

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

Ser. No. 0019-04R
HABS _____ HAER _____ NR 4 SHL _____ Loc _____
UTM: A 10/712890/3906010 B _____
C _____ D _____

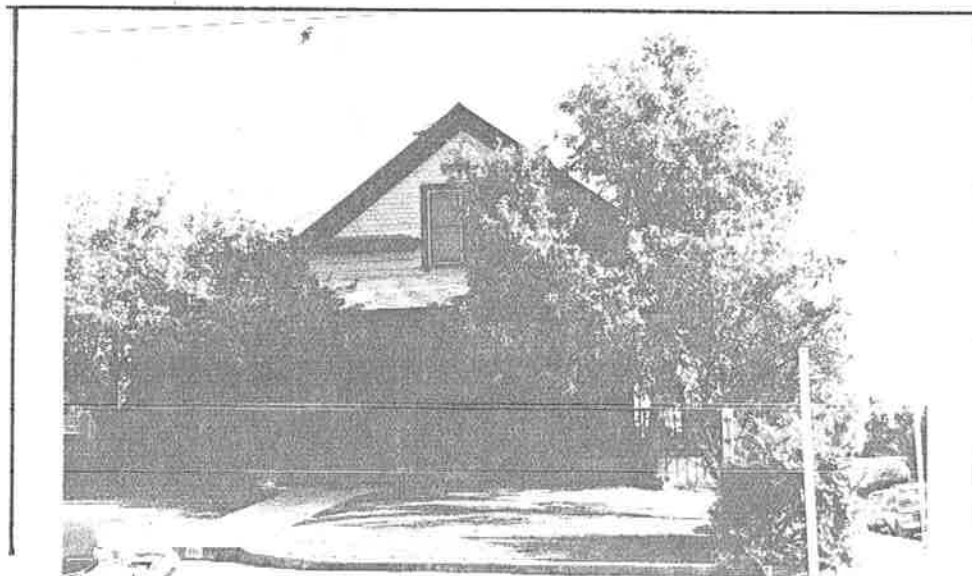
IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: _____
2. Historic name: Nathaniel Brew Home
3. Street or rural address: 771 Buchon Street
City San Luis Obispo Zip 93401 County San Luis Obispo
4. Parcel number: 03-536-01
5. Present Owner: Birra, G.B., et al. Address: P.O. Box 594
City San Luis Obispo Zip 93401 Ownership is: Public _____ Private X
6. Present Use: Residential Original use: Residential

DESCRIPTION

- 7a. Architectural style: Colonial Revival
- 7b. Briefly describe the present *physical description* of the site or structure and describe any major alterations from its original condition:

A verandah curves around the entire front, corner and portion of the side of this residence. A front facing gable has a pediment return with double hung windows in the center, and fishscale shingles. There is one double and one single double hung window on the porch. A round pebbled glass window is in the front door. A generous wooden verandah accomodates porch furniture and potted plants. An open balustrade encloses the verandah in a contemporary geometric style and appears to be an addition to the main structure. Slanted bay on side of the house on the ground floor with a pediment return and double hung windows repeating a pattern in the front of the structure are on the upper floor.



8. Construction date:
Estimated 1906 Factual _____
9. Architect Unknown
10. Builder Unknown
11. Approx. property size (in feet)
Frontage 60' Depth 180'
or approx. acreage _____
12. Date(s) of enclosed photograph(s)
December 1982

13. Condition: Excellent ____ Good X Fair ____ Deteriorated ____ No longer in existence ____
14. Alterations: _____
15. Surroundings: (Check more than one if necessary) Open land ____ Scattered buildings ____ Densely built-up ____
Residential X Industrial ____ Commercial ____ Other: _____
16. Threats to site: None known X Private development ____ Zoning ____ Vandalism ____
Public Works project ____ Other: _____
17. Is the structure: On its original site? Yes Moved? ____ Unknown? ____
18. Related features: _____

SIGNIFICANCE

19. Briefly state historical and/or architectural importance (include dates, events, and persons associated with the site.)

Built between 1904 and 1909, this vernacular rendition of a carpenter-designed frame structure is a combination of Carpenter Gothic and Neo-Colonial styles. The contrasting sheathing on the exterior of wood siding on the house and shingling on the gable is a carry over from Queen Anne Victorian architecture. It is typical of many turn of the century homes constructed in San Luis Obispo by unprofessionally trained carpenter builders. The eclectic design of this house shows the conservative tendency to incorporate older, familiar modes of embellishment into new, contemporary designs. In 1914 this was the residence of Nathaniel Brew who operated a carpenter and furniture business in downtown San Luis Obispo.

