nuisance, as numerous people were regularly coming and going, some living in a massive bootleg structure in the backyard, and dogs were being bred and kept in unsanitary conditions. Years of deferred maintenance had taken a toll on the house and it had reached a breaking point, including active plumbing leaks, a busted sewer line, and excessive termite damage.

Enter Heather and Jason. With a remarkable eye for spotting character details hidden behind the mess and years of unfavorable alterations, a vision



Before . . .



for what the home could be, and a rehabilitation loan, they set out to make this eyesore on Berenice their home and began the process of bringing back many of the home's period details. They also had

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the wonderful idea of documenting their project on a blog, showing the progress of work as well as the issues that they have faced throughout the project. For those of us watching the transformation, the blog has been an incredible treat, a diary that captures the highs, lows, and ultimate rewards of a restoration-minded renovation project, from start to finish.



... After

This is one remarkably resourceful couple. Thanks to Heather and Jason for sharing their story and inspiring us all to think about why we care about our historic neighborhoods, and the potential of even the most neglected, badly altered, or seemingly lost structures to be reborn with a new vibrancy that can improve a community. You have certainly inspired us.

So, what work did they do to the house, and how is their project turning out? You can see for yourself by visiting their blog at: <http://4001berenice.wordpress.com/>

Congratulations Heather and Jason, and welcome to the neighborhood.

Go to our facebook fan page "Highland Park Heritage Trust" and click "Like".

Please follow our blog: [historichighlandpark.blogspot.com](http://historichighlandpark.blogspot.com)

Do you have a historic home or preservation story you want to publicize? Please contribute articles, photos and anecdotes to our blog.

Email to [info@hpht.org](mailto:info@hpht.org).



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Would you be interested in playing a more active role in our events or activities? Please consider volunteering to help us continue advocating for historic preservation in our community. Contact us at [membership@hpht.org](mailto:membership@hpht.org) or (323) 908-4127 for more information on ways that you can help. Thank you.

### Time to Renew Your Membership for HPHT

Renew online at <http://www.hpht.org/join.html> or use this form to mail your check. Remember to consider how you can volunteer a few hours.

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# Northeast Los Angeles Christmas



**Photos by  
Antonio Castillo, Ron Rocha and Al Strange**



# Parade and HPHT Party, Dec. 2014





**HCM Designations Team is recruiting.** Jonathan Silberman, Ron Rocha and Charlie Fisher seeking members who want to learn and help. HPHT Board President, Antonio Castillo and member Rebecca Schiffman are seeking likeminded individuals who are ready to tackle the HPHT archives with the help of Anne Mar, archivist librarian at Occidental.

Contact the HPHT at (323) 908-4127 or [info@hpht.org](mailto:info@hpht.org) and a member of the appropriate committee will follow up with you.

## SurveyLA is coming to Northeast Los Angeles and they need your help!

BY ANTONIO CASTILLO

Help identify properties within the NELA neighborhoods that you believe have architectural, cultural, social, and/or historical significance and should be included in SurveyLA.

SurveyLA is coming to Northeast LA very soon. According to the City's Office of Historic Resources (OHR), Phase 3 will begin in NELA in Spring 2015. In an effort to participate in the survey process and to make sure that all potential resources are identified, it is important that we work collaboratively to provide the OHR with a list of properties, sites, or areas that we believe should be included in the city-wide survey.

It's important for everyone (individuals, organizations, neighborhood councils, etc.) to get involved and help identify those properties that are believed to be significant within our neighborhoods. Besides, we know our neighborhoods best!

The Highland Park Heritage Trust is compiling a list of properties to share with SurveyLA. Please help contribute to this process by emailing us a list of those properties you believe are significant to our neighborhoods in NELA.

Most important to note is that Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZ) will not be resurveyed as part of this process. The Highland Park-Garvanza HPOZ is the largest in the City. This means that a large section of NELA will not be surveyed. When the original Highland Park HPOZ was created, the HPOZ had identified a period of significance between 1886-1941. Since the expansion of the HPOZ to include Garvanza in 2010, the period of significance was revised to include 1941-1961. A 20-year gap of potential resources that were not surveyed can be overlooked through SurveyLA unless we identify them and bring them to OHR's attention.

