

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 30, 1952

### **Says my Mama**

When the Rev. Walter Colton arrived in Monterey as chaplain of the U.S.S. Congress, and later to build Colton Hall he unearthed the Zamorano Press and began the publication of The Californian with the assistance of Robert Semple, who later became the president of the First Constitutional Convention in 1849.

About 1848 a tiny settlement near Sutter's Fort was growing into a tent city and the old Ramage press was loaded on a small California-built sailing vessel bearing the name, "Dice mi Nan" (Says my Mama) and carried up the river to the fort, where on April 28, 1849, The Placer Times was printed, the first newspaper in Sacramento.

In June the much traveled press moved again, two miles to the west, to a mining community known as "Embarcadero." From there the venerable Monterey Press was taken to San Francisco to be preserved as an "heirloom" by the publishers of The Alta.

When H.H. Radcliffe, an Englishman with an urge to print, according to the author of "The Pioneer Press of California," wished to start a newspaper in Stockton, he appealed to The Alta for the Monterey or Zamorano Press. It was again loaded on a sailing vessel and early in 1850 printed the first issue of The Stockton Times and Tuolumne City Intelligencer – another tiny sheet of foolscap. It lasted for one year until the great fire of May 6, 1851, destroyed the plant.

The old press survived the fire, for two Sonora men had purchased the entire outfit. While it was still in Stockton the first issue of The Sonora Herald was set up and printed as of July 4, 1850. A few days later the old press was loaded on a wagon and taken to Sonora.

A co-editor of the Sonora press wrote home to his eastern family many letters telling of his life in the 'diggin's.' In one of them the printer editor remarked:

"I have known of printing offices in log cabins with the latchstring always hanging out but here I am seated at a table covered with papers in the middle of a 'rag house,' ten by fourteen feet surrounded by all the paraphernalia of a printing establishment. We have two or three cases of old type, a wooden 'stick' manufactured by my own hands with a jack-knife and an old Ramage press that has long been a pioneer in the

business, the first numbers of nearly all the papers printed in California having been printed upon it after it had been brought second-hand from the States through Mexico ... It well deserves the title of the "Pioneer Press." It has spoken to millions and no one can calculate the amount of good it has already done, nor estimate what amount it is yet capable of doing. Then as a reward for past services it well deserves to be placed by the side of Franklin's old press in Washington as a curiosity for future generations to look upon. In a century to come when our children have read the history of California, with what wonder they would look upon the press." The foregoing was written in 1850.

The history of the Zamorano press did not end with its life in Sonora. The nearby camp of Columbia needed a press to publish a hometown paper, so in October of 1851, the old Monterey press was again hoisted onto a wagon and hauled over the hills to Columbia, now an historic monument owned by the State of California. On the twenty-fifth day of October, 1851, the first edition of The Columbia Star was published.

G.W. Gore, who had acquired the press and published The Star could not meet his payments, and finally the press was sold under execution, being removed from the building in which it had operated and placed outside where it remained overnight. That night the press was again moved to the middle of the street and "an act of vandal ruffianism committed." A fire was set beneath the historic old press and the venerable relic destroyed. Thus passed from the archives the first printing press to visit California. When it arrived in 1832 the pastoral simplicity of California was at its best, Mr. Wheat writes. Zamorano, Vallejo, Colton, Semple, Kemble, Gunn, and Christian, all drew vigor from its mechanism. The Californian, The Placer Times, The Stockton Times, The Sonora Herald and the Columbia Star.

(More on Thursday)