

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Save The Perry House

I sincerely hope that the old Perry home at the corner of Scott and Van Buren street may be saved from destruction and allowed to remain as a wooden structure painted yellow as it is today and as it has been for many years.

Why tear down all the old Victorian houses of old Monterey to replace them with modern structures?

I propose that protection will be provided for buildings and sites having important local, state or national associations; buildings and sites of neighborhood importance.

It is highly regrettable that demolition of buildings that have witnessed important events in Monterey's past, and buildings that meritoriously exemplify the building tastes and styles of other years has occurred.

I do not wish Monterey to become just another typical town, undistinguished and indistinguishable from the cracker box new cities springing up all over California.

I have read in a San Francisco newspaper an editorial outlining that the Junior League's active participation in the plan for the preservation of 34 buildings, selected on the basis of a study of a plan, in that city.

The Monterey Junior League members here might think seriously of joining with the Monterey History and Art Association and the Monterey Foundation in the program of saving not only the old adobe buildings but also the other historic structures such as the old Doud house on Van Buren street to the right of Scott street, and the Perry House on the south side of Scott and Van Buren.

Mrs. W.W. Downer has been investigating the history of the old home from records, family members and pioneers who remember the family and also think it would be extremely sad to see such an historical landmark go down in a dust heap.

I have also been interesting myself in the historic value of both these houses and am convinced that they are more than worth the effort to save them for future generations to look at and enjoy.

Mrs. Downer has had experience in restoring and renovating antiquated structures both on the east coast and in San Francisco.

In addition to the Nicasie schoolhouse (which has since been designated a California Historical Monument) and Governor Eustis' residence, she has renovated a Federal row house on Capitol Hill in Washington, a country house in Virginia and a pair of Victorian flats in San Francisco.

The Governor William Eustis residence is in Cambridge, Mass. and is the second oldest house there. It once stood on the ground of Harvard Square. Governor Eustis was governor of Massachusetts from 1823 through 1825.

Experience gained in mastering these buildings should prove of great assistance in the work proposed for the Perry property.

I made a trip to the Perry home with Mrs. Downer a few days ago and was amazed at the destruction which vandals have accomplished there, but all that did not dampen Mrs. Downer's enthusiasm and determination to make a beautiful and dignified structure there which will be a tourist and home-folks delight to see and to enter.

I also saw a collection of doors, windows, newel posts, and a handsome fireplace mantle and mirror which will replace the one that has disappeared from its old setting.

Much of the information of how the Perry house was built, by whom and dates, has been furnished by Anthony J. Silva, who was born in the First Theatre, lived across the street from that historic building and whose ancestors built the Perry house.

Manuel Perry was a cabinet maker and carpenter and built the original house, his son was a whaler and the grandfather of Anthony J. Silva. Mr. Silva has been residing in Paso Robles but recently returned to make his home on the Peninsula.

I also hope that our Christmas Angels may remain this holiday season on Alvarado street. They are really Monterey symbols and not just like all the other towns between the Peninsula and San Francisco. Let's put more greenery around the posts which hold them, more lights in the shop windows and better shop displays—more Christmasy than they have been in the past.