

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 4, 1962

The Path Of History

"Follow the Path of History" was the headline in the Monterey Peninsula Herald on June 26, the day of the publication of a special vacation section. The writer was most complimentary to the Monterey History and Art Assn. for many of the historical monuments, sites and buildings which have been saved and marked by the association since its organization in 1930, as well as the pleasure of traveling over the red line or route which passes the majority of the important monuments.

All of the buildings and most of the sites of former historic buildings, have been marked with the metal markers telling a very brief history of the adobe, not just a few and very shortly a new sign will appear in front of the most recent restoration - the Fremont Headquarters on Hartnell street.

The Old Custom House was the first historical spot acquired after the United States had declared it surplus property. Through the intercession of the Native Sons of the Golden West, the City of Monterey, the Monterey History and Art Assn., and a group of local citizens who had not cashed their World War One bonus checks but gladly contributed them to the cause, the building was obtained for preservation, through matching funds from the State of California. It was almost immediately named as State Historical Monument No. 1 and so that honor for the building - the oldest government building west of the Rockies - was not a recent happening. The building and its historic museum opened there on July 7, 1929, the 83rd anniversary of the Sloat landing. Most of the historical exhibits in the Custom House are on loan to the state from the Monterey History and Art Assn.

Left off entirely from the published list, on June 20, was the Casa Amesti, a building which stands as a significant monument regarding a typical Monterey two-story town house of the Mexican capital of Alta California and of the transitional period of the development of the town into an American community. The builder, Don Jose Amesti, a Spanish Basque from Catalonia, came to Monterey in 1822, and married Prudenciana Vallejo. It was built in the early 1830's, first as a one-story structure, and very soon thereafter was added the second floor.

Another, we think, charming old adobe home was absent from the printed list, the Casa Soberanes at 338 Pacific St. This historic house became an historical monument on June 3, 1953, when it was presented to the state at the annual History and Art Assn. Merienda in the Memory Garden on that date. This adobe along with the Casa Amesti and several others, is recorded both in articles, descriptions, and pictures in the Library of Congress in Washington. The sala is also used to illustrate Monterey adobes, in miniature in the collection of Thorne rooms in the Chicago Art Museum.

Casa Soberanes was built by Don Jose Estrada, ranking officer of the Presidio of Monterey under Mexican regime, about 1830. Estrada sold the property to Don Feliciano Soberanes, who married one of the daughters of Don Ignacio Vallejo. It was later owned by Mr. and Mrs. Reuban Serrano and then by Mr. and Mrs. William O'Donnell. It was presented to the state by Mrs. O'Donnell who has retained a life interest in the property. It is not open to the public.

Casa Serrano is also on the Historic Route. This charming small adobe, located at 412 on Pacific, was purchased by the Monterey History and Art Assn. in 1959 and has now been restored as the headquarters of the association. Florencio Serrano courted the daughter of Don Joaquin de la Torre, who bought the property on Calle Estrada (now Pacific Street) from a foreigner who had started but not finished a house there. Senorita de la Torre and Florencio were married in July 1845, and in the old adobe they raised a family of sons and daughters. There Florencio had his school and brought education to Monterey and there he died.

We also missed the Fremont Headquarters from the published list. This small two-story building on Hartnell street was purchased and saved through the efforts of the Monterey History and Art Assn. in 1961. For many years it has been known as the Fremont Headquarters and records show that the building and surrounding property, on which there were two other buildings, was obtained by Gen. Castro for military purposes. A 137-year old map of the City of Monterey, drawn by a surveyor named Narvez, shows existence of the adobe on the present site of the Fremont adobe on Hartnell Street opposite the home of W.E.P. Harnell's adobe home.

Since the present restoration, the building is occupied by the Monterey Realty Board. So, another old and

historic adobe building has been rescued from destruction and is on the Historic Route.

To keep the record straight, we would also correct the written statement that Stevenson roomed in the two - story adobe known as the Stevenson House in 1897. It was in 1879. He died In Samoa in 1894.