

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 8, 1950

A Letter From Colton's Niece

On the 22nd of February of 1950 there arrived at Colton Hall the following letter, written by Miss Mary S. Myrick of the Livingston Apartments at Dobbs Ferry-on-the-Hudson, New York, saying: "Colton Hall: Some friends of ours were in Monterey the summer of 1948, and you told them it was being made into a museum in memory of my great uncle, Walter Colton. Could you give me any information as we are all very much interested? The portrait that you have of Great Uncle Walter was painted by a cousin from a miniature that Uncle Walter Colton had, and he gave it to Colton Hall. We hope that some day we will be able to visit, but in the meantime would appreciate any information you could give us. Thanking you for any trouble this request may incur."

Mrs. Curtis immediately answered the note, as the restoration and furnishings in Colton Hall, are in charge of the museum board, and on April 20 she received the following reply:

"My sister and I do thank you many times for your letter and the enclosures, the Centennial edition of the Monterey Peninsula Herald, and in this morning's mail came the magazine, 'What's Doing.'

"We had no idea our Great Uncle Walter was such a great man, and are thrilled over all we have read about him from California.

"You are all to be congratulated over the wonderful Centennial you had and I am sorry we could not have been there. I sent your letter to my brother and he sent me a copy of the letter he had written to you. I find he has made a mistake in saying that the portrait of Great Uncle Walter was given when Colton Hall was built, for the portrait was given around 1914 by our Uncle Walter Colton, who was named for Great Uncle Walter. It should be recorded as a gift from the nephew and namesake, Walter Colton.

"We have great Uncle Walter's wallet, with a Mexican coin he gave Uncle Walter. Would you care to have it for the museum?

"Also Great Uncle Walter was one of 12 children, and we have a most interesting picture of 11 of them taken

at a family reunion, and could have a copy made if that would be of interest.

"I have copied Great Uncle Walter's record from the Colton Book, which I am enclosing. We do not know about his son but will see if any of the cousins do.

"We are interested in the letter you sent us of Mrs. Louis. We find in our Colton Genealogical Book a Cecilia Childress born in Minersville, Utah, and married Albert Joseph Louis of Beaver City, Utah. They had four children. Cecilia Childress is the daughter of Alonzo and Nettie (Lawry) Colton. She is the eighth generation and a different branch than we are, but we all go back to the original, George Colton, who settled in this country before 1644.

"We are having the Centennial paper bound.

"I do hope we can get to Monterey some day, and see all the things our ancestors helped start and which have grown so wonderfully through the years.

"My sister, Blanche, joins me in kindest regards, and we hope we will have the pleasure of meeting you.

"Sincerely yours,

"MARY S. MYRICH."

From Julian S. Myrick, a brother of Miss Mary Myrick and a grand nephew of Walter Colton, came the following letter: "I was very much interested in reading and learning about Colton Hall; also in reading and learning about Colton Hall; also in reading the clippings showing the fine work you and your associates are doing in this connection. I have always thought that the portrait of Walter Colton was given by his nephew and my uncle, Walter Colton. He commissioned me to have the portrait from a daguerreotype which he provided, and I had Walter Biggs do the portrait. I had some books written by him which I intended to send out to you, but in the course of moving, etc., have not been able to locate them. When I do, I will certainly see that they are sent. I have never been to Monterey but hope to be able to visit one of these days."

With Miss Myrick's letter came the following copy from the George Colton Genealogical Book:

Rev. Walter Colton, born May 9, 1789, in Rutland, Vt.; Married Cornelia B. Colton, June 26, 1844. He died in Philadelphia, Penn., January 22, 1851. She married second time, Hon. S. B. Chittenden of Brooklyn, N.Y.) .

He graduated from Yale College in 1822, and from Andover Theological Seminary, 1825; Professor of Moral Philosophy and Belles Lettres in Capt. Partridge's Military Academy at Middletown, Conn.; county editor with Jeremiah Evarts of the "American Spectator" and "Washington City Chronicle" in 1830. Appointed by General Jackson a chaplain in the United States Navy in 1830, and in 1835 was assigned to the chaplaincy of the Naval station in Charlestown, Mass. He was the author of several volumes, among them "Ship and Shore," "Constantinople and Athens," "Deck and Port" and "Three Years in California." Was also one of the editors of the Philadelphia "North American" 1840-1844. In 1845 was ordered to California; was alcalde at Monterey, first by military authority, and afterward by popular election, and was territorial governor of the 1849. Built the first school house in California; impaneled the first jury, and established and edited the first newspaper, "The Alta California."

One son, Walter Ewing Colton was born June 3, 1846, in Philadelphia. He married Eliza M. Litchfield, November 24, 1869, in Brooklyn, New York.