

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 29, 1952

Pioneer Press

While browsing in the Monterey Public Library a few days ago, we found in the room devoted to Californiana a delightful publication entitled, the Pioneer Press of California by Carl Irving Wheat. It was published by Biobooks of Oakland, California in 1948, and printed by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco.

In the past we have written of the Zamorano Press on which the Californian, the first newspaper in California was printed in Monterey; of the Zamorano 80, a collection of the best publications on California history before the turn of the century; and of the "Californian" and its contents. "The Pioneer Press of California" contains much additional information to that which we have known and used in the past, so we are passing it on to the readers of the Diary today.

News of the world and its doings came almost solely through the "Boston Boats," through the Viceroy of New Spain – and later the ruling clique of Mexico, or when some explorer touched the shores of Monterey. More than half a century had followed Anza's visit before the need of a printing press was felt on this still very lonely shore.

In 1825 Augustin V. Zamorano came from Mexico to Monterey to be the secretary to Governor Echeandia. He soon decided that he must have a printing press and start his business career. He accordingly arranged with Thomas Shaw, a trading sea captain, for the purchase of a press and type in Boston. Captain Shaw bought the press and delivered it at Monterey on board the "Lagoda" in June, 1834, and its records are now a part of the historical collection in the library of Harvard University.

Even at the time of the purchase of the press it was a "weather-beaten relic – an ancient Ramage – fashioned on the old plan, with great wooden uprights, large enough to sustain a building; its stone bed surmounted by a massive iron screen."

E.C. Kemble wrote in his "History of California Newspapers," published in the Sacramento Daily Union on Dec. 25, 1858: "In the patent office at Washington, preserved under glass, is an illustrious member of the family of printing presses ... at which that honored representative of the craft, Benjamin Franklin, worked

as a printer. It is probably the oldest printing press in America, though the same style, known as the Ramage press, has continued in use until within 10 or 15 years." The old Franklin press, continued Kemble, is an exact duplicate of the press which ... "executed the first printing on the northwest shores of America; the press which gave California the first newspaper and on which were afterward printed the first journals of the interior and of the mines."

Today the Franklin press, on which Franklin worked in 1726 as a journeyman in London, has been placed near the main entrance to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where it was brought from the patent office more than 50 years ago.

Next to it stands a tall, and likewise massive, Ramage press made about 1823. It is clearly the type, if not the exact counterpart of the Zamorano press of old Monterey, on which were imprinted the first specimens of typography to be struck off on what is now the Pacific Coast of the United States. It has been said that the entire outfit, including the type, cost but \$460 delivered at Monterey, including the sea captain's profit.

Two years after its arrival Zamorano used it for the first time. One of his first efforts was an advertisement for his shop, which being translated, read:

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

At the printing office of The Citizen Augustin V. Zamorano & Company established in this capital, service is offered to the public with the greatest punctuality and care, receiving all sorts of writings under the rules established by the laws for the liberty of the press, subjecting the loose impressions to the following rates, and agreeing at more equitable prices with gentlemen who may wish to establish any periodical.

Figueroa's Manifesto to the Mexican government was published by Zamorano in Monterey in 1835. In 1836 Governor Alvarado ordered to be printed upon the press his celebrated "Declaration of Independence" of Alta California.

The press finally left Monterey for Sonora where it stayed for a time before being brought back to Monterey and stored in El Cuartel on the city plaza.

(Continued Tomorrow)