



A HISTORIC LITERARY HAPPENING

On January 25, 1988, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors under the chairmanship of Nancy Walker, approved a proposal by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and City Lights Books to rename twelve San Francisco streets after famous authors and artists who had lived and worked in the City. Mostly alleys or cul-de-sacs, streets were named after Ambrose Bierce, Beniamino Bufano, Richard Henry Dana, Isadora Duncan, Dashiell Hammett, Bob Kaufman, Jack Kerouac, Jack London, Frank Norris, Kenneth Rexroth, William Saroyan, and Mark Twain. (Historical research on the streets had been done by Karen Larsen, and some famous authors could not be proposed since there were already streets with the same last names.)

On Sunday, October 2, 1988, a ceremony and unveiling of new street signs was held at City Lights Bookstore (which was also celebrating its 35th anniversary), and there were short speeches by literary notables, including James D. Hart, Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Joseph McElrath of the Frank Norris Society; Mignon Garland of the Isadora Duncan Heritage Society; Don Herron, Dashiell Hammett aficionado; Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Nancy Peters of City Lights; and Jane Winslow of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers who had sponsored the project early on, as had the San Francisco Art Commission. (City supervisors William Maher and Richard Hongisto were also instrumental in pushing the proposal through the city government.) Mayor Art Agnos declared October 2nd to be "City Lights Bookstore Day in San Francisco," and it was truly a historic occasion. An enormous crowd showed up at City Lights, and after the speeches the first signs were unveiled at Kerouac Street (between City Lights and Vesuvio's Bar) and William Saroyan Place across the Avenue between Spec's Bar and the Tosca Cafe, where the celebration continued into the night.