

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Reconstructing The French Consulate

A bit of the history of the old French Consulate adobe seems most fitting to present in the Diary today, since the recent fire in the building did considerable damage to the north end of the structure. The adobe is known as the Girl Scout House, but a marker, placed by the Monterey History and Art Assn., gives the adobe its historical name and data.

In the early part of 1934 the reconstruction of the French Consulate was completed at its present site on El Estero. It had formerly stood on Fremont between Munrus and Abrego streets. The owner, wishing to make modern improvements on the site, had announced plans to tear down the consulate building. From then on the City of Monterey and the Monterey History and Art Assn. began an intensive campaign to save the building as an historical monument.

On Dec. 4, 1933, at a meeting of the board of directors of the association held in the Old Custom House, it was moved and carried that a committee be appointed to cooperate with the city in moving the consulate to El Estero Par. The directors also voted to give \$250 toward the expense of the materials required to complete the removal and restoration.

The following letter was sent to the city authorities on Dec. 5, 1933, signed by Col. Roger Fitch, president of the Monterey History and Art Assn. is extremely interested in efforts to preserve the historic first French Consulate in California by moving it to city owned property in El Estero Park where it can be preserved permanently.

"This old adobe was built over a hundred years ago and except for the American Consulate (Larkin House), is the only consulate in California of the time preceding the Mexican War. It occupied a real place in early California History and is of great historical and architectural interest.

"In view of the important bearing that this historic adobe and its early official occupants had upon early California history, especially during the critical days immediately preceding the American occupation of California, it is hoped that it may be preserved for the generations to come."

In Col. Roger S. Fitch's fourth annual report as president he stated: "The taking apart, adobe brick by brick, beam by beam, and plank by plank, of the first French consulate and its restoration on city owned property in El Estero Park, was completed early in 1934. To this work the association contributed, first, the initial saving of the building from destruction: next a committee to work with the city, and third, half the cost of the additional material required. The City of Monterey furnished the other half and the services of an expert building superintendent (J. C. Anthony)."

On March 16, 1935, a request was made by Carmel-Monterey Council of Girl Scouts that the French Consulate be made available for use as a Girl Scout headquarters in Monterey. The request was referred to the association, as the association had been the primary means of saving this historic building. It was approved by the board on March 20th.

During 1937 the History and Art Assn. included the French Consulate in the list of 15 markers placed in front of that number of historic building in Old Monterey.