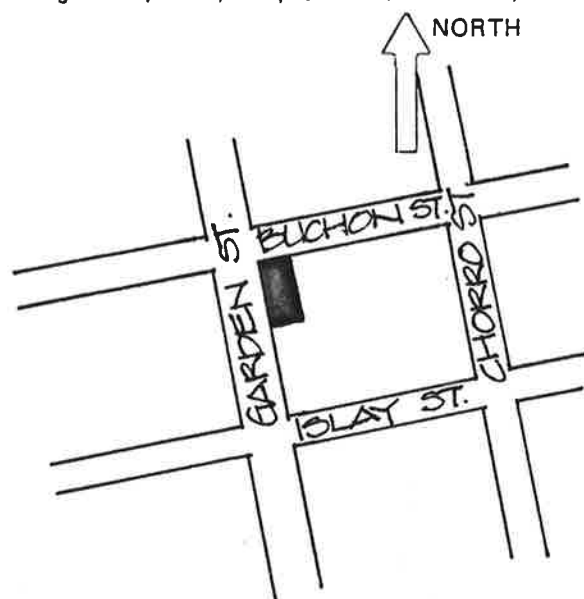
20. Main theme of the historic resource: (If more than one is checked, number in order of importance.)
Architecture 1 Arts & Leisure ____
Economic/Industrial ____ Exploration/Settlement ____
Government ____ Military ____
Religion ____ Social/Education ____

21. Sources (List books, documents, surveys, personal interviews and their dates).

City Directory (1904, 1914)
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
(1903, 1909)

22. Date form prepared JUN 17 1983
By (name) Historic Res. Survey Staff
Organization City of San Luis Obispo
Address: P.O. Box 321
City San Luis Obispo Zip 93401
Phone: (805) 541-1000

Locational sketch map (draw and label site and surrounding streets, roads, and prominent landmarks):



**The Brew House (1901)
771 Buchon Street
San Luis Obispo, California**

Like so many of the old homes in the city of San Luis Obispo, the Brew House at 771 Buchon Street can be used as a lens through which to view much of the history of early San Luis Obispo. The street, the houses, the residents--all contain elements of the county's rich history: elements of the Chumash, the Spanish, the early Yankee settlers, the Portuguese immigrants, the railroad families, and others.

Buchon: A Chumash Chief

"Buchon" means "goiter" in Spanish. The origins of the name "Buchon" for various locations in San Luis Obispo County were indicated by Miguel Costanso, who kept a diary of the 1769 Portolá expedition through the area. On September 4 of that year, he noted:

"Encontramos...una ranchería de gentiles, corta y pobre: estas tierras están algo despobladas. Los indios de esta ranchería que distaba poco de nuestro alojamiento, vinieron en la tarde á visitarnos con regalo de semillas, y algun pescado, que nos ofrecieron; su cacique tenia una disformidad grande sobre su persona de una lupia que le colgaba del pescuezo y los soldados le pusieron a vista de ello el sobrenombre de Buchon, con que se quedó tambien su ranchería y todo el parage."

"We came upon...one small and wretched Indian village. This part of the country is practically uninhabited. The Indians of this village, which was only a short distance from our quarters, came in the afternoon to visit us; they brought presents of seeds and some fish, and offered them to us. Their chief had a large deformity, consisting of a tumor that hung from his neck. The soldiers, when they saw it, gave him the nickname of Buchon, and this name likewise stuck to his village and to the entire place."

The 700 Block(s)

The 700 block of Buchon Street is sometimes referred to as San Luis Obispo's "Nob Hill" since this was a favored building spot at the turn of the century, when the big Victorian homes were going up as part of the growth sparked by the Southern Pacific railroad's arrival in town. The Buchon Street hill was near the commercial center of town, but high enough to escape the floods which occurred when San Luis Creek overran its banks, and on solid ground, as opposed to the actual marsh which gave its name to Marsh Street.

Actually, the 700 "block" of Buchon Street is two blocks long, as are the 700 blocks of Marsh Street, Pacific Street, Pismo Street, and other streets parallel to Higuera in the central street grid. This is due to the need to keep addresses consistent with the double-long 700 block of Higuera Street, which is not intersected by Garden Street, as the others are. (The city's street numbering system was introduced in 1903 to facilitate mail delivery, and has remained consistent ever since.)

