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BEGINNINGS

A History of San Jose's Education

through 1906

by

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APRIL 29, 1985

LELAND HIGH SCHOOL

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

I was surprised by all this seemingly simple report got me into! I was fascinated by the little I knew of education in San Jose and I wanted to find out more. Also, several of my relatives were teachers in San Jose many years ago and can vaguely remember the "olden days."

In deciding on my final topic, I eliminated several related areas. Among other things I originally wanted to include a history of the State Normal School. I soon found however, that the history of the State Normal School is a topic all its own. I chose 1906 as the concluding year for the paper because it is the end of an era for education. After that year, most of the schools were new and the size and complexity of the district increased dramatically, making the topic too broad for a single research paper.

When I began doing my research, I soon found that books were not going to provide me with anything more than the most elementary facts. The history of San Jose's education has never been thoroughly written up before, and therefore primary sources would prove to be the basis for the paper.

My most unique source was the board meeting minutes of the San Jose School District. These are located in a vault at the district office, and I was given special

permission to look through these original manuscripts, dating from 1860 to the present for use in my paper. These minutes are in heavy leather bound books, all handwritten by the various secretaries of the board.

I was able to get the clearest picture of what went on in San Jose's education, though, from reading old newspapers (on microfilm). I chose selected periods of time and searched the papers for anything relating to education. I found education mentioned on a daily basis in the early years, and less frequently later. Most of the action was visible in excerpts from the board of education minutes and common council notes. Many times there were editorials relating to education as well.

Other sources were obtained from the California Room at the San Jose Public Library (newspaper clippings, and an 1892 Superintendent's Report), the Leland California Collection, the Almaden Public Library, and the San Jose State University Library (microfilm).

I enjoyed doing the research and learned a great deal from it. I really began to see what education was like in the early years and understand its importance in the city. I hope that those who read this paper will be able to create for themselves a picture of early education in San Jose.

BEGINNING

BEFORE 1850

The early years of education in San Jose are rather humorous and provide a good introduction to what would become San Jose's public school system.

The first mention of any school in San Jose occurs in 1794. The Spanish governor, Diego Borica, was told to find a teacher for a pueblo school; higher authorities felt it was time for the children of the town to "get some learnin'."¹ Borica hired Manuel de Vargas as the teacher and the school was held in the pueblo's granary. The parents were not very supportive of the school, so the governor ordered the town council to demand that parents send their children to the school. Tuition was 85 cents a month per child. De Vargas became very discouraged with his work and left fairly soon. A second teacher, Ramon de la Vega, was hired at \$6.20 a month, but he soon left as well. During this time, all children 7-10 and all illiterate non-commissioned officers were required to attend. A grain tax was levied to help pay for the school. All school reports and copy books were sent to the governor for approval.² One interesting

¹Edith Brockway, San Jose Reflections. (Campbell, 1977), p. 37.

²San Jose Mercury-News, April 23, 1950, p. 41.

antidote is that during these years, due to a shortage of writing paper, the students would write on cartridge paper before it was rolled into cartridges.³ This school lasted only a short time before it was decided to stop it due to various problems.

In 1811, a second attempt was made to start a school in San Jose. This time Rafael Villavicencio, a retired corporal, was the instructor. He was paid \$6.25 a year in grain and flour per family. A document was found in the archives of the pueblo relating to this school. It was sent to the commander at Monterey for approval and could be considered the first school law for the city of San Jose. The school was to be in session six hours a day: three in the morning, and three in the afternoon. Twice a week religious instruction was included. Attendance policies were strict. On the first absence the parent was notified, and on the second absence the commissioners compelled the family to send the child to school. The school's value is expressed in an interesting quote: "During the time in which the children are at school, their fathers will be exempt from being responsible to God for them, as the teacher will be the one who is thus responsible."⁴

³Brockway, p.38.

⁴H. S. Foote, Pen Pictures from the Garden of the World. (Chicago, 1888), p. 142.

