

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Step Softly

"Time wounds all heels, but it will not heal all wounds."

These words are quoted from an article which appeared in the last issue of "Historic Preservation," published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation with headquarters in Washington, D.C. This trust is the owner of the Amesti adobe in Monterey now also known as the Old Capitol Club on Polk street.

"Time wounds all heels," but will not heal all wounds. Anticipating the annual spate of house and garden tours, where gracious owners of historic and otherwise notable and beautiful houses open them for the benefit of the very best causes, especially that of preservation, We turn a sympathetic ear to one such hostess who reports cruel damage to handsome floors and to cutup rugs by the stylish pounding of spiked metal heels.

According to the National Trust article, the writer reports from bitter experience and some trepidation about this form of vandalism with chic. Her house has been thoroughly wounded, and yet she still prepares to offer her hospitality (as do other hostesses) to those of the NT who wish to view this particular great house.

But she asks: "One thing that I wanted to ask your help on may sound foolish to you but does present somewhat of a problem. I don't know whether you are familiar with the spike metal heels worn by many women, which are death and destruction to old floors.

"A year ago, one group cut up my dining room floor pretty badly, so this time asked the ladies to please stay on the rugs whenever possible. Do you think it would be possible to insert a line somewhere in the literature that goes to the trust members, asking that when they visit private houses not to wear those horrible and destructive heels?"

"I understand that in some of the restorations in the South they provide slippers, so perhaps this will not come as a shock to trust ladies."

"I hope you will not think that I am being fussy and tiresome – but I think other people showing their houses probably feel as I do. Destruction of this type to an old floor cannot be repaired without planning, so it becomes a serious item."

"The real enthusiasm for what our colleagues in England deplore as winkle pickers' comes from one segment of the world of fashion. It belongs there, and not in the field of preservation."

"Do not be surprised then, if we emulate our Japanese friends and offer slippers at the door on special tours. They will not be chic - we are investigating those paper towels "scuffles' offered the tourist in the better motels and provided for the indigent patient as slippers in a clinic."

"It also occurs to us, ladies, that we offer you a favor, if you are really planning to walk your way through history without leaving your pockmarks on the floors of time."

The heels are not only bad within the doors of the houses of the gracious and generous hostesses who open their homes frequently here in Monterey, but they are also noticed in the gardens. The paths in the well-kept gardens are also pockmarked with holes.

The shoes certainly must not be too comfortable after walking and standing around in homes and gardens from 10 a.m. until 5 or 6 p. m., so it is suggested that next time you wear suitable shoes when you attend a tour. Forget to be chic and bring along the old-style grandmother shoes, for comfort for yourself and in compliment to the hostesses in the homes so hospitably opened for your enjoyment, and for a good cause.

The Larkin house in Monterey provided flannel slippers to put on over the shoes before you are taken on the conducted tour over this delightful and historic house. It would take a thousand such slippers to provide the proper such equipment for all who are welcomed to the other private homes for the many tours which are held in Monterey each year.