

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Adios to the Old Relic**

Colton Hall and the school questions are still as important today as they were in 1891, when Colton Hall was declared unsuitable for school purposes and bonds were voted for a new school building – but then the question of the choice of a lot on which to build the new edifice became more important – sixty-one years ago.

Answering the sealed bids for a site for the school building were: D. Roderick, a lot on Larkin street, price \$2,900; lot on Hartnell street by P. Zabala, \$3,500; J.B. Snively, Abrego and Fremont streets, \$1,800; lot on California street by M. Soberanes, \$1,900; lot on Van Buren street by David Jacks, \$984, and another on Larkin for the same price. Zabala won and the Hartnell lot was chosen. Later a resolution was passed protesting the school board's action and urging them to rescind their previous decision to purchase the Hartnell lot.

A citizens' committee was appointed following several mass meetings and that committee reported back the following: "After due consideration by us, the final conclusion arrived at, is the present site, with the additions that we have instructed to be purchased for \$1,900 is, in our opinion, the most suitable location for the new school building. The material in the jail and the present school building can be sold for enough to reimburse the district for the amount paid for the additional property."

If that suggestion had been followed through the Walter Colton School would probably now be located facing Pacific Street and bordered by Madison and Gordon – probably the present site of the Few Memorial building and Colton Hall. Mauldin Brothers, a local firm, were chosen as the architects for the new building after their plans had been submitted along with those of nine other outside firms.

The plans called for an 8 classroom building. "A tower thirty feet in diameter surmounts the whole structure and will add much to the grandeur of the building," a news item declared on September 12, 1891.

In the same issue of The Cypress in which the above item appeared, there appeared this notice signed by Harry A. Greene, one of Monterey's best known citizens

until his death a few years ago: "Mr. H.A. Greene requests all those interested in Colton Hall and the jail, to call at Ingram Bros. shop and sign the protest at once."

Again on October 24, 1891, Colton Hall was on the verge of destruction according to The Cypress editor. He stated that it seemed to him there had been too much time and wind lost in discussing Colton Hall. "If those patriots who wish to see the structure preserved," he wrote, "would only move in the right direction (with their hands) and produce coin, the board of school trustees would be in a better condition to act. But under the circumstances they could not see where they could do otherwise than tear the structure down – then adios to the old relic."

November 7<sup>th</sup> a reporter interviewed school trustees Manuel and Abrego, regarding the Colton Hall question. Both men seemed willing to accede to the demands of the people and save Colton Hall if possible. "But how are we going to do it," they demanded. "If the new school house is erected where the citizens' committee have instructed us to build it, there will not be enough yard room for the children without the ground occupied by Colton Hall and the jail, and necessarily those buildings must come down. I for one, would like to see Colton Hall saved, if some brighter mind than mine can show me a way to do it."

The California Pioneer Society had offered \$2,000 but that was not sufficient to protect the old building at that time. \$1,000 was to be paid for the building and the other half of the promised sum was pledged to place it in repair; the structure to be placed in the hands of the City of Monterey and under its care and protection. In the meantime a high board fence was built around Colton Hall to keep the children out of the grounds and trenches were being dug for the foundations for the new school.

When Messrs. Abrego and Manuel were questioned they gave as their opinion that there was no other recourse but to tear Colton Hall down – if the building was in some way saved, then construction on the new school would have to begin anew.

(More tomorrow)