

05/17/2009

News from the Inn-Spector



Above the Mission Inn lobby desk is a plaque with the following saying:

*You canna expect to be baith
Grand and comfortable*

Greater attention is being paid to this saying as the result of a recent donation. One Sunday afternoon two ladies walked in with this odd looking small wooden plaque. The front desk was busy with tours and really did not have time to talk with them. Staff turned to Doug Hargis, "Would you please talk with these Lady's for us." The plaque is now part of our collections. According to the donor, the sign was purchased here at the hotel where it once was displayed in a restroom. During the course of the discussion the phrase was recognized as the same mounted behind the lobby desk. Where did the phrase come from? Thanks to Doug, we now know.

The phrase appears in the book titled *The Little Minister* (1891) by Scottish author J.M. Barrie. Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937) was a prolific author. He is most well-known for his work *Peter Pan* (1904). *The Little Minister* was made into a play and film, including the 1934 movie starring Katharine Hepburn. Appropriately, Barrie makes liberal use of the Scottish idiom in the melodrama of a minister falling in love with a woman of peirage pretending to be a gypsy lass. The phrase appears in the following context:

"Him," said her man, "that is forced by a foolish woman to wear genteel 'lastic-sided boots canna forget them til he takes them aff. Whaur's the extra reverence in wearing shoon twa sizes ower sma?"

"It mayna be mair reverent," suggested Birse, to whom Elspeth's kitchen was a pleasant place, "but it's grand, and *you canna expect to be baith grand and comfortable.*" (see: Barrie, J.M. (1891). *The Little Minister*. New York: Scribner & Sons)

It is apparent that the phrase pertains to ill-fitting Sunday shoes. The shoes were grand, but one could not wait to get them off and be comfortable. On page 40 of Steve Lech and Kim Johnson's book *Riverside's Mission Inn*, the same plaque now in the hotel lobby appears in the photograph (some 100 years ago) with Charles Fetcher Lummis and Aunt Alice (Alice Richardson). Frank Miller was not the only one to make use of the this phrase. Architects Charles and Henry Greene incorporated the phrase into their design of the Mrs. Carrie Whitworth House in Alta Dena.