

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Saving a Mansion

The Victorian mansion, Fernald House, at 422 Santa Barbara St. in Santa Barbara, is to be saved through the efforts of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, according to word just received from W. Edwin Gledhill, director of the museum of the historical society.

Built in the early 1860s by Judge Fernald for his bride, Hannah Hobbs, the house is an outstanding pioneer American home of its period in Santa Barbara. The historical society has been interested in preserving it since the death of the late judge's daughter, Miss Florence Fernald, last year at the age of 91.

During a visit in Santa Barbara last September we were driven by this mansion. Even, in its state of disrepair, it has an elegant aloofness from the commercial buildings and dilapidated houses which have encroached on what was once a city block, iron-fenced and planted with almost every known variety of tree.

Being a tree lover, the judge planted the Norfolk Island pine as a seedling. The sweetly fragrant eucalyptus arching over Santa Barbara streets has been saved from destruction, we were told, by the city park department which has used this species in the freeway planting.

The judge, former builder-owner of this old house, sponsored the planting of the Australian eucalyptus in Southern California.

One wonders what will become of the other beautiful trees such as the huge magnolia which we saw on our recent visit to the southern city. Miss Pearl Chase of the Plans and Planting Committee informs us that some have been taken to beautify the University of California Santa Barbara campus at Goleta.

Judge Fernald came to California as a Forty-Niner at the age of 18 from his home in North Berwick, Me. He soon gave up gold mining to study law in San Francisco and earn a living (he lived in a tent) by writing for the San Francisco "Alta." Fire destroyed his hard-earned law library and then the editorial offices of the newspaper.

Disheartened he started back to Boston by ship. He stopped over in Santa Barbara to say goodbye to a friend, Edward Hoar, a fellow lawyer, and remained for 40 years.

Among the famous guests entertained in the Fernald home were the Marquis and Marchioness of Lorne (Queen Victoria's daughter), Admiral George Dewey, and Bishop William Kip, California's first Episcopal bishop. The bishop's hostess was one of the founders of Trinity Church, while his host founded Santa Barbara's first school and the chamber of commerce there and gave one-third of the capital for building the town's first street railway.

The Santa Barbara Historical Society is taking steps to raise the money for the project of moving the historic house to another location beside the Trussell-Winchester Adobe to be preserved as a Santa Barbara landmark of the early American period.

The Santa Barbara telephone company has pledged \$1,200 toward the cost of removal of the structure, a project termed "worthy" by L. E. Lattin, president. This is the amount which would be incurred by them in clearing the site on which the house now stands. It is planned that the building when restored will provide ample space as headquarters for society-sponsored committees and related organizations. The Santa Barbara Junior League has been invited to use it as headquarters.

The Fernald House will make the third of three historic buildings situated close together at the corner of Montecito and Castillo streets. The others are the society-owned Trussell-Winchester Adobe, a registered state landmark, and the Assistance League building, the Hunt-Stanbach House. It is planned that the Fernald House, and the adobe will both be kept open to visitors on stated days, according to present plans of the historical society.

We report this happening in Santa Barbara for the reason that it fits in so well with all the projects of the History and Art Assn. and the Monterey Foundation here in Monterey at the present time. The saving and preservation of the Serrano Adobe, on Pacific street by the History and Art Assn. and the City of Monterey, the cooperation of the State Division of Beaches and Parks and the generosity of a number of our private citizens have made all our historical preservation of adobes and sites of historical places possible and we congratulate Santa Barbara on its continued interest in its heritage which is so worthwhile both historically and from an economic standpoint.