By 1818, a new school room was provided with Antonio Buelna as teacher. He was paid \$15 per month in grain. The school was soon disbanded due to changes in the governmental and social environment.⁵ Classes did not begin again until American influence began to be felt in the 1840's. The early teachers were classified by some as "infirm, stupid - or worse - instructors sent down from San Francisco's presidio."⁶

The first American school was started at Mission Santa Clara in an unused building (the stable!) somewhere between 1846⁷ and February 1847.⁸ Another school opened in the San Jose jail, where students were separated from prisoners by only a barred window.

The gold rush brought mixed blessings. Some say it stripped the city of its teachers, others say it brought in educated easterners. Whatever the case, in March of 1849, Rev. J.W. Douglass started a private school, and in January, 1850 a very famous school was started by Rev. S. V. Blakeslee. It is known for the fact that it was held

⁵ Brockway, p.38.

⁶ San Jose Mercury News, April 23, 1950.

⁷ San Jose Mercury News, October, 1936.

⁸ Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California. (Berkeley, 1937), p. 26.

⁹ San Jose Mercury News, April 23, 1950, p. 41.

¹⁰ San Jose Mercury News, April 23, 1950, p. 41.

¹¹ Ferrier, p.47.

in a large blue tent made out of the same material that was used in mining areas. Children were taught by formal Eastern teaching methods, and neighbors remarked that they could hear the students singing and reciting.¹²

The first secular school, started in 1851 by Rev. E. Bannister, became known as the San Jose Academy. The Bascom Institute, started in 1852 or 1853, was a famous school run by the Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of Mrs. R. C. Hammond.

Though San Jose did not yet have its first public school, the seeds were planted for the beginning of a public school system.

¹²Roy W. Cloud, Education in California. (Stanford, 1952), p. 32.

BASICS

1850-1859

The first public schools were made possible by the passing of a legislative act dated May 1, 1851. This act authorized a 5 cent/\$100.00 state education tax and a 2 cent/\$100.00 local education tax.

In 1852, parents contributed a total of \$185.00 which allowed for the building of a \$75.00 shack on the Plaza (near today's city hall - then the garbage dump!).¹³ A county common school system was established which had 16 districts.

In May, 1853, the San Jose school commissioners reported to the common council that a public school had been established March 14, 1853 (or 1852?¹⁴), under Rev. H. Richardson. This school had "rough going," for the state school fund was not as large as originally hoped for. It became necessary to send pro-rata bills to parents in order to cover the costs. Since some parents could not pay, a \$100.00 deficit resulted.¹⁵ This school was moved to the Baptist church (Second and San Antonio) where "lowest cost price" instruction was promised. As

¹³William F. James and George H. McMurry, History of San Jose. (San Jose, undated), p. 76.

¹⁴Ferrier, p. 122.

¹⁵San Jose Mercury News, July 17, 1951, p.57.

soon as state funds became available, the cost of tuition would be reduced. The money crisis ended when the legislature allowed for a tax. By May 24, the school was eligible for tax support because it had 60 pupils in attendance. Leadership of this school was eventually taken over by Orrin Hinds. On July 25, 1854, school was opened in a new school room on Second Street - probably a continuation of the same school.¹⁶

In March of 1854, Rev. Eli Corwin submitted plans to the city council for \$5,000 schoolhouses. One was opened somewhere between September 15 and October 16, 1854, under the leadership of Freedman Gates. This was the second public school in San Jose and it was located near Third and Santa Clara - the District #1 school. This school was large and comodious and had strict discipline, good order, and thorough training.¹⁷ One teacher of a private school, B. P. Baird, requested that all of his students go to Gates' new school.¹⁸ This was probably a trend. As public schools opened, they gradually took over many of the small private enterprises.

On August 24, 1859, the Grand Jury (county level) reported an embarrassed state of school finances.¹⁹ In

¹⁶ San Jose Telegraph, July 20, 1854.

¹⁷ San Jose Tribune, September 15, 1854.

¹⁸ San Jose Tribune, September 15, 1854.

¹⁹ San Jose Tribune, August 25, 1854.

