

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 9, 1951

More About the Great Seal

It was not until 1917 that the second seal for the State of California was used permanently, although it had been used intermittently since 1883. The dominant distinctive characteristics of this seal are the sidewheeler steamboat in place of the sailing vessel on the extreme left, Minerva's hand and wrist rest on a shield, the miner's pick is now below the body of the ship, Minerva's right elbow is above the fingers on her left hand, the miner's shovel is not over the edge of the pit, a decorative fringe now appears on the inside of the outer band of the seal, and there is no point of land between the ships behind Minerva.

Then there was a third Great Seal! This new one is first found on a proclamation of Nov. 16, 1891. It was made by Albert Kuner about July 7, and the warrant in payment was drawn 10 days later for \$100.

Albert Kuner was the maker of the first Great Seal. The Sacramento Union of July 17, 1891 reported the payment of the warrant. The dominating difference in this third Seal was the bear with the head raised, the open space in the mountains (maybe to represent the Golden Gate), and a small hill on the point of land on the left, the tip of the bear's nose is under the rocker arm and most of his feet are visible, only part of the Medusa head is visible, the pick handle is nearer the stern of the ship, the spear points to E of EUREKA, the mountain peaks are less pointed, Minerva's right elbow is above her left hand, the fingers of which are in a straight line with the spear, and her right forefinger extends upward along the spear. The master die of this seal is still in use on the hand press in the office of the Secretary of State and its impression was the basis of the design set forth in the law of 1937.

Then there was a fourth Great Seal for this great State! It was the last and made its first appearance on a proclamation of Sept. 22, 1937. It was made in late August of that year by an engraver of the firm of Patrick and Moise Klinkner Co. for the Norman F. Hall Co., both of San Francisco. The cost was \$240. The engraver of this master die was James Cairns, born in New York State on April 15, 1887, of Scotch parentage: he learned the engravers' trade in Bridgeport, Conn. He came to California in 1918, and since the year following has been with his present employer.

Cairns states that the master die was made by free-hand engraving in about two and a half weeks and that the object on the left point of land at the "gate" he engraved as a fort. The differentiating characteristics of this seal are the tip of the bear's nose under the corner of the rocker, the stars with five points, the fort on the left point of the break in the mountains, the miner's pick shown as near the stern of the ship, the spear pointing to K in EUREKA, Minerva's left fingers extending beyond the line of the spear. The Master die of this seal is still used on the electric press in the main office of the Secretary of State.

The die of 1849 was in use until 1906; from 1883 or whenever the second master die was engraved, two dies were in use, and from that date 1906, three dies were intermittently used; from 1906 until 1917 there were two dies, from 1917 to 1937 there was only one in use and from 1937 to the present day two dies and two presses have been available for certification of papers.

The original design for the seal made by Major R.S. Garnett was already lost or mislaid before the end of the Constitutional Convention at Monterey. On October 11th W.H. Halleck, a member, inquired as to the whereabouts of the design as Garnett wished it returned but he received no reply, according to the records of J. Ross Browne, the secretary.

The original design submitted by Caleb Lyon and used by Kuner in engraving the master die has also disappeared, according to the history of "The Great Seal of California" as written by J.N. Bowman, historian, Central Record Depository.

The designers of the second and third seals are also unknown, nor have the original designs been found. The fourth master die was made from the design established as the official State Great Seal by the Legislature in 1937; but this official design is a reproduction of the seal of 1891 with a few minor changes in detail relations.

(More on Monday)