

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Museum's History

Now that the term of office of three members of the Board of Museum Trustees of the City of Monterey has expired and three new members have taken their places, it seems appropriate to review the history of this group of interested citizens who gave of their time and knowledge to make the upper floor of Colton Hall the charming place it is today. Not only are the two rooms upstairs in the hall beautiful architecturally, but the Museum Board has succeeded in bringing back the feeling of the place as it looked during the Constitutional Convention one hundred years ago.

The three retiring directors are Mrs. Hugh Dormody, Mrs. Thomas Mathews, and Arthur Hill Gilbert, the latter having served since September of 1938, the very beginning of plans for a city museum. Taking their places are Mrs. K. Hovden, Pal Clark and Dr. Wesley Heard, all well-qualified to carry on the work of the board appointments of Mayor Leslie K. Smith.

It was on Thursday, September 15, 1938, that a group of five citizens selected by Emmet G. McMenemy, then mayor of the City of Monterey, met for the purpose of organizing an historical museum. On the evening of September 20 the council took the first step toward establishment of an historical museum in old Colton Hall, when the suggestion of the newly appointed museum committee that the upper floor of the building be set aside for their use, was referred to the city manager with the request that it be given every consideration.

On that first museum board were: Mrs. G.S. Curtis, now the efficient chairman; Mrs. H.W. Toulmin, Mrs. W.M. O'Donnell, Arthur Hill Gilbert and Pal Clark, who acted as chairman at that time.

On the 31st day of March, 1939, the Council of the City of Monterey passed Ordinance No. 492 for the establishment and maintenance of a public museum of natural and historical objects within the City of Monterey. The ordinance was signed by Mayor McMenemy, and councilmen: Peter Hay, J.R. Perry, John Thomsen, and Clyde A. Dorsey, city clerk.

In May the first museum board was appointed by B.J. Pardee, city manager at that time. On September 28,

1943, Mrs. Christine Raynsford, who followed Mr. Pardee as city manager, appointed Myron Oliver, Arthur Hill Gilbert, Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Mary Greene and Mrs. John P. Sandholdt to the board, Mrs. O'Donnell and Pal Clark having resigned. The members of the board who have served so well during the past three years and who have actually accomplished the work of bringing Colton Hall back to its rightful historical place in the community, were: Mrs. Curtis, chairman; Mrs. Hugh Dormody, Mrs. George Fuhrman, Mrs. Thomas Mathews, Mrs. John P. Sandholdt, Myron Oliver, Thomas W. Norris, Arthur Hill Gilbert, and Mrs. John B. Morse.

It was on February 15, 1944, Monterey passed to print a resolution, No. 4135: stating that "The use of the second floor of Colton Hall in the City of Monterey, be given to the Board of Museum Trustees for the purpose of establishing and maintaining therein a public museum, subject to the rules and conditions provided in Ordinance No 4135." It was signed by Mayor J.R. Perry and Councilmen Guy S. Curtis, Dr. Hugh Dormody, Peter Hay and Shedo Russo.

The amended ordinance, adopted on December 2, 1947, sets up a board of nine members to be known as a Board of Museum Trustees for the City of Monterey. The members are to be appointed by the mayor, with the approval of the council, for a term of three years. Such trustees are to serve without compensation. That the mayor, with the approval of the council shall appoint persons, who are students of early California history, authorities on the customs, modes and habiliments of the early Californians or are particularly interested in preserving, collecting and collating historical objects for Monterey as honorary members of the Board of Trustees of the City of Monterey.

The ordinance calls for the trustees to meet once a month and at the first meeting in January of each year the officers of the group are to be elected. The board is to have the secretary file copies of their minutes for both special and regular meeting with the City Clerk. Contrary to this last provision, Mr. Edward Walker, the city clerk, has himself acted as secretary, giving his time to the group.

The Museum Board can make its own rules and regulations, for the management and control of the museum and the properties therefore, they shall prescribe the duties and powers of the curator,

secretary and other officers, subject to the approval of the council.

All gifts bequests and grants received for the use of the museum are placed in a fund which is designated the Museum Trust Fund and the expenditures from this fund shall be for such museum purposes as are requested by the board of trustees of the museum, according to the ordinance.

Monterey, the whole Peninsula and in fact the State of California, are most grateful to Mrs. Curtis, who had the vision of Colton Hall as it is today and worked to make that vision a reality. It was in the big room of the building that the Constitution of the State of California was signed and where history was made. The members of the board cooperated in the plans and today the tables are placed as they might have been in 1849 and the pictures of a great majority of the signers of that constitution are under glass at the places where they may have sat.