

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The 31st Star In The Flag

It was just 114 years ago that California became a part of the United States. The struggle only lasted a few months and few people were killed or wounded, yet this was one of the most exciting periods in American history. It was a conflict which was waged from Southern Oregon into Mexico, in Washington and according to many historians, even in London. It was a race between British and American warships which the Americans won – a factor which many historians say saved California for the Union.

It had some names famous in American history – the grandson of Paul Revere along with Fremont, the military leader, and Kit Carson. And it had another figure even more prominent in California than any of these. He is William B. Ide, known as the first and only President of the Bear Flag Republic. His adobe home near Red Bluff in Tehama County has been made a state monument which will be dedicated during the weekend of April 30 and May 1, 1960.

Ide's administration lasted only 25 days but it was the Republic which brought California into the Union and along with it the Bear Flag with its familiar figure of the grizzly which has become the official State emblem and flies beneath the United States Flag on all public buildings.

Ide had been in California only about seven months when history began to be thrust upon him. He was born in Rutland, Mass., March 28, 1796, and was a descendant of a British family which came to America about 1630.

In the winter of 1844 Ide got what was then known as the "Western fever" and he decided to take his family to Oregon the following year. He bought cattle and spent time getting the wagons ready. Mrs. Ide and their daughter, Sarra, helped fashion the canvas covers and the four boys in the family worked in getting the equipment ready. They started out on April 1, 1845 with three painted wagons, the rear of one carrying a sign "Oregon." They had 165 cattle, including 28 oxen which would haul the wagons. In the party were 13 people and five young men who would drive the teams in exchange for their board and passage. When they

arrived at Fort Hall Ide decided that he wanted to go to California. They arrived at Sutter's Fort Oct. 25, 1845.

Finally Ide bought Josiah Belden's half interest in a 17,707 acre ranch south of Red Bluff. Belden had already given him a half interest for taking care of the place. He paid Belden \$6,000 for the other half.

Ide was named civil leader of the party, and of the republic which finally came into being in California. The task of selecting a flag came up, but even this is a source of controversy. Ide gave credit to Henry L. Ford, a member of the party, who is said to have suggested the emblem of the grizzly bear then common in California.

One story is that the flag itself was made from a flour sack and that the emblem was created from a piece of flannel, taken either from a man's shirt or from a woman's skirt. The design was admittedly crude, so much so that at first the Spaniards thought the grizzly was a small pig.

The Bear Flag Republic lasted 25 days with little fighting. Eleven days after a raid upon Vallejo's home Fremont arrived in Sonoma. Americans were still unaware that war had existed between the United States and Mexico since mid-May.

On July 7, Commodore John D. Sloat took possession of Monterey. On July 9th Warren Revere, a naval officer and grandson of Paul Revere, arrived in Sonoma. He brought with him an American flag. The Bear flag was lowered and the Stars and Stripes were raised at Sonoma on July 9, 1846, two days after it had been raised at Monterey.

When the Gold Rush started Ide and his sons and son-in-law, went into the mountains, and returned with \$25,000 with which he bought property north of Red Bluff where he built an adobe house. This property has been purchased by the State of California and is now a State Historical Monument to be dedicated during the weekend of April 30-May 1.

Ide died in Monroeville Dec. 20th, 1852. The site of his burial has never been found.