

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 9, 1950

Documents on Display

Thomas W. Norris of Carmel has very generously placed on display in Colton Hall his private collection of documents pertaining to the Constitutional Convention held in that hall in 1849 and other documents printed at the time California was admitted to the Union. The documents are under glass, with a typewritten explanatory statement accompanying each. The exhibition was placed there for the entertainment of the members of the Western Museum Conference, who met on the Peninsula Friday and Saturday of last week.

President Millard Fillmore signed the bill on September 9, adopted by the United States Senate on August 13 by a vote of 34 to 18, and by the House of Representatives on September 7, by a vote of 150 to 56, admitting California as a state. It was not until October 18, 1850, that the first news of admission to the Union reached San Francisco with the arrival of the steamer Oregon. The impromptu celebration was followed by a formal one on October 29 when a new star was added to the flag flying in the plaza.

Among the manuscripts owned and loaned by Mr. Norris is the manuscript of General Riley's proclamation of June 4, 1849, written in Spanish as submitted to the printer. General Bennett Riley was the civil governor of California, under instruction from the Secretary of War of the United States. A large poster type proclamation to the citizens of San Francisco to hold a mass meeting in Portsmouth Square on June 11, 1849, is next in line. This meeting was held in response to Governor Riley's proclamation of June 3, 1849.

The original contract between J. Ross Browne and the finance committee for the reporting of the Constitutional Convention, for which he was to receive \$10,000, is of interest to historians. Browne was a world traveler, historian and a resident of Oakland for many years. Mrs. Hugh Comstock of Carmel is his granddaughter.

Next in line is a photostat copy of General Riley's proclamation of October 12, 1849, calling for the ratification of the constitution as submitted to the people.

Two documents one in English and one in Spanish, are copies of the original constitution as submitted to the voters for ratification.

Worthy of study is the original copy of General Riley's proclamation of December 12, 1849, stating that the constitution had been ratified by the voters of California.

Two very attractive, beautifully printed and elaborately decorated invitations, printed in script, one in English and the other in Spanish, are invitations to the citizens of San Francisco to the "Grand Celebration Ball, celebrating the admission of California as the 31st State of Union, on Tuesday evening, October 29." The invitation is signed by M.H. McAllister, John W. Geary, J.D. Stevenson, John Wilson, C.V. Gillespie, W.D.H. Howard, Gregory Yale, D.C. Broderick, F. Argente, William Burling and C.T. Botts. The setting for the ball is not given.

A facsimile of the Congressional Record admitting California as a state in the Union, is followed by the notice of the adoption of the Great Seal of the State on September 29, 1849.

Colton Hall today is what might be called a far cry from what it was in 1844 when on February 15, the city council passed Resolution No. 4135 C.S., giving the Board of Museum trustees of the City of Monterey the use of the second floor for the purpose of establishing and maintaining therein a public museum. The document was signed by J.R. Perry, mayor; Councilmen Curtis, Dormody, Hay and Russo. At that time the hall was divided with many partitions for various offices. Now the one large hall extending the width of the building has been restored, the south fireplace has been replaced, and the whole furnished as it probably was when the Constitutional Convention was held there.

During the past few weeks, the small room adjoining the Constitutional Hall has also been restored to one large room and several historical exhibits have been installed there, including a portrait of Thomas O. Larkin and the original painting of the California bear from which the design for the state seal was made.

The exhibit will remain in place the greater part of this week.