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THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY /

by
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California Pioneers
of Santa Clara County
Santa Clara County
Historical Essay Contest
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PREFACE

As a senior in high school I have been concerned about my future, Particularly about the college that I plan to attend. In reading the pampletts concerning the many colleges I have consequently read their histories. I found them very interesting and thus I decided to write on the subject of schools in the Santa Clara County. I have chosen four that were of particular interest to me.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

"No one, therefore, should be discouraged from studying. ... Its greatest service is not so much to increase our knowledge as to stimulate thought and broaden our intellectual horizon."¹ William P. Atkinson spoke of the need for education and Santa Clara County seems to have agreed with his statement fully. Among the many schools to be found in this county there are four with rather unique histories. The institutes for learning are The Santa Clara Female Seminary, The College of Notre Dame, The University of the Pacific, and Stanford University.

The Santa Clara Female Seminary had a interesting and grand history. The boarding school was started as a result of the first annual session of the Baptist Association of Churches in June 1851. Their resolution proclaimed, " Our obligation to the cause of Christ, and to the interest of our adopted state, demands that we, as Baptists, commence,

1, Hunt, Rockwell, D., California Firsts, p. 139.

at once and earnestly, united effort for the advancement of education in California."² The school was infact one of the first schools to be found in the state. The board of trustees for the new school purchased a building, on what is now the corner of Santa Clara and Lafayette streets, from John C. Braley. The building had been constucted by Henry J. Appleton and had been resold two times before the trustees gained possess-ion of it. At one time the building was known as the Pacific Hotel. The first principal of the school was Mary Julia Harwood Hamilton, the graduate of a ladies school in Troy, New York. Mrs. Hamilton must have done a wonderful job because at the Baptist Association of Churches' annual session of 1853 the report stated, "During the year a flourishing school has been in progress at Santa Clara under the able management of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, aided by suitable assistants. The location of this school is delightful."³ The building were chiefly of brick, and were able to accomodate twenty-five boarding and seventy day students. The school became so popular that a separate department for young men was added. The studies were taught by Hiram Hamilton, the principal's husband. The Baptists maintained the school for several years but finally had to sell it to Jane A. French in 1863. Unfortunatly in 1890 later owners tore down the building.

2. Hoover, Rensch, and Rensch, Historic Spots in California, p.452.

3. Ibid.

Although the Santa Clara Female Seminary is no longer an active school, its unique past has enriched the history of Santa Clara County.

The story of the College of Notre Dame is just as different as that of Santa Clara Female Seminary. The institute dates back in California to 1851 and was originally founded by Sister Mary Catherine and Sister Loyola. The two nuns had lived in Oregon and had journeyed to San Francisco to meet four sister missionaries from Cincinnati. While they awaited the arrival of the sisters they were asked to stay in Santa Clara and organize a catholic school. The two nuns decided to stay and they chose a spot outside the Pueblo de San Jose near what is now Santa Clara street. The lot was thirty-seven by fifty Spanish Varas and lay along a irrigation ditch, from which water could be pumped. On this lot there was an unfinished adobe house that the nuns supplemented with a shed and a small two-story frame building. The upstairs of the latter building was used as the sleeping quarters for the nuns, while the downstairs served as the school. In 1855 the College of Notre Dame was chartered as an institution of higher learning. The sisters gradually acquired more land and built more buildings. The school now extended from West Santa Clara Street back to San Augustine and from Notre Dame Street across to Santa Theresa. San Jose soon grew around the school and eventually the school moved to a position some twenty-five miles farther up the peninsula. The change was made in 1923. The little two-story frame building was carefully

moved to the new school site in Belmont. The small building was again moved, only this time to the headquarters of the California Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur on Bohlman Road in Saratoga. Unfortunately, it stood in its new location for only a few years before it was torn down for the expansion of the provincial house. The two brick buildings of the college remained in San Jose until the 1960's. One of these buildings erected in 1876 was demolished in September 1963. The other building, which was the science hall, was under construction at the time of the 1906 earthquake. The edifice withstood the quake^{and} was completed. The stately hall was a landmark for sixty years before it was finally torn down to permit the extension of Almaden Avenue to the north. The school contributed extensively to the history of Santa Clara and its past is one of uniqueness.

The history of Notre Dame college is just as interesting as that of The University of the Pacific. The college is known for the fact that it is the oldest incorporated educational institution in California. The school received its charter on July 10, 1851, but using the name California Wesleyan University. The school was founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was run by Rev. Isaac Owen. The University of the Pacific actually opened on May 3, 1852, in its preparatory department. Edward Bannister was the principal at the time, though in 1854 he was relieved of his duty and Rev. Martin C. Briggs was elected president.

The first regular college class to receive baccalaureate degrees consisted of only five young men and five young women. The scholars graduated in the spring of 1858 under the presidency of Rev. A. S. Gibbons. There were two separate ceremonies because the Female Collegiate Institute and the Male Department were virtually two separate schools, even though they had the same president and board of trustees. In 1871 the college was moved, through the efforts of Greenberry Baker, to College Park in San Jose. There it remained until 1924, when it was moved to its present location in Stockton. In the mean time President W. W. Guth proposed that they change the name from University of the Pacific to College of the Pacific in order to better conform to the scope and type of the work being done. In 1951 the college the college celebrated its first centuary, using the slogan, "A Golden Century Crowns Pacific"⁴ The notable celebrants were President Robert E. Burns, inaugurated in 1947, and Chancellor Tully C. Knoles, who had served as president from 1919 to 1946. The college is still in use today. The College of the Pacific has undergone many changes not only in location and name but its interesting history will not change , only grow more complex.

Stanford University has as an engrossing past as the College of the Pacific. The college was founded on November

4. Hunt, Rockwell, D., California Firsts, p.146.

11, 1886 by Mr. and Mrs. Stanford as a, "Memorial to their child and a gift of love to all the children of California."⁵ The start of construction began on May 14, 1887 and in October 1891 it opened its doors to students. The college was built after the style of the early missions and with a strong Spanish design. Having been constructed around a quadrangle, the inner quad contained a church which Mrs. Stanford dedicated to her husband. Stanford University's most famous graduate was President Herbert Hoover. He received news of his election in his home on the campus. The house is now occupied by the president of the school. Herbert Hoover also assembled the Hoover Library for the school. The library contains an extensive collection of documents on war, peace, and revolution. The Stanford University started out as a memorial to a deceased and beloved son and has grown into a very respected establishment of learning. The history of this college has been long and interesting and will continue to grow.

William P. Atkinson's statement concerning education has certainly been taken to heart by the people of Santa Clara County. The county has developed many schools, each with a unique history of its own. Four of these schools have had rather interesting but different pasts. The Santa Clara Female Seminary was one of the first schools in California and through many changes it has closed its doors.

⁵, Hoover, Rensch, and Rensch, Historic Spots in California, p. 462.

Though the College of Notre Dame has also been closed it to
had an engrossing history. The University of the Pacific was
the first chartered college in California and is still in use
today as is the Stanford University.

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Wm. H. Hall

1895

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