

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Travels of a Printing Press

We were writing in our last issue of the diary of the Rev. Walter Colton's venture in journalism in Monterey during his three years spent here, 1846 to 1849. His partner was Robert Semple, a huge and picturesque frontiersman, and the name of the paper was the Californian.

We have already reviewed the first issue which appeared at Monterey on Aug. 15, 1846, and subsequent events up to Feb. 10, 1847, when Colton wrote in his diary: "My tall partner in the Californian is back at last from his three months' trip to San Francisco. I excused his long absence, and cheerfully endured all the toll of getting out the paper, with only the assistance of a type-setting sailor, under the vague impression that he was hunting up a wife.

"But he has come back as single as he came into this world. Whether his solitude is a thing of choice or necessity I have not inquired. A man's celibacy is misfortune, with which it seems wicked to trifle. It is too selfish for pity and too serious for mirth. But let my partner go; he will get a wife in due time; indeed he has had one already; and hat is about the number which nature provides."

Evidently, although it is not stated in the notice appearing in the Californian on Feb. 13, 1847 the publishers would like to have their subscribers supply more financial support to the weekly paper. This notice appeared on that date: "To our patrons—it will be remembered that this week is our 26th number and of course closes the first six months. Many of our patrons only subscribed for that period. Those wishing to continue the paper, will let us know. We are making arrangements to enlarge our paper, and it is desirable to get the money already due and what we can of new subscriptions."

The Californian was printed in the shop of Augustin Vicente Zamorano, who established the earliest California printing press at Monterey in 1834. Previous to the Zamorano press, impressions had been taken from wood blocks and later from type, but who the printers were has not been discovered.

Zamorano came from Mexico in 1825 as the executive secretary of the Territory of Alta California and served

11 years as second administrative officer. In addition he commanded for six years the most important military post within the Territory, the Presidio of Monterey.

Zamorano imported the first printing press to be set up west of the Rocky Mountains and on it printed a series of small books and official proclamations that are the rarest of California imprints.

Semple, who had the sole control of the The Californian in May, 1847, moved the paper and equipment to San Francisco. Later the printing equipment was removed to New Helvetia, or Sutter's Fort, where it was used to print the Placer Times, the first newspaper in the interior of California. Later on, another move to Stockton, in order to produce the Stockton Times. Still, another move in 1850 to Sonora, in the southern mines, where the old press printed the Sonora Herald. Once again on wheels, now to Columbia, where it came to rest, but rested tragically. Not entirely paid for—(ever the grief of the craft according to Herbert Fahey of the San Francisco Club of Printing House Craftsmen)—the pioneer press was, by the party of the first part, unfeelingly dismantled.

On Nov. 28, 1851, the following article appeared in the Daily Alta California (San Francisco: "The Old Pioneer Press Burnt. The Old Pioneer Press of California, which was recently sold, together with other printing materials, to George W. Gore of the Columbia Star, for which a balance of \$370 was left unpaid according to contract, was attached as security. On trial, the jury without hesitation, gave the verdict against Mr. Gore.

The Sonora Herald then had a friend bid to a certain amount, and the press was knocked off to him at \$310. After packing up the materials and removing them to a store for safe keeping till the next morning, as it was impossible to procure a team at the time, according to the story, it was proposed to leave the press where it stood till morning and to pay the person having charge of the building for the privilege. He asked \$32, so it was decided to dismantle the press, all except the frame work, and deposit it under the roof. The frame was left upon the sidewalk. During the night it was moved back to its former place, and there it was burned. The charred remains were returned to Sonora but that city soon had a conflagration and what remained of the historic relic disappeared forever.