November, they ran out of money and needed to resort to private and public funds. As early as November 2, it was recognized that San Jose needed a third public elementary school and also a high school.²⁰ A teacher's convention was held annually in San Francisco. Notice appeared in the newspaper that any teacher from San Jose who desired to attend could get free passage on the steamer. There was also notice of a high school under the leadership of Mr. Chinn. It was not advertised as a public school, but its private affiliations were not mentioned either. The school was looking for advanced scholars and offered good instructors.²¹

In January of 1855, a new school law was passed which allowed each of the county's sixteen school districts to take care of its own needs, no longer were they ineffectively controlled on a county level. The county schools during this period were classified as "wonderfully efficient from the start . . . liberal salaries . . . best talent . . . rank with the best in the Union"²² - a very optimistic, exaggerated boast. The Grand Jury seconded the opinion, though, for in April of 1855 they said that the county schools were flourishing.²³

²⁰San Jose Tribune, November 10, 1854.

²¹San Jose Tribune, December 15, 1854.

²²Foote, p. 143.

²³San Jose Tribune, April 6, 1855.

This could not be an entirely accurate picture, though, for in the same month it became necessary to shut down one of San Jose's schools due to lack of funds.²⁴ An editorial said that more money should be put into education. The writer said that it was cheaper to pay for the education than the results of ignorance - schoolhouses were cheaper than jails.²⁵

Each district in the county was able to submit its own bill for the school tax to the county judge for approval. The request was then approved by voters.

In October of 1855, the citizens of San Jose petitioned that the San Fernando-Market school be taken over by the city. It was. (This is possibly another name for the Second Street School.) In 1856, the public school system was organized by ordinance, and a superintendent, Rev. Eli Corwin, was appointed (1858). In 1857, an \$8,000 schoolhouse was built in Washington Square. To some this school was known as Fannie Price's school. It was said to have no paint and no plumbing.²⁶

Editorials in the newspaper in 1858 stressed the importance of parents supporting their child's education both at home and at school. Question was also raised as

²⁴San Jose Tribune, April 27, 1855.

²⁵San Jose Tribune, April 27, 1855.

²⁶San Jose Mercury-News, July 17, 1951, p. 57.

to why school teachers were so grudgingly paid. The editorial writer felt that citizens should realize the importance of the teacher's job and the responsibility it entailed.²⁷

During this decade, the basics of a public school system were established, but education was far from free and many children did not have access to schools.

²⁷San Jose Tribune, April 6, 1858.

BOASTING

1860-1869

The next decade of education in San Jose included some improvements, but the same old problems remained. Public schools were still not free, and money problems abounded. For five months in 1861 teachers went without pay.²⁸ Parental apathy and casual attendance were also problems. On February 7, 1860, the San Jose District #6 school opened, on December 30, 1861, Hester School opened (not part of the San Jose school district at the time), and in 1863 Willow Glen school opened at the corner of Lincoln and Malone (also not part of the San Jose school district).

In 1863, the Board of Education passed the giving of \$50.00 in support of a colored school if 20 pupils regularly attended. The school did start in this year (not 1867 as some sources state²⁹), for on September 7, 1863, they approved paying the teacher.³⁰ Also in 1863, a petition was received from the parents in the district strongly requesting that the district rehire the same teachers for the coming school year.³¹ During these

²⁸ James, p. 91.

²⁹ James, p. 91.

³⁰ San Jose School Board Minutes, Aug. 5, 1863.

³¹ San Jose School Board Minutes, June 30, 1863.

early years, teachers had no protection, since the district hired them on a yearly basis and could fire them for any reason.

A big step was made when a high school was opened in Washington Square. There is a question as to when it actually started, though. It is traditionally thought to have opened in late 1865, for there is a mention of it in the Board meeting minutes.³² The newspaper reports, however, that the graduating class of the high school was going on a picnic in May, 1864. The school had actually started in 1863. (This new finding made it necessary for the school to move its centennial celebration forward two years!)³³

A good picture of what went on within the school can be extracted from the School Superintendent's report published in the Tribune.³⁴ At the end of every five month session, the superintendent was required to hold formal examinations in the schools. Only two public schools are mentioned: District #1 and District #2. In both schools he had similar findings. Good attendance was evident, and a good performance was made by the younger students. He felt the older students were not up

³²P. F. Grosbey, History of San Jose High School. (San Jose, 1908), p. 1.

