

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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California's Great Seal And the Grizzlies

It is probable that Maj. R.S. Garnett drew his design for the Great Seal of California in Monterey in the middle of September when the idea of the seal was discussed informally, and because of his modesty, indifference, or because of military-civilian politics, the design was turned over to Caleb Lyon for presentation.

According to J.N. Bowman, historian, Central Record Depository, in his account of the Great Seal published by the State Printing office, a number of legends have grown up around Garnett's designing of the shield and his relations with Lyon – that he designed the seal in one evening; that he designed it on the beach at the mouth of Lompoc Valley after the shipwreck of the Edith, which, however, was reported in Washington first on September 12th; that he showed the design to a storekeeper in San Luis Obispo after the wreck of his ship; that for the most expressive seal a prize of \$1,000 had been offered by the Convention; that a "Lieut - - - -" prepared the design; and that Lyon's action in presenting the design was not wholly ethical. In Sutter's Fort Museum there is the Reed-Lewis walnut table on which the design is reputed to have been made; and several designs made on this table and discarded, were preserved in the Reed Family for many years but have been lost in more recent years.

The exact design made by Garnett is not known; undoubtedly its central features were Minerva, the river, one or more ships, the mountains, and Eureka. Browne states in his records that Lyon added the stars, and Bayard Taylor, in an early newspaper story, indicated that the bear was added at the instance of Jacob R. Snyder of the Bear Flag Rebellion, that the sheaf and vine were added at the instance of parties from Los Angeles and San Diego, and that the water and ships were to represent the interests of Sacramento and San Francisco Bay. Browne was quoted in the Union on March 17, 1858, as to the correctness of above information.

Whatever the original Garnett design may have been, the design presented and described by Lyon to the convention was the same as the Great Seal adopted in 1949 except for the addition of "The Great Seal of the State of California." In the Lyon description of the seal the body of water is named the Sacramento River, but early references call it the San Francisco Bay. This

uncertainty may have induced the later designers of the new master dies of 1891 and 1937 to place a break in the mountains and later still to add the fort on the left side of the break.

The bear probably was included in the design because of the abundance of these wild animals in California in 1849. Bancroft writes "The bears, wolves, coyotes and other wild beasts were responsible for what little excitement was known about Monterey in the early years of the decade. The bears became so bold as to kill and eat cattle every day in full view of the herdsmen. The Indians were often chased by the bears, and one was killed by a grizzly. More than 50 bears were killed in 1801-02 including one who had distinguished himself by eating five mules and seven cows.

"Traps and poison proving inadequate, the governor was called upon to authorize the use of 1,000 cartridges, and a regular military campaign was undertaken against the enemy. In 1805, some four hundred head of livestock were killed in and about one rancho, although about thirty mares had been killed and their poisoned carcasses used against the beasts."

There had arrived in California and settled in San Francisco, on July 22, 1849, an engraver, George Albrecht Ferdinand Kuner, or as he was usually known, Albert Kuner. Lyon engaged him for the task of engraving the dies for the Great Seal. Kuner had engraved the dies for the first \$10 and \$5 gold pieces for the private gold coiners, Moffat & Co., and who, in October of the same year, had opened his own shop in the Bay City.

Kuner was born on Oct. 9, 1819, in Lindau on the islands in Lake Constance, a part of Bavaria since 1805, and learned the engravers' trade in Nuremberg. In addition to the Great Seal he made the first seal for the State Supreme Court, for the new state counties, for the Masonic, Odd Fellows, Redmen, Druids and other lodges. His name as an engraver appeared in the San Francisco directory until 1904. He died there on January 23, 1906, leaving three daughters and a son. None of his account books or business papers survived the fire of 1906.

(More Tomorrow)