

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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When A Sailor Set the Type

The Rev. Walter Colton, "late Alcalde of Monterey; author of "Deck and Port" dedicated his "Three Years in California" to "Gen. Guadalupe Vallejo, one of California's distinguished sons, in whom the interest of Freedom, Humanity, and Education have found an able advocate and munificent benefactor."

On Saturday, Aug. 22, 1846, he noted this in his daily report: "Our little paper, the Californian, made its appearance again today; many subscribers have sent in their names since our last, and all have paid in advance. It is not larger than a sheet of foolscap; but this foolscap parallel stops, I hope, with the shape. Be this as it may, its appearance is looked for with as much interest as the arrival of the mail by the New Yorkers and Bostonians in those days when a moon waxed and waned over its transit."

On the 31st of Aug. 1846, Colton wrote in his diary: "I am at last forced into a systematic arrangement of my time; without it, I could never get through with my studies. I rise with the sun, read till 8 o'clock, and then breakfast; at 9, enter on my duties as alcalde, which confine me till 3 p.m., then dine; and at 4 take my gun and plunge into the woods for exercise and partridges; return at sunset, take tea, and in the evening write up my journal, and an editorial for the Californian."

First of all, we did not know before that there were ever partridges on the Monterey Peninsula, at present we do not know of editor or journalist who arises with the sun; who does all the other fascinating, regulated things that Colton claims he did each day, but we think that it was a grand procedure and thoroughly recommend the program to all those who would have the stamina to continue it. Maybe today our lives are too hurried and hectic, with too many interests and we do not stop often enough to think about the beauty which surrounds us, to carry out a program, no matter how much we might wish to.

Saturday, Sept. 12, 1846, the Rev. Mr. Colton wrote in his diary: "my partner in the 'Californian' has been absent several weeks. All of the work of the office has devolved upon a sailor, who has set type for the whole paper, with fingers stiff as the ropes around which they have coiled themselves into seeming fixtures. Yet the;

'Californian' is out, and makes a good appearance. Who would think, except in these uttermost ends of the earth, of issuing a weekly journal, with only an old tar to set the type, and without a solitary exchange paper!

"By good fortune, a hunter brought along a copy of the "Oregon Spectator": it is quite a windfall, though the only intelligence it contained from the United States was that brought its editor by some overland emigrant. The 'Spectator' speaks of the institutions of the "City of Oregon" with as much reverence as if they had the antiquity of the Egyptian Pyramids, when there is scarce a crow's nest which does not date further back. But age is no evidence of merit, since folly runs to seed as fast as wisdom."

Evidently the "Californian" continued to appear on the streets of Monterey for several more months for on Saturday, Dec. 12, Colton referred to the newspaper again in his diary. This notation was made by the alcalde on that date: "Our paper, the only one published in California, made its hebdomadal appearance again today. It is a little fellow, but is half filled or more with original matter. A paper is much like an infant; the smaller it is the more anxious the attentions which it requires. My partner promised to stick by me, but has been the greater part of the time of its commencement, on the Bay of San Francisco. He went there to locate a city but if rumor speaks truly, has gone off in quest of his Aphrodite before he builds her shrine. I suppose he thinks there is but little use in a cage without a bird, but there is still less in a bird without a cage. Birds, however, always pair before they rear their nests. So that my partner is after all in nature's great line, however wide it may run from the columns of the Californian."

(To be Continued)