If you have any questions, please contact HPHT. For more information about SurveyLA, please visit the OHR's website at [www.preservation.lacity.org/survey](http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey). If you are unfamiliar with SurveyLA or would like more information about its purpose and benefit, we encourage watching the 9-minute video located at [www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/videos](http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/videos).

For questions, please contact HPHT by email at [info@hpht.org](mailto:info@hpht.org) or by telephone at (323) 908-4127.



# The Southwest Museum Is Declared a National Treasure

The National Trust for Historic Preservation announced that a partnership has been forged with the City of Los Angeles and the Autry National Center of the American West to identify viable options and sustainable uses for our beloved landmark. The announcement was made on Thursday, January 22, 2015, before an audience that included a diverse group of local community organizations and stakeholders who have been steadfastly maintaining the viability of the Southwest Museum as a useable and useful museum.

We have been actively supporting the work of

the Friends of the Southwest Museum Coalition for over 12 years. Many times you have been asked to voice your opinion. So too, the NTHP is asking "What's most important to you about the historic Southwest Museum site and the Casa de Adobe?" Over the course of the project, they will be asking you to weigh in on all kinds of things related to re-imagining this important piece of our history. Log onto <http://www.treasureswm.org/> and "join the conversation." Continue your active concern of the Southwest Museum through this new forum.

Support the next phase of the **NELA Community Newspapers Preservation and Archiving Project**, a joint project partnering Occidental College, HPHT, and the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society. Donations can now be submitted online through the HPHT website; please visit <http://hpht.org/donate.php> and simply select the category "NELA News Project," enter your donation info and submit. Thank you for your support!

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## EVENTS & MEETINGS

- **2nd Monday:** 2015 Monthly HPHT Board and Program meetings, 7 to 9PM, February 9, March 9, and April 14, May 11(check website), June 8, Ebell Club, 131 S. Avenue 57, Highland Park
- **Saturday, February 21:** 5th Annual Lummis Day Film Night, 7PM, \$15 per person (all proceeds support the 2015 Lummis Day Program), purchase tickets online [www.lummisday.org/events](http://www.lummisday.org/events) or Galco's Soda Pop Stop and Las Cazuelas, free bus transportation
- **Thursday, March 5:** 7PM, The Highland Theatre 90th Anniversary celebration, information <http://www.hpifilmfest.com/index.html>
- **2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month:** Highland Park/Garvanza HPOZ, 6PM, Arroyo Seco Library Community Room, 6145 N. Figueroa St, Highland Park
- **Thursdays and Saturdays:** 10:00 AM to Noon, Volunteer your time to help with the Community Garden at the top of the Hopi Trail at the Southwest Museum. Barbara Arvi, director, [Barbara@indiancenter.org](mailto:Barbara@indiancenter.org) (323) 274-1070, A.I.F.P Headquarters 5809 N. Figueroa St, Highland Park, 90042. View the garden at website <http://indianfamilies.org>
- **Saturdays Bi-monthly 2015 Schedule Walking Tour:** Sycamore Grove Highland Park area, 10am to 12:30pm, February 28, April 25, June 27, August 22, October 24 December 19, register at [www.hpht.org](http://www.hpht.org) or (323) 908-4127, \$5 HPHT/LAC members, \$10 non-members
- **Saturday, April 25:** 10th Annual Lummis Day Benefit, 6:30pm, \$35 per person, more information to come, [www.lummisday.org/events](http://www.lummisday.org/events)

*Highland Park, Sycamore Grove Walking Tour seeking Docents in Training – We hope you have been waiting for HPHT to ask you to help with the tour. Learn while you enjoy the welcoming atmosphere of visiting with other tour participants. Contact the HPHT at (323) 908-4127 or [info@hpht.org](mailto:info@hpht.org) and a member of the appropriate committee will follow up with you.*