

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 26, 1954

The Historical Markers

The condition and correctness of the historical markers on the historic trail in Monterey was the principal subject of discussion at the regular March meeting of the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn.

A tour of the route had been made by members of a committee appointed to make such a survey, resulting in the recommendation that four markers be replaced with new ones. The plaque at the Merritt House and the Casa Amesti are historically incorrect as to the data printed thereon and the ones for the Larkin House and the Pacific Building are so badly worn as to make them objectionable. The directors voted to replace these markers as soon as possible.

The complete lists of all the objects of historical interest owned by the association, and on exhibit in the Old Custom House and the Stevenson House, were presented by the secretary. A copy of this inventory has been sent to the Division of Beaches and Parks, a copy retained by the custodians of the two state owned buildings and a copy attached to the minutes of the association.

Present at the meeting were the following directors: Mesdames Charles Mason, W.R. Holman, Mary Greene, F.L. Knudsen, W.M. O'Donnell, Maria Antonia Thompson, Elmer Zanetta, and Miss Ethel Solliday; Messrs. Carmel Martin, Myron Oliver, Charles McHarry, the president; J.F. van Loben Sels, John Martin and Fritz Wurzmann.

Last Saturday the Old Custom House was alive with the talk and laughter of 50 children of the fourth grade from the Waterford School in the San Joaquin Valley. The class had been studying California history with the promise that a trip would be made during the year to California's first capital. They had left their home town at 6 o'clock in the morning stopped at San Juan Bautista for a tour of that historic monument, had lunch at Lovers Point in Pacific Grove and then visited the Custom House and Stevenson House.

Two teachers accompanied the children, and the principal piloted the school bus on the 275-mile round trip from the valley to the Monterey Bay region.

The Spanish club from the Live Oak Union High School at Morgan Hill, numbering 60 students, were also visitors during the past week touring the Custom House, Stevenson House and First Theater under the sponsorship of their instructor, Miss Eleanor Hodges.

Seven different groups from the Army Language School, students of Russian, have visited the building during this week. Last Friday a number of students from the Romantic department visited the historic museums.

We have written a number of times about the Zamorano press, the earliest California printing press established in Monterey in 1834. 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. It was discovered ..?.. Walter Colton and Semple ..?.. the Californian, California's first newspaper, was printed on this old press in 184?. ..?.. traveling to Sutter's Fort, Columbia and Sonora, the old pioneer press met two great fires in 1851, the first in Columbia and the second in Sonora, and disappeared forever.

Now we hear of another old press which is to be saved among the relics owned by the Book Club of California in the club rooms at 549 Market St., in San Francisco.

Through the generosity of a group of members, the club was presented with one of the three Columbian hand presses in the United States. This fantastically ornate instrument of printing was invented by George Clymer of Philadelphia in 1813, was made in Edinburgh, Scotland, and is certainly a museum piece. However, the new owners claim that it is in excellent working condition and will be used for an occasional broadside, in addition to decorating the office.

This press was found in Santa Cruz by one of the Book Club members, John E. Jones of San Francisco. It is described as being highly decorated. On the bearing support for the main counterbalance lever around the nameplate, is an ornamental design, emblematic of "Productivity." Draconic serpents, emblematic of "Wisdom," adorn the large levers. Surmounting the press on the balancing lever is the American eagle holding in its talons Jove's thunderbolts, the olive branch of "Peace," and the cornucopia of "Plenty," all of which suggest the "Balance of Power."

Of the three Columbian presses in this country, the other two are at Taylor & Taylor (San Francisco printers) and at the Edison Museum (Dearborn, Mich.).

In the Book Trade Weekly there appeared this item:
“Most hand printing presses seem to enjoy a restless, nomadic type of existence. Witness the presses brought here by Zamorano and Sam Brannan. Many years ago, Ted Lilienthal (The Quercus Press in San Mateo) acquired an Albion press once used by William Morris for proofing. Now it is on the move again. This time to the Huntington Library, where it will embellish fine printing shows; also, they plan to do an occasional broadside on it.”