

Peninsula Diary

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### **National Trust**

Busily cultivating the flowers of remembrance in the form of old; homes and buildings, is an amazingly-active, well-financed organization with headquarters in Washington called the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

It is a private nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949. Its primary mission is to advise community leaders on what is worth saving, how to organize effective preservation groups and how to restore, preserve, interpret and raise funds for a project.

In the eyes of the National Trust, a log cabin or a sod house may be as worthy preservation as a mansion if it has outstanding historical and cultural significance.

Historical structures or sites "in which the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community is best exemplified."

Structures or areas "that embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type-specimen...mere antiquity is not sufficient basis for selection of a structure for permanent preservation.

Its chairman is Gordon Gray, North Carolina businessman-publisher-educator-public servant who worked in high government posts under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower.

He has expressed a firm hope of success in the effort to bring to every citizen the opportunity of sharing in the responsibility of saving our national heritage.

"Decisions made today in many areas, will determine for all time whether future generations will receive from us some small portion of that heritage that it was our privilege to know in our lifetimes," he said.

The executive director of the trust, who runs its day-to-day operations, is another North Carolina native, Robert R. Garvey Jr. Discussing how the trust operates he said:

"We have encouraged and aided public efforts to provide information that is necessary for the public to participate.

"We have individuals and groups coming to us for assistance in preservation projects. We write letters.

We can send a person, under certain circumstances, to advise the local groups."

Garvey said further, in 1963: "From east to west, the wrecker's ball and bulldozer are lords of the land. In the ruthless if often well-intentioned, cause of progress, the nation's heritage from colonial days onward is being ravaged indiscriminately—for highways, parking lots, new structures of organized mediocrity.

"The real problem is getting enough public opinion and sentiment aroused. Too often the public sentiment values are not mustered until the new construction plans are completed and announced, and the horse is pretty well out of the stable by then.

"It is significant that we are seeing a great more interest in preservation, by planners, than we saw for a while. It is a fact that we are getting more correspondence and telephone calls from them."

Communities which have asked for and received advice from the National Trust include Santa Barbara and San Francisco; Litchfield, Conn.; Georgetown, in the District of Columbia; Lexington, Ky.; New Orleans, Annapolis and Easton, Maine; St Louis County, Mo.; Portsmouth N.H.; Staten Island, N.Y.; Providence, R.I.; Charlestown, S.C.; and Alexander, Va.

The Trust owns and operates five historic houses which have been given it for posterity.

Woodland Plantation in George Washington's Mount Vernon estate; Decatur House in Washington, built by Commodore Stephen Decatur and occupied at various times by several famous families; President Woodrow Wilson's last home, also in Washington; the Shadows of Teche, in Louisiana, and Casa Amesti in Monterey, now known also as the headquarters of the Old Capital Club.

Carl Sandberg once wrote: "If America forgets where she came from, if the people lose sight of what brought them along, if she listens to the deniers and the mockers, then will begin the rot and dissolution."