

Peninsula Diary May Hayes O'Donnell

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Guarding The Gifts of History

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the only private organization chartered by the Congress of the United States to help preserve sites, buildings and objects of significance in American history and culture.

The trust owns Casa Amesti, now known as The Old Capital Club, on Polk Street in Monterey.

Through its publications, seminars, regional conferences, reference services and archives, it serves as a national leader of the American preservation movement. It is governed by a board of trustees, vitally interested in helping to guard and preserve the future—our heritage of irreplaceable buildings, sites and neighborhoods.

The National Trust sponsors the American celebration of UNESCO's International Monuments Year of 1964. The event is to be celebrated throughout the world by member nations of UNESCO, with Monterey assisting in a small way by opening Casa Amesti Oct. 3 and 4 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The American Landmarks Celebration is intended to draw nationwide attention to the acute need for militant action to safeguard the richness and diversity of America's architectural, historical and natural heritage as living history—a vital record and a source of inspiration of future generations.

Contemporary society is the custodian of this heritage, and our living landmarks are the eye-witnesses to history. One of the greatest gifts we can offer the future is the preservation of those buildings, forests and countrysides which bring fresh perspectives to each generation. Very often an historic building can become a central feature of a new development, rather than a casualty.

"And the only remedy for indifference is our own conscience—that of the individual and of the nation"

The National Trust reports in its records.

"The monuments of our past have something to say to us that no book, no microfilm, no motion pictures will ever be able to record. Through these each generation reminds us of its values, its achievements, its hopes.

Every significant structure that is torn down or recklessly improved, every fine bit of landscape that is

massacred and ruined forever for some ephemeral purpose, such as shortening a motor route, impoverished our common heritage."

"Not age but significance and beauty are what make a landmark worthy of preservation: Some of the buildings of but yesterday should be earmarked for preservation no less than the most venerable colonial structure. The fact that Impedence Hall was once almost auctioned off as was the Old Custom House, to the highest bidder, and that in our time we permitted our most ancient monuments, the great redwood groves to be sold off as mere lumber, shows the need for an American landmarks movement.

Without these historic monuments, our land will exist only in the one-dimensional world of the present that will soon be past, leaving as its chief reminder blasted landscapes and the memory of buildings wantonly destroyed."

The foregoing is quoted from ideas expressed in the letters sent to the Old Capital Club in Monterey by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.