

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 12, 1957

### **Old Columbia School**

"The Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, Aug. 23, 1904." project of restoring the historic century old schoolhouse at Columbia.

The sum of \$36,500, comprised of pennies, nickels and dimes, contributed by California school children, has been transferred to the State of California Division of Beaches and Parks by the California Teachers Assn. Restoration of this pioneer school was started to prevent further crumbling of its foundation and walls and is now well underway.

Many artifacts have been uncovered under the building and under the large, worn original board floor. Workmen have found handmade ink bottles, lunch boxes, parts of old schoolbooks and other articles of historic interest. Every detail of the two-story building will be restored exactly as it was in the days of the Gold Rush. It is estimated that the cost of this project will be about \$100,000. The Native Sons are giving their support to the children of the state in their endeavor to create a memorial to pioneer education in Columbia, the best preserved "ghost town" in the state.

The California Herald, official publication of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, has recorded an interesting story in the latest issue. The historic item follows:

A man drove into San Jose on Jan. 19, 1850, and stopped his team in front of the building housing the Legislature. Accosting several men standing in the doorway, he asked, "Where can I find Gov. Burnett?"

One of the group stepped forward. "I'm Gov. Burnett. What can I do for you?"

"Col. Fremont sent me down here with 100 books he wants to give the state. Says that California needs a library."

"We're not exactly a state yet," replied Burnett, "but we soon will be, and we certainly appreciate Col. Fremont's thoughtfulness. I'll get someone to give you a hand with the books."

Five days later the Legislature empowered Secretary of State William Van Voorheis to serve as state librarian and authorized him to obtain suitable quarters to be

used "in a manner best calculated to subserve the objects of the library."

On the ninth day of the following April a law was passed creating the state library. From a humble beginning of 100 books presented by Fremont, the library now possesses more than a half million volumes on 21 miles of bookshelves, with 1,500 new books added annually.

Until 1903 only the legislators and other state officials were permitted to use the library. Since that time, it has been available to the public.

The Monterey History and Art Assn., received several gifts of historical value during the regular monthly meeting of the board of directors on Aug. 5. A valuable book, "Narrative of Nicholas 'Cheyenne' Dawson, overland to California in '41 and '49, and Texas in '51." The book is one of seven of the rare Americana series, printed and published by Grabhorn in San Francisco in 1933, and is the gift to the association library from the author's grand - nephew, George E. Dawson, of Carmel.

Mrs. Vida Jacks of Monterey presented the association with a copy of "Practica de los Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignaciz de Loyola" printed in Mexico in 1832. Inscribed in Spanish is this notation: "Gift of Margarita Sanchez de Mayen to Prudenciana Vallejo." Also, "To Rita de la Torre de Serrano, mother of Manuela Serrano de Rico, daughter. Inez Benicia Rico de Jacobs, granddaughter, Aug. 23, 1904."

Miss Hawley Foster of Pacific Grove has given the association one baby dress and cap which belonged to Harriet Peirce Andrews and a beautifully carved tortoise shell comb. Mrs. Andrews' father was the owner of a ship and made many trips 'round the Horn' to California. She was the granddaughter of one of the men (Peirce) who helped to throw tea at the Boston Party.