

PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES BACKED BY LAW

(This is the second of two articles on the preservation of historical buildings in this area.)

Los Angeles has taken a giant step forward with the establishment by ordinance of a Cultural Heritage Board, which has the job of preserving and protecting the landmarks of the past.

For the first time, there is a city law with teeth in it that can prevent a property owner from destroying an historic building—up to a maximum of 360 days.

"This means we can preserve our valuable historic assets and still protect the rights of the property owner," says William Woollett, Los Angeles architect who heads the board.

For example, the board has already declared several sites to be historical structures, and the owners are specifically enjoined from destroying or altering them without permission of the Cultural Heritage Board.

Tujunga Structure

The historic Bolton Hall at Commerce Ave. and Valmont St., Tujunga, is one of the structures.

In its official action stamping Bolton Hall as a historic site, the board has put itself squarely in the controversy over whether to rehabilitate or demolish the structure, which recreation and park department reports have labeled "an obsolete building."

The hall, built in 1913, has stood empty and deserted for years on a weed-choked lot. Vandals have left their mark on the historic landmark many times.

The parks department recently earmarked an undisclosed amount from bond sales to acquire land adjacent to the building for a park. The department also spent several hundred dollars repairing the vandalism when it took over the structure last May.

Citizens Committee

A 10-member citizens committee, led by Ray W. Brooks of Tujunga has been formed to preserve Bolton Hall. They are endeavoring to stir up community interest in saving the building. Frank E. Mosher of Glendale, who is on the committee for the preservation of historic buildings in the Southern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects, is assisting the group in an advisory capacity.

The cost of rehabilitating the structure is estimated by city officials at \$40,000. A parks department spokesman points out that funds are not available for such a project.

Bolton Hall's fate stands in abeyance. However, any move to tear down the old structure will run into a

series of hurdles set up by the Cultural Heritage Board.

Under the city's new ordinance, all applications for demolition, major alteration or removal must be checked against the list of historic buildings issued by the board.

If the owner of a building on the list applies for a permit, the application is automatically referred to a heritage board, which has 15 days to file an objection. An objection blocks issuance of a permit for at least 30 days.

Before the end of that time, the property owner can ask the city Art Commission to cancel the objection of its subsidiary board, and if the objection is cancelled, then the alteration, removal or demolition can go ahead.

Time Factor

However, if the Art Commission refuses to cancel the objection, then granting of the permit can be postponed for up to 360 days, giving the Cultural Heritage Board and other interested groups time to gather community financial and moral support for saving the historic building.

Wollett, a Glendale resident, points out that the decision to put the "historic" label on a structure follows careful guidelines. The code definition is as follows:

" . . . Any site (including significant trees or other

plant life located thereon), building or structure of particular history or cultural significance to the city of Los Angeles."

Historic sites are those in which "the broad cultural, political, 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."

Other Board Members

The board includes Woollett, past chairman of the preservation of historical landmarks committee of the Southern California chapter, American Institute of Architects; Carl Dentzel, director of the Southwest Museum in Highland Park; Mrs. Bonnie Riedel, city commission member; Mrs. Edith Gibbs, amateur historian, and Mrs. Francis Sullivan, state chairman of California history and landmarks committee, Native Daughters of the Golden West.