Description of the House

There are no known records of the construction of the house, and even the date of construction has been at issue. A report in the City of San Luis Obispo's 1983 Historic Resources Inventory describes the house as typical of many turn-of-the-century homes constructed by unprofessionally trained carpenter-builders: "This vernacular rendition of a

carpenter-designed frame structure is a combination of Carpenter Gothic and Neo-Colonial styles. The contrasting sheathing on the exterior of wood siding on the house and shingling on the gable is a carry-over from Queen Anne Victorian architecture. The eclectic design of this house shows the conservative tendency to incorporate older, familiar modes of embellishment into new, contemporary designs." The wraparound verandah, which faces onto both Buchon and Garden Streets, is one of the most distinguishing features of the house.

Brew: The Original Owner

The original owner of the home was Nathaniel Charles Brew, who owned a furniture and carpet business on Higuera Street. He began his business in the boom years of the late 1880s, and did not retire until 1919. In the 1901 City Directory, Brew described his store as follows: "So much pride is now being taken by the patrons of retail furniture dealers in the ornamentation of their homes, in purchasing for parlor or bedroom, that the retail dealer considers alike the two virtues in purchasing wholesale--elegance and quality--and all who have purchased from or inspected the stock of N.C. Brew, 721 Higuera Street [presently next to Michael's Optical], fully and unanimously assert that it is one of the best selected stocks in San Luis. Mr. Brew is a thoroughly experienced furniture dealer and a good judge of all matters connected with the trade, and you will always find his large stock of household furniture, from kitchen tables to tapestry carpets, the very best." In later years, Brew moved his business to 699 Higuera Street, at present the location of Beau's Russia House and Tea Room.

The Brew house is, in a sense, notable for the woman who did not get to live there, in that it was in the final stages of construction when Brew's wife Caroline died of "pulmonary consumption," or tuberculosis, in November 1900. Mrs. Brew was one of the 13 children of pioneer rancher and banker J.P. Andrews and his wife Tennessee. The Andrews Bank building still stands at the corner of Morro and Monterey Streets. Caroline Brew had been ill and an invalid for four years; her death at age 31 was doubly sad, as she left behind not only her husband, but two young children--Carrie, age 9, and Nathaniel, age 5.

The Earlier Landowners: Beebee and Faustino

City records show that in 1912 Nathaniel Brew purchased this lot, or adjoining lots, from Judge William L. Beebee and Manuel Faustino. Beebee was a Yankee who'd left his home in New York State at age 16 and gone to Chile, where, he said, he intended to get into the mercantile business. On the trip around Cape Horn, he met some Californians, and decided to continue on to California as soon as he could book passage from Chile. In 1847, he arrived in Monterey--the territory of California had recently come under the control of the United States, but the official transfer of government would not take place until February of the following year.

After trying his luck in the gold fields in 1848, Beebee came to San Luis Obispo in the spring of 1849. With a quick profit he had turned on property in San Francisco, Beebee and his partner Samuel Pollard established one of the first stores in San Luis Obispo. The adobe store was located at the corner of Monterey and Chorro Streets, where Johnson's for Children is now. Later Beebee engaged in cattle ranching, served as county judge from 1863 to 1871, and then became a partner in the lumber business of Beebee, Harford, and Schwartz, which dominated the lumber shipping into Port San Luis for many years. Later, Beebee went into banking with equal success.

Manuel Faustino, the other landholder who sold to Brew, was an immigrant from the Azores--nine Atlantic islands 900 miles west of Portugal--which were settled in the great days of Portuguese exploration during the 15th century. By the mid-19th century, overpopulation on the islands, along with droughts, potato rot, and grape fungus, led to starvation and a lack of employment. These factors, combined with the Portuguese government's military draft of 14-year-old males, caused thousands of young men to flee, seeking opportunities in the United States.

The whaling industry provided a means of escape for many of these young Azoreans, since whaling ships stopped at the islands to take on water and supplies; often, they took on Azoreans as crew members, and sometimes as stowaways bound for the United States.

Manuel Faustino was born in the Azores in 1858. Although we do not know whether he made his way to the U.S. by whaling ship, we do know that he became a naturalized citizen of the United States, and that in 1884, he married Florence Valina, a schoolteacher from Maine who may also have been of Portuguese heritage. For many years the Faustinos farmed land in the South Higuera/Vachell Lane area. (Their son George donated to the Historical Society Manuel's corn-shelling machine, which is currently on display in the Museum.)

