

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Pioneer Press Burns

In the "Daily Alta California" (San Francisco) issue of November 23, 1851, there appeared this information about the ultimate fate of the old Ramage press, which printed California's first newspaper in Monterey and then was moved to various cities, winding up in Columbia to print the Sonora Herald.

The "Alta California" reprinted the Sonora Herald's account:

"The old pioneer press of California, which was recently sold, together with other printing materials, to George W. Gore of the Columbia Star, and for which a balance of \$370 was left unpaid, was attached as security. On trial, the jury without hesitation, gave the verdict against Mr. Gore.

"We instructed a person, however, to bid for us to a certain amount, and it was knocked off to him for \$310. After packing the materials and removing them to a store for safe keeping till the next morning, as it was impossible to procure a team of horses at the time, it was proposed to leave the press where it stood until morning and to pay the person having charge of the building for the privilege. But he asked only \$32! Whereupon it was thought best to remove it from the spot.

It was accordingly taken apart, and all except the frame deposited under the roof. The frame, however, being bulky, was left upon the sidewalk. The night was a fit time for such kind of work, and the opportunity was improved by certain persons to move the frame back into its former place, and there it was burned.

"As regards our own loss, it is nothing at all, for all the materials which are of any use to us have been saved. But for the sake of the profession, and for the credit of the profession, and for the credit of California, whose first newspaper was printed on this press, we do regret the outrage.

"The town of Columbia has immortalized herself, and her citizens can hereafter congratulate themselves on being residents of a place which burns up relics valued by every printer, and revered by every man who feels pride in the past history of California. We sent only yesterday for the charred and half-consumed timbers which constituted the frame, and brought it to our

office, in front of which it is now deposited for examination by all who feel interested in the relic. It shall be duly labeled and preserved, not only to show what it once was, and in memory of past services; but also to show to the better members of society who are fast emigrating to California, how different has been the character of some of her settlers. The appearance of the press as it now stands, forms a chapter in the history of the state; and when a state museum may be established it shall be placed in the collection.

Unfortunately, the press did not survive long enough to be placed in a museum. Sonora had a severe conflagration shortly after the return of the charred frame, and the remains of the historic relic disappeared forever.