

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 6, 1961

Purchase Of Colton Hall

During February of 1900 there were discussions back and forth between the school board and the council concerning the school lot adjoining the Colton Hall property. It was finally decided not to bid for the land at that time, as "our treasury is not in condition to warrant the expense and we are not in any present need of larger grounds."

In March, 1903, the following motion was carried after Mr. Schaufele had made it: "The clerk was instructed to draw a warrant for the sum of \$400 and retain the amount ordered drawn until the delivery of the deed to the lot to the city, by the school trustees." Trustees of the school district were Ross C. Sargent, J. K. Oliver and L. D. Lacey.

The property included as described in the deed:

"Commencing at a point on Gordon street, in said City of Monterey, at the SW corner of the stone wall enclosing the Monterey jail as it now-stands, running hence on the east line of Gordon street 50 feet; hence at right angles easterly 245 feet, a little more or less, to the westerly line of Pacific street, hence at right angles northerly 40 feet to the district school lot, etc., being a piece of land 50 feet wide on the easterly side of Gordon street and 40 feet wide on the westerly side of Pacific street by 245 feet deep, a little more or less.

"Together with all and singular tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging, in other wise appertaining and the reversion and revisions, remainder and reminders, rents, issues and profits thereof."

Ten years before this purchase, Trustee Kennedy had protested against Colton Hall being used as a camp ground. After discussion, the board concluded it best not to use the property that way because campers abused it.

The first official record of the City of Monterey shows the "Meeting of the Ayuntamiento of Monterey at Colton Hall, Jan. 2, 1850, at 1 o'clock p. m. At this meeting committees were formed as follows: On Roads Bridges, and Police, on Laws and Ordinances and on Ways and Means. At the beginning of 1850, Jan. 7, a "Report of commissioners to inquire into the accounts of Walter Colton received and ordered on file."

Meeting Jan. 14, 1950, "Communication from trustees of Colton Hall in relation to Colton Hall. On motion, of Mr. O'Neil the secretary be instructed to inform the trustees appointed by Mr. Colton, formerly Alcalde, that the Ayuntamiento (Council) considered themselves 'ex officio' trustees of the building known as Colton Hall. Adopted."

"On motion of Joseph Boston (storekeeper in the building now known as "House of Gold"): "Resolved by this board that all the town property be placed under its custody as the proper representatives of the people. Adopted."

On motion of Mr. Diaz:

"Resolved that the thanks of this body be tendered to the former trustees appointed by Mr. Colton for the good charge they have taken of the building known as Colton Hall. Adopted."

California's first state constitution, drafted at Monterey in the autumn of 1849, made provision for a public school system, declaring "The legislature shall encourage by all suitable means, the promotion of intellectual, scientific, moral and agricultural improvements," Thus it is quite natural to conclude, as in the words of one Writer, that "the California Public School System was born at the Constitutional Convention, which met in September, 1849.

A notable event occurred in 1834, when William E. P, Hartnell, an Englishman who had married a seniorita of the de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara, established near Monterey a private school College de San Jose."

Hartnell's ambitious program included the three R's English, French, German, and Latin, as well as some philosophy, bookkeeping, and Christian doctrine.

Several other schools were started during the Gold Rush period, notably one founded by the Rev. Samuel Willey in Colton Hall in March 1849, and one by Rev. Albert Williams in San Francisco later that year.