

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Saving The Fremont Adobe

The Monterey Peninsula History and Art Assn., has definitely decided that it will follow the idea of the members of the first board directors as it is expressed in the association's constitution written and adopted in January 1931, and save the Fremont Adobe on Hartnell street from complete destruction. These first directors and originators of the association began their constitution with these listed purposes: "To promote interest in the history of Monterey County; to protect its historic sites, landmarks and buildings; to assist in the identification of points of historic interest and when deemed advisable, to erect suitable markers or monuments.

"To cultivate and promote widespread interest in the development of art in Monterey County; to encourage contacts between artists and the public to their mutual benefit, and to facilitate the artistic growth of the community in architecture, painting, sculpture, and other forms of art.

"To collect, preserve and own paintings, sketches, drawings, records, books, manuscripts, charts and other material pertaining to the history and art of Monterey and California, and to have and to hold, and to buy and to sell such property, both real and personal, as may be necessary to carry out the objects of the association."

Those first directors, elected in 1931, put an obligation upon the board of directors of 1960, which they are endeavoring to carry out to the best of their ability. Living members of the first board of directors, who wrote and adopted the constitution are Allen Griffin, Carmel Martin, Myron Oliver, Harold Mack, Mrs. Laura G. Wheeler and E. Charlton Fortune.

For the first time since the organization of the Monterey History and Art Assn, the directors are asking the membership for contributions to purchase and restore the "Fremont Headquarters" on Hartnell street, an adobe built in the early 1840s, adjoining the Monterey Post Office. The federal post office department is willing to sell the building for preservation and build the addition to the local post office around the adobe. All contributions, small or large, will be thankfully received and acknowledged and

placed in a fund for this single purpose, Contributions may be sent to the association's secretary, 336 Pacific Street, Monterey.

The little old building is a boxlike, two-storied charming adobe and the three-foot adobe walls are resurfaced with clapboards. Two markers appear in front, one placed there many years ago by the California Automobile Assn., and another simple blue and white enamel marker, over the entrance door. Both designate the house as "Fremont Headquarters". It may have been, for Fremont spent much time in Monterey in 1846-47.

The building is also said to have served earlier some of the military purposes of Fremont's opponent, General Jose Castro, during the Mexican-American hostilities. He is supposed to have given away later a part of the property retaining under Spanish custom, however a right-of-way over the land so long as any member of his family lived. Assessed to Dr. James Stokes in the assessment records of 1851, the building later passed through the hands of various owners, including onetime Mayor Robert F. Johnson.

We know that Mrs. Fremont and her daughter lived in rooms in the Castro Adobe, now Frank Work's home facing Fremont street and overlooking El Estero, while General Fremont was in this part of California. A delightful description of this home, the arrival of the Fremont family there and how Jessie Benton Fremont furnished it, is contained in Irving Stone's biographical novel "Immortal Wife".