

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **St. Augustine**

In Monterey when so much development is being planned by both the State of California and our own City Council, it is appropriate that we should study what is being done in other historic cities throughout our country. History News, the publication of the American Association of State and Local History for August, reports from St Augustine, Florida.

In a letter to Florida's Gov. LeRoy Collins dated July 21, Dr. Clifford L. Lord, president of the American Association for State and Local History, urged the governor to request the Florida State Board to delay construction on Highway A1A along the historic Bay Front in St Augustine. The letter was sent to the governor after a week-long investigation made by Dr. Lord's assistant Clement M. Silvestro.

Mr. Silvestro made the trip to St. Augustine at the request of the St Augustine Historical Society, a member association, to investigate the two-year controversy among those who feel an improvement of the Bay Front area with a four-lane highway and parking area is necessary to protect and expand the tourist industry, and those who, while recognizing the importance of the tourist business, feel that the new road and Bay Front improvement would destroy a large portion of the historic seawall and seriously diminish the charm and atmosphere which so many visitors to St. Augustine have enjoyed over many years. Sounds like Monterey, doesn't it?

Dr. Lord assured Governor Collins that the American Association for State and Local History is very much interested in getting as many visitors as possible to our important historical shrines. He noted "however, that any project which would destroy any historical landmark in St Augustine, or encroach upon the boundaries of the old city, thereby obstructing further plans for restoration, would be a serious loss not only to Floridians but to every citizen in the United States.

"The conservation of historical resources," noted Dr. Lord, "is as important as the conservation of natural and human resources. Since St. Augustine is the oldest settlement in the United States, very special efforts should be made to safeguard its rich historical heritage. As changes need to be made to accommodate the

needs of increased traffic on today's roads, they should be undertaken only after proper and detailed study of the problem by competent, impartial authorities."

Governor Collins has already requested the Florida Board of Parks and Historical Memorials to appoint a special advisory committee to undertake a study of how the restoration of St. Augustine can be achieved, as part of the plan for the Florida quadricentennial celebrations (1559-1959). At the same time, the city of St. Augustine has recently engaged the services of the leading city planner in the South, Mr. Simons of Jacksonville. It was in view of these developments that the association asked the governor to delay construction of the highway until his advisory committee on restoration proposals has had an opportunity to make its report, and until Mr. Simons has had a chance to make some preliminary investigations and surveys.

The Monterey History and Art Association is a member of the American Association for State and Local History. Having visited St. Augustine, talked with the manager-director of the Historical Society of St. Augustine in his office in the "Oldest House" there, admired the waterfront. appreciated all the work of restoration and preservation that has been accomplished in this old town, we sympathize with their efforts to keep their historical heritage intact for posterity.