³³Interview with Clyde Arbuckle, April 14, 1985. (telephone)

³⁴San Jose Tribune, January 11, 1861.

to their potential in reading - they had poor modulation and misplaced inflections. He felt every student should have a Webster's student dictionary at hand, but they did not. Arithmetic, grammar, and geography were all well done. He said that the district #2 school was a large school and more should attend.

The Superintendent was very upset by the fact that no parents and relatives were present at the examination. He felt their apathy caused the students to loose motivation. He also was upset by the low number of girls in comparison to the boys. He said that the board was doing everything it could to make it possible for more girls to attend; fences were put up to divide the playground, and classes were segregated. The boys and girls were allowed to recite together, though, for it was supposed to heighten competition.

The report itself caused quite a bit of controversy. A student wrote in saying that the Superintendent had used very poor grammar.³⁵ The Superintendent replied with a very long, technical letter saying that his grammar was, in fact, correct.³⁶

Because the District #1 school was so overcrowded, some students were allowed to transfer to the District #2 school if they so desired. At the next examinations in

³⁵ San Jose Tribune, January 25, 1861.

³⁶ San Jose Tribune, February 1, 1861.

April, the Superintendent said that San Jose's teachers were not as good as those in other states, but were improving.³⁷ New teacher's examinations were going to be administered. Student attendance was also improving. Out of 704 children in the city, 374 were registered in public schools, and 146 were in average attendance.³⁸

In 1862, an editorial was written that provides an interesting sample of the educational theory of the day. The writer said that children learn best when they have just returned from play and blood is still rushing through their veins. He felt that sitting confined in a classroom for long periods of time was an ineffective teaching method. More recesses and less school hours were the answers, so he said.³⁹

In 1860-1, school finances were fairly simple (on paper at least). The total cost of education was \$4,329.66. About \$3,000 of that went to the teachers. Half of the total amount came from the state and county funds, and half from city funds. For that year, they ended up \$11.82 short.⁴⁰

Culture came to San Jose's schools in 1864 when a certain Mr. Higgins started teaching music and giving

³⁷ San Jose Tribune, April 5, 1861.

³⁸ San Jose Tribune, April 5, 1861.

³⁹ San Jose Tribune, March 28, 1862.

⁴⁰ San Jose Tribune, April 5, 1861.

concerts in the public schools.

In 1865, John Swett, California superintendent of schools made a report on San Jose's public schools. He said that San Jose had good teachers, but that the school houses were very poor. "It is not credible to San Jose that she has remained so long in prosperity and wealth without public schoolhouses worthy of the name."⁴¹ He said that teacher's salaries were also very low.

Here are several miscellaneous excerpts from this period: (1) In 1866, a new school "shack" was opened on Thirteenth Street. (2) The five elementary teaching positions in San Jose in 1866 were hard to fill. A newspaper ad was published in an attempt to get some applicants.⁴² (3) One source says that in 1866 Spanish was dropped from the school curriculum⁴³ (the board meeting minutes say this happened in 1860⁴⁴). (4) On the county level, there were financial problems in 1867. The county treasurer embezzled money (for a second time) that caused twenty schools within the county to close.

Great excitement surrounded the purchase of school grounds in January of 1867 for the Santa Clara Street School (Horace Mann). The land cost \$3,250, and a three-

⁴¹Cloud, p. 47.

⁴²James, p. 91.

⁴³James, p. 91.

⁴⁴San Jose School Board Minutes, Sept. 29, 1860.

story, eight-room schoolhouse was built for \$20,000. This school, located on the north side of Santa Clara between Sixth and Seventh streets, was considered a "splendid edifice."⁴⁵ The eight classrooms all had fourteen foot ceilings and the exhibition room was 58-by-70 and had seventeen foot ceilings. This new school also boasted hat rooms, dressing rooms, and wash rooms. The windows were weighted and would slide up and down; the school was built to hold 700 pupils. This building also housed the high school (a two year course) in its large exhibition room.

Hall says that in 1869, "there is no town so well provided with schools in the state, nor any town with such an amount of school funds. All money from sales of Pueblo lands, that is, land belonging to the city, are placed in the school fund."⁴⁶

The 1860's brought some improvements in education, and citizens were proud of what had been accomplished. Much of the boasting, however, was a little premature. The schools did not quite live up to the exaggerated descriptions.

