

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 21, 1956

### **Gold Discovery Publicized**

We continue, today the history and fate of the Ames Press, the second to the Zamorano press of historic importance in California. The latter was the press upon which The Californian, the first newspaper in California, was printed by Walter Colton and Robert Semple. Zamorano was the printer.

Ames did not fare too well in San Diego where he had been publishing The Herald since May 29, 1851, so he packed up his old press, type and all, and journeyed to San Bernardino, which had been settled by the Mormons in the early '50s. He started the San Bernardino Herald, a staunch Union sheet. In 1861 the press was taken over by one "Major" Edward A. Sherman and renamed The Patriot, devoted to Abraham Lincoln. In March 1862m he again packed the press type and all else, behind a team of oxen and hauled it through, the Mojave Desert and Owens Valley to the town of Aurora where on May 24th he printed the first issue of the Esmeralda Star.

In 1870 the press went to the ownership of Pleasant Arthur Chalfant who hauled it to Fort Independence in Owens Valley to print The Inyo Independence. There it was sent to collect dust until it went to Ford Dearborn Museum to rest in peace.

The third of the historic printing presses so closely connected with early California was the one brought around the Horn by Sam Brannan to San Francisco in 1846. The trip was made aboard the "Brooklyn" , and ended in the City by the Golden Gate, then known as Yerba Buena.

Brannan was a Mormon and was still in his early twenties when he was made an elder in the Mormon church by Brigham Young, the new head of the church and told to proceed by water to the promised land.

Brannan was a printer by trade. Before he left New York, he had the heading cut for the California Star. He possessed a sturdy press, much on the same order as the Ames press which we have already described, and plenty of type. He also had collected a two-year's supply of paper, all of which was loaded on shipboard.

Brannan and his equipment landed in San Francisco on July 31st, 1846, only three weeks after Sloat had landed at Monterey and taken California for the United States.

This act may have saved California from becoming a Mormon state, which, it is said, was Brannan's secret hope.

Upon landing Brannan immediately set up his press, did a few odd jobs of printing for the authorities and then printed a small balance sheet in October 24, 1846, on which the editor of "Pioneer Presses of California " relates there is not a single copy known to exist. On Jan. 9, 1849, the first issue of The California Star came off the press.

The Star was a small, three column affair, carrying news of Mexico which was at least two months old, some civic news and some complaints.

It was one year after The Star began publication that Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's mill. The editor of The Star, Kemble by name, did not at once believe the news, but Alcalde Colton in Monterey told the story to The Californian. We will repeat that story here: - "Monday, May 29, 1848. Our town was started out of its quiet dream today, by the announcement that gold had been discovered on the American Fork. The men wondered and talked, and the women too, but neither believed. The sibyls were less skeptical; they said the moon had for several nights appeared not more than a cable's length from the earth, that a white raven had been seen playing with an infant, and that an owl had rung the church bells." Then followed several stories for several days, until at last the population started moving.

Brannan learned of The Californian's first announcement made in Monterey of the gold discovery. He then planned a spectacular piece of advertising in The Star. On April 1, 1848, 2,000 copies of a special edition were printed for distribution in the "states", while Brannan arranged for an "express" to rush the copies across the continent. This article was the basis for the first publication of the gold discovery in The New York Herald on August 19, 1849. Thus, it is due to The Star and its old press which had come around the Horn from New York to San Francisco, that the first news of the great discovery was brought to the attention of the outside world.