The W.C. Hall Family

And now, back to N.C. Brew, who was known as Charles, rather than as Nathaniel. At the time of his death in 1931, he was living in what was described as an "apartment" at the 771 Buchon address. It is not known whether he had lived there continuously since the house was built, but the City directories of 1904 and 1906 show him as residing there, and the 1914 directory listed, for that address, Mr. Brew, his son Nathaniel, and his daughter-in-law Hazel. (Daughter Carrie had married in 1910 and no longer lived with the family.)

By 1919, the City directory shows William C. Hall as residing at the 771 Buchon address, but the house may have still been under Mr. Brew's ownership. Mr. Hall was an employee of the Southern Pacific railroad and had previously worked in Oakland and in Nevada; his wife Anne Elizabeth Murphy Hall was a dressmaker. In May of 1919, their son Norman married Edna Root, and the young couple at first made their home with Norman's parents. Here is how the late Edna Root Hall remembered the Buchon Street house:

When Norman and I returned to San Luis Obispo from our honeymoon in San Francisco [May/June of 1919], we made our home with Norman's folks, who lived in a large two-story house at the corner of Buchon and Garden Streets. While living with the Halls, I helped with the housework and dinners, as Norman's mother took in roomers and boarders. There were from 10 to 14 people who sat down to the dinner table every night.

Eventually, the Halls bought acreage in Sacramento and moved there; Norman and I took over the house. We had one boarder who took meals with us, and we rented rooms out to nurses. I was constantly keeping linens clean. There were no electric appliances. I washed the sheets in tubs that sat on apple boxes. The house was carpeted throughout; there were no vacuum cleaners or refrigerators, but there were brooms and dustpans. We had no car or supermarkets, but ordered our groceries by phone. The grocery delivered twice a day, and we paid for the groceries once a month.

Nearby Hospitals

The nurses referred to by Edna Root Hall in the above paragraph were most likely employed just down the street. At 735 Buchon was the Pacific Hospital, which in 1913 advertised being "A modern Hospital, ideally situated on high ground, modern in every respect, and equipped in every detail for the scientific care of the sick, both medically and surgically. Finest X-ray equipment in the county. All nurses are STRICTLY GRADUATE from the best institutions in America." And across from that, at 726 Buchon, was the Maternity Home operated by nurse Jessie Wright in the early 1920s.

Neighbors

Other neighbors in the 700 block(s) of Buchon Street included a number of names we still recognize today, including:

Carrie **Angel**, the widow of Myron Angel (714 Buchon): Myron Angel wrote the earliest comprehensive chronicle of county history, and later was editor of the San Luis Obispo Tribune and the San Luis Obispo Daily Republic. He was also instrumental in the founding of the California Polytechnic School which we now call Cal Poly.

Rev. and Mrs. George **Willett** (736 Buchon): The Rev. Willett served as pastor of the Congregational Church, and it was he who performed the first of only two wedding ceremonies known to have taken place in the Carnegie Library building at 696 Monterey Street. Mrs. Willett was a teacher at the Nipomo Street Grammar School.

W.A. and Mary **Andrews** Rideout (779 Buchon, next to the Brew House): Mrs. Rideout was another of the daughters of J.P. and Tennessee Andrews; had Carrie Andrews Brew lived longer, she would have had her sister Mary as her next-door-neighbor.

Manuel **Marshall** (785 Buchon): Manuel Marshall had a jewelry business at 778 Street (currently the location of The Network); this business was the precursor of the Marshall's Jewelry store now located at 751 Higuera.

Subsequent Residents and Owners

Others who lived at 771 Buchon Street over the years included Floyd Walter (as per the 1931 City directory), and later the Birra family (1948, 1950, 1951 telephone directories). A complete title search would be helpful in establishing the progression of ownership. Present owners Paul and Diana Bunker have lived in the house since 1989 and have done much to restore it to its Victorian appearance.

Sources:

Captain Portolá in San Luis Obispo County: Introduction and Notes by Paul Squibb, past President of the San Luis Obispo County Historical Society, 1968
City and County Directories and Telephone Books
City of San Luis Obispo: Historic Resources Inventory, 1983
County Recorder's Office
Diary of Miguel Costanso, edited by Frederick J. Teggart, University of California, Berkeley, 1911
Mark Hall-Patton: "Judge Beebee, one of area's forgotten movers and shakers," Telegram- Tribune, June 18, 1991
Memories of Edna Root Hall
San Luis Obispo Tribune obituaries, marriage, and birth notices