

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Houses to Rent or Sell

The Monterey Foundation is a member of the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings. Mrs. Henry Potter Russell, the president of the local organization, has recently been elected a member of the board of directors of the national group and during her present visit in Washington, D.C., she is attending meetings of the board of directors.

The National Council was organized five years ago last December. The mere idea of a national preservation organization was first seriously discussed by a small group sitting around a table in New York City. A few months later, in April 1947, the first formal meeting to discuss the possibility was held. Two months later, the National Council had a charter and was in fact an organization.

Today the National Council has an office and has representatives in 37 states. General U.S. Grant III is the president. He wrote in his last annual report: "The final objective? An alert, dynamic organization dealing intelligently and immediately with all phases of preservation; an organization capable of assisting all those individuals or groups of individuals who believe that significant portions of the physical heritage of Americans are worth preserving for this and future generations."

Last year the National Council took over the administration of its first historic property – Woodlawn Plantation – at Mt. Vernon. Woodlawn had belonged to the Custis family and thereby was very dear to George Washington. The quarterly report of the Council contains this item: The National Trust's project, Woodlawn Plantation, began to take shape during the fall under the aegis of Henry H. Surface as administrator and Worth Bailey as curator. Plans for the restoration of the central section, for general development, including parking facilities, for furnishing and for continued display and interpretation have keyed the fall program.

Another note of interest to Monterey is: "Lancaster, Ohio. After 18 months of restoration by the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, the birthplace of General William Tecumseh Sherman was opened to the public this year as a state memorial and museum." We

have in Monterey several reminders of Sherman's visit here. His headquarters, known as the Sherman-Halleck Headquarters, are on Calle Principal next to the Larkin House.

Following the above is a short article concerning the work of the State Park Commission at Columbia, California. The item reads: "Although plans for full restoration of this historic ghost town have been drastically curtailed because of reduced state appropriations, some immediate preservation work is under way. All state-owned buildings will undergo brick masonry repairs, window and sash replacement, and a general clean-up."

Another item from California is "'Old Monterey – Doorway to History' is an outstanding illustrated brochure setting forth the preservation program of the Monterey Foundation."

From the guide to the United States Naval Academy received by the National Council, they quote a phrase which might well inspire Monterey and other early American cities to emulate Annapolis in their preservation efforts. "The many fine examples of Georgian architecture, the quaint, narrow streets and cobblestone walks have been safeguarded by the citizens of Maryland's capital against the disenchantment of modernization."

Word got around last winter in Georgetown, D.C., that a group of three early Federal period houses on "M" street were to be sold and demolished. Some public-spirited citizens, determined that historic Georgetown should not further be destroyed, got together and obtained assurance of funds enough to initiate purchase of the property. Since then they have incorporated and contributions made to pay off the mortgage and to pay the cost of restoration will be covered by stock certificates.

When restored these old houses will be rentable or even saleable, according to the National Council's opinion,

This undertaking is mentioned as an example of how a local group of enthusiastic citizens can finance and organize a project to save and appropriately utilize an historic property for the benefit of the community and the protection of their neighborhood.

Such was the project undertaken by the Monterey Foundation when the Casa Gutierrez was restored.