

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Santa Fe and Today

Santa Fe, New Mexico is asking the question, "How can Santa Fe preserve today, the priceless identity the past centuries have given it?"

Since territorial days many "Anglos" have settled in the old town to paint, to write, or just to lead what seemed to them a good life in the midst of mountain-rimmed space. That is just as true on the Monterey Peninsula today as it is in Santa Fe.

Miss Dorothy L. Pillsbury wrote in the Christian Science Monitor:

"Aside from being the capital of the fourth largest state, Santa Fe lived on its charm. As the years passed, the tourist trade became its only sizable means of support. In good years that has run as high as eight million persons in a single season. Tourists came here because there is something unusual and different to see. Above all they sense something in tangible which they call charm."

This also might be said of Monterey, as well as Santa Fe:

"Since the war, the old town has been growing house by house and subdivision by subdivision, modern houses. Adobe houses involving mostly hand work have become antiques as they cost twice as much to build as their cement block substitutes. Visitors return after many years and exclaim, Yes, the old town has changed. Then they hasten to add, "But it still has its charm." To which some residents answer complacently, "Our old town has deep roots!"

The correspondent replies to this statement with this:

"But people who have lived in Santa Fe for many years are ignoring the fact, roots or no roots, unless something is done, this ancient capital will become another ordinary town along the highway."

Blocking this outcome is an organization now known as the Old Santa Fe Assn. Back as far as the 1910-1912 period this association was founded by a group of far-seeing residents who aside from aesthetic reasons, realized the traveling public was the greatest source of income for their town.

The objects of the association continue today as they were 30 years ago, to preserve and maintain the

ancient landmarks, historic structures, and traditions of Old Santa Fe, to guide its growth and development in such a way as to sacrifice as little as possible of the unique charm born of age, tradition, and environment which are the priceless assets and heritage of Old Santa Fe." For many years these pioneer residents have kept their lonely watch over the town they loved. The History and Art Assn., organized in 1930, has been endeavoring to act in the same capacity in Monterey, and we are proud to say that the organization has been quite successful, but there is still work to be done and continual vigilance to be observed.

A plan made for Santa Fe in 1946 warned that if the natural and ordinary characteristics of 20th Century urban America overcame the more ancient and traditional characteristics, there would be no real reason for the existence of the community except as the state capital. Little if anything was ever done in Santa Fe to follow through on this protect. Our Knight plan for Monterey is another example of this failure to follow through, although parts of the plans have been accomplished.

Within the last two years, Santa Fe now approaching a population of 40,000, began to wake up. A city planning commission came forward after a long study with various propositions. Santa Fe residents packed the council meetings to capacity and let the council know what they wanted and what they stood for. The old Santa Fe Assn. enrolled hundreds of new members.

Finally, the city planning commission proposed a system of Historical zones which were determined on the basis of historical interest and the display of the character of Old Santa Fe. In all about 15 streets or areas are to be kept true to character.

That the ancient city has gone as far as this is due to the intensive work of the city planning commission especially the constant efforts of a small group of dedicated citizens. The work has been particularly difficult as it has been necessary to define a style of architecture which has different types and which is still a part of a living growing tradition, writes Miss Pillsbury.

Having visited Santa Fe many times, we are in sympathy with the problem as we are with Monterey's problem. But we still think that the historic atmosphere of Monterey should be protected preserved and appreciated by the council, the residents, the Chamber of Commerce, and our tourist visitors. Monterey

represents the history of the West as does Santa Fe, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of New Mexico.”