⁴⁵Frederick Hall, History of San Jose and Surroundings. (San Francisco, 1871), p. 307.

⁴⁶Hall, p. 329.

BUILDING

1870-1879

During the 1870's, four new school buildings were built, making a total of eight schools in the San Jose School district. There were a total of forty teachers and 1,965 students by 1877. Expenditures reached \$51,930.

The decade started off with the opening of the Reed Street School (third ward) in 1870. Bounded by Reed, Margaret, Sixth, and Seventh streets, this two story, four room structure cost \$16,000. Also, in 1870 Latin was introduced into the high school curriculum. In 1873, the first graduating class emerged from the high school - there were eight members.

1874 brought the building of a new school in the fourth ward. This was an eight room, \$18,000 structure.

In 1875, first ward got its chance for a new school. This school was a big three story structure with eight rooms, costing a total of \$20,000. This building project was well reported in the newspaper and was a fair representation of all similar projects. The first stage was a notice that the council was accepting bids for the specifications. Later, in July, mention came that the council chose the bid with the best style - including

⁴⁷ San Jose Patriot, July 24, 1875.

circular headed windows.⁴⁷ The building was started in early August and bids were accepted for the school furnishings. By September, the entire frame was completed and the work was said to be well done. This school was to be the same size as the Santa Clara Street School. There was a concern, by the end of September, that the joists were too short. After much argument, the council decided to go and look at the building for themselves. Goodrich said that the building was correct according to the plans. The contractor said that whatever the case, the building was by far the best in the city.⁴⁸ The public was very concerned that the building be the very best possible - they were interested only in excellence. Applications for principal, teachers, and janitor were taken for the school. Pleasant Street School closed and transferred its students to the new first ward school.⁴⁹

Another event that aroused much controversy occurred in the Hester School District. The leaders of the school district wanted to increase taxes to raise \$10,000 to build a new school house. They expected resistance, so they had a meeting and vote at the present school building. The residents didn't oppose the tax, but they wanted more than one big school house - a total

⁴⁸ San Jose Patriot, September 23, 1875.

⁴⁹ San Jose Patriot, November 20, 1875.

of four or five at the total cost of \$10,000. A school was badly needed in the southern part of the district. The vote was eventually defeated 84 to 20.⁵⁰

Vandalism is not new. During the summer vacation in 1875, the children had supposedly run rampant. At the Second Street School the blinds were left open and the glass in all of the windows was broken. The parents were held responsible.⁵¹

A big controversy arose over the question of a colored school. The colored citizens of San Jose wanted the abolition of the colored school and wanted to send their children to the regular public schools. In mid-September, 1875, a petition was submitted to the Board of Education. This action was aroused by the fact that Prof. Henning had discharged the colored students from his school. The question was to be taken to court. In November, a petition from Mrs. White to reinstate her daughter (colored) in the fourth ward school was denied.⁵² The outcome of this controversy is unclear.

Teacher's salaries remained fairly constant during this decade. The men made between \$80 and \$150 per month depending on their position, while the female teacher

⁵⁰ San Jose Patriot, July 26, 1875.

⁵¹ San Jose Patriot, July 23, 1875.

⁵² San Jose Patriot, September 9, 1875.

made no more than \$77 per month while doing the same work.⁵³ Even in the early days, the question of comparable worth might have been an issue among teachers.

In 1876, the City Council bought a lot on Empire Street for a new school. The lot cost \$3,000 and was part of the estate of Judge Davis Divine, who died in 1876.⁵⁴ This school was eight rooms and cost \$19,000. It was the second ward school or Empire Street School.

In 1877 the high school course was extended to three years.

San Jose was to struggle with its present buildings for the next eleven years. In 1878 there were forty teachers divided among the schools as follows:⁵⁵

Santa Clara Street School	= 6
Reed Street School	= 8
Fourth Ward School	= 8
First Ward School	= 9
Empire Street School	= 5
Thirteenth Street School	= 2
Second Street School	= 1
Colored School	= 1

The building of schools was the main effort during these years. Four large, much needed schools were built.

⁵³San Jose Patriot, October 23, 1875.

⁵⁴Patricia Loomis, Signposts. (San Jose, 1982), p. 30.

⁵⁵James, p. 98.

BURSTING

1880 - 1889

The 1880's were a period of significant overcrowding in the schools. Not much new building went on, but growth in number of students increased greatly. By 1885, there were 2005 pupils in the school district. Another example of this growth can be seen in the high school. This school grew from 49 to 188 pupils between 1887 and 1889.⁵⁶ The 1880's were a period of great population growth in San Jose. The school enrollment clearly reflects this.

The adoption of text books was a big concern during these years. In April, 1880, the principals from all the San Jose schools met to determine what texts they wanted.

In May, 1880, the high school took the day off from school for a picnic.⁵⁷ The names of all those deserving a diploma were printed in the newspaper. Later in May, the lists of all the students from elementary schools who were on the honor rolls were published in the newspapers.

The apportionment of the county school fund looked something like this in 1880:⁵⁸

⁵⁶ James, p. 107. (The number in the text is 1889 which must be an error. The correct number is probably 188 or 189.)

⁵⁷ San Jose Mercury, May 7, 1880.

⁵⁸ San Jose Mercury, June 9, 1880.

Hester	6	361.20
Pioneer	1	56.00
San Jose	35	2,401.70
Willow Glen	2	109.20

In June of 1880, the board of education adopted a uniform course of study for the city schools. The superintendent said the present course was "nearly perfect" but was not consistent in all schools.⁵⁹ San Jose teachers were so good during this time that an editorialist wrote into the newspaper saying that the board should stop letting teachers leave the district and go to Oakland and the Normal School to teach.⁶⁰

It is interesting to find out rather personally what the teacher's examination was like - not often do you get to see the actual test questions! The idea of the test was not only to discover text book knowledge, but also an ability to reason with practical ideas. Here are a few excerpts from the test:⁶¹

Geography:

- 1) Give proofs of the Earth's roundity
- 2) Define physical geography and political geography
- 3) Describe gulf streams

⁵⁹ San Jose Mercury, June 18, 1880.

⁶⁰ San Jose Mercury, August 12, 1880.

⁶¹ San Jose Mercury, June 26, 1880.

History:

1) Into what periods and epochs may the history of the United States be divided?

School Law:

1) Who constitutes the State Board of Education?

2) How are county boards of education formed?

Composition:

1) What constitutes a paragraph? An essay?

Word Analysis:

1) Analyze and define: chronology, biology, antithesis

Methods of teaching:

1) How do you conduct a class in reading?

On June 29, 1880, an editorial in the newspaper ridiculed the planners of a meeting for the parents of the children in the Hester district. The meeting, aimed at deciding whether or not to purchase a lot adjoining the school, was scheduled at a time when most of the interested parties would be working. The meeting happened, none the less, and the idea of purchasing the lot was abandoned. At the adjournment of the planned meeting, a second meeting was spontaneously called to order to explore the idea of a school in the southern part of the district. This was probably the meeting that led to the building of the Sunol School.⁶² This school was built at a total cost of \$2,000 and served a rural

⁶²San Jose Mercury, July 1, 1880.

area just outside of San Jose.

Another issue in 1880 was the question of parental involvement in education. The principal of one of the schools became quite upset that parents were not coming to visit the schools during the day when given an opportunity. As a result, he started having monthly parent's meetings at night. He found this an excellent solution to the problem and recommended it to others.⁶³

The Grand Jury reported in 1880 that as a whole, the county schools were not putting enough care into hiring the best teachers - plenty of money was available.⁶⁴ This report seems to portray the opposite of the situation in San Jose. They had good teachers and not enough money.

It was reported that the students returned to school in September, 1880, as a mass of clean, bright, happy faces. The editor said that "San Jose is truly a city of schools and the youth of this city have superior advantages in the the way of education."⁶⁵

The next big event of the 1880's was the adoption of a three division school system in 1883. There was a four year primary school, a three year grammar school, and a three year high school. Gradually the school system was

⁶³San Jose Mercury, August 6, 1880.

⁶⁴San Jose Mercury, December 16, 1880.

⁶⁵San Jose Mercury, September 2, 1880.

becoming more and more like it is today.

Miscellaneous events in 1884 include:

1. Questioning of the