

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Same Old Problems

History repeats itself. In 1891 the question of bigger and better schools and the eventual use and restoration of Colton Hall, were the subjects for a great deal of newspaper publicity and discussion by the man on the street, as they are today.

The public school 61 years ago was held in Colton Hall which was inadequate, it having been built for other purposes in 1849. A group of citizens started a campaign to acquire a lot and build a real school building. The board of school trustees resolved to call for the issue of \$20,000 in bonds for school purposes, \$2,000 to New Monterey and \$16,000 for a 10 or 12 room grammar school in Monterey.

A few nights previous a meeting had been held in Bagby's Opera House to hear a report of the committee which had been appointed to examine Colton Hall. The report declared that Colton Hall was unsafe and recommended the issuance of at least \$18,000 in bonds for school purposes.

These statements and decisions set off a heated discussion which lasted until December when the question of situation and cost of the new building was finally settled to the satisfaction of most of the citizens.

The editor of The Cypress wrote: "Those who have any doubts as to the unsafety of the building (Colton Hall) can easily satisfy themselves by making a thorough examination. As was demonstrated by the committee a few days ago, the defects in the old structure are not yet apparent to the casual glance. A multiplicity of coats of paint and white-wash hide the most defective and dangerous portions of the building.

"No one had ever before pried into the walls and ascertained their weakness and humidity; nor taken up pieces of the flooring to find nothing but streaks of rotten wood where the floor plates and joist should be; no one had ever peered into the loft, and learned the dangers in that locality. Hence we sincerely hope that the bonds will carry and that a good, roomy building will be erected on an elevated and healthy location."

In another note there appears this news: "Complaints have been made that boys are warring on Colton Hall, and are breaking the windows with stones, and otherwise mutilating it. The first Constitution of the

State of California was framed and signed in Colton Hall and it may be possible that the state will take it in hand and preserve it because of its historical importance." This bit of information could have been written today instead of in 1891, so similar are the plans for Colton Hall today.

A few days later Mr. Francis Doud Sr., one of the gentlemen who examined Colton Hall and reported it in good condition told The Cypress representative that he was not against the bonds. He went to examine the building through a desire on his part to have it protected from destruction at the hands of vandals, on the plea that it was unsafe. Mr. Doud was of the opinion that while the building might not be suitable for school purposes, it should nevertheless be preserved because of its historical importance and used for other purposes.

Mr. Doud had been present at the Constitutional Convention held there, although not a member. It was Francis Doud who went home for his family's kitchen table when it was found that another table was necessary to seat the delegates. That table is now one of the original articles of furniture in the City Museum on the upper floor of Colton Hall.

On July 3, 1891, the school bonds carried by a vote of 162 to 67. In the same month the school trustees began advertising in The Cypress for a suitable site on which to build a school house, and thus began another long controversy.

(More Tomorrow)