

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Splendid View of the Bay

The Native Sons of the Golden West and several individuals of Monterey pledged \$1,400 at a meeting of the Board of Trade held in November of 1891 to take action regarding the destruction or saving of historic Colton Hall. The newly organized group had been holding nightly gatherings to discuss the serious situation and do all in their power to delay the actual start of clearing the land upon which the school playground was to be placed.

During the meeting enthusiastic speeches were made by Messrs. David Jacks, Hon. B.V. Sargent, Harry A. Greene, R.H. Willey and others. A petition was circulated among the members and the \$14,000 was pledged including one pledge for \$500 from David Jacks. A committee consisting of Martin Doud and Alex Underwood, representing the Native Sons, was present and offered to do all in their power to preserve the historic old structure. A committee was elected to solicit contributions with a view to raising \$600 more towards paying for delays, and purchasing another lot for the school building. The money paid was to be a loan and not a donation. It was to be repaid when an appropriation was made by the Legislature or the California Societies for the purchase and preservation of Colton Hall.

An editorial in The Monterey Cypress on November 21, 1891 began: "The people of Monterey were never more unanimous in any one thing than that Colton Hall should be preserved. The old building's historic connection with the Golden State has won for it not only the admiration, but also the reverence of the old pioneer and the native son, while those whose eyes have been accustomed to gaze on the old structure since their birth look upon its destruction as a deed bordering on sacrilege."

The very idea of tearing down the old building, then as now, brought forth the following remarks: "Why you might as well talk of tearing down the old Mission!" or "You might as well advocate doing away with the Serra Cross!"

But the school board treasury had been depleted to the extent of \$2,025 for the additional land just four weeks

before, leaving a sum of \$18,000 for the erection of three new buildings.

And so the fight went on. The Cypress advocated that some means be devised to save the building without crippling the school fund. It was suggested that some of the moneyed men of the community advance \$5,000, the value of the property; let that money be given outright to the school district, and then let them assume the risk of "unloading it upon the state or some society or societies in the future."

On the evening of November 28th, 1891, a large group of Monterey voters met in the Bagby Opera House in answer to a call made by the school trustees to decide the matter of selecting a site for the school other than Colton Hall. During the evening Captain Lambert, director of the Custom House, read the following resolution which was adopted: "That Colton Hall and its entire surroundings should not be sold excepting to the Pacific Coast Pioneers or the Native Sons. Lambert had been assured by members of both organizations that they would make an effort to secure an appropriation from the Legislature to preserve the historic structure. Martin Doud supported the resolution and promised that as a Native Son of the Golden West he would do all in his power to preserve it.

Following the adoption of the resolution, the business of the selection of a lot upon which to build the new school was taken up and after the clerk had opened the three bids – one from David Jacks, one from Zabala for the Hartnell lot and one from Francis Doud Sr., for a lot on Pacific street. The Doud lot was the unanimous choice of all present. The price was \$1,000 for a 300x300 foot lot and so the new school was built on the site of the present Walter Colton school and even in 1891 there was a soda works opposite the school.

A description of the new building to be constructed makes entertaining reading. "The new school building, which will be eighty feet from foundation to dome, will loom up grandly. The new site is at least twenty feet higher than the Colton Hall lot and commands a splendid view of the bay."

(More tomorrow)