

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 26, 1960

### **Public Buildings**

As far back as January 1850 the Common Council of Monterey was worried over the crowded condition of the city owned buildings, about the school system and the property in front of Colton Hall and to whom it belonged and most of all about where to put the public library. They were also excited about the prospects of making Monterey the state capital.

But these weighty problems were not the only matters to be settled by the Common Council, some of which are disclosed in the minutes which follow:

Meeting of February 5, 1850

"On motion of Mr. O'Neill. Resolve that a special meeting be called to take place tomorrow afternoon at 8 p.m. that the Prefect of this town be invited to attend, for the purpose of consulting upon the propriety of tendering the public buildings of the town to the assembly now at the Pueblo of San Jose provided they will move hither. Adopted."

Proceedings of the Ayuntamiento of Monterey with the cooperation of Mr. David Spence, prefect, held in Colton Hall Feb. 7, 1850, reported:

"The resolution of the last meeting relative to this matter was read and approved:

"Whereupon it was resolved: That this body offer the Legislature of the State of California use of the public buildings in this town for a term of five years from the passage of this resolution for its future settings free of expense. And that a committee of five be appointed to wait upon the members of the Legislature now in session at San Jose to request their acceptance of the same, and that said committee be empowered to urge speedy passage of an 'Act to incorporate the City of Monterey' now before the Honorable Body. Adopted, unanimously."

Mr. John O'Neil, one of the delegates appointed at that special meeting, evidently went to San Jose with the important message and returned with this report -

"That the bill for the incorporation of the town of Monterey has received the first reading and has been referred to a committee on Corporation to be reported again to the Senate on the twenty-third instance, for a second reading, previous to being sent to the House.

"Our proposals of inducement for removing the Capital to Monterey referred to a committee on Public Grounds and

Buildings, who were instructed to report, the last of the present month.

"Communications were received that evening from the trustees of the Public Library asking for a portion of Colton Hall. It was moved, seconded and carried that they be informed - the building itself is already tendered to the Legislature of the State of California, Adopted."

The problem of where to put the Library was taken up again at a meeting of the Ayuntamiento of Monterey again on March 18, when a petition was received from the residents of the town seeking the use of a portion of Colton Hall, to be used as a public library. The Ayuntamiento responded: "On motion resolved that their petition be granted - they to have use of a portion of the building for so long a time as the Town may deem it advisable."

The Ayuntamiento was changed to the, Common Council of the City of Monterey on April 6, 1850.

On January 13, 1852, the Council was informed by the Assembly of California and the Senate of California that "From the diversity of opinion existing at present as to where the next Legislature shall hold its session, we are of the opinion that a contingency may arise, which will enable us to urge the claims of Monterey, to the seat of Government. And as your Representatives, we desire to be empowered by your Honorable Body to offer for the use of the State of California the public Buildings at your disposal. We invite your Instant attention to this matter as it is of deep interest to the people of Monterey."

It was not until November 17, 1896, that resolution No. 56, was passed to print to clear the title on the property known as Colton Hall, then held and claimed by the trustees of the Monterey School District and others. At that date W. W. James was the president of the Board of Trustees. Just one year later on Nov. 2, 1897, "The city attorney reported the decision of Judge Dorn in favor of the City vs. the Monterey School district for the Colton Hall property."

President Johnson of the council informed the board on Feb. 17, 1989, that he was in receipt of a letter from Assemblyman Feliz stating "that his bill for the preservation and restoration of Colton Hall had been reported favorably by the committee."

On Aug. 4. 1890, Trustee Kennedy protested against Colton Hall being used as a camping ground. After discussion the board concluded it best not to use the property as a camping ground as the privilege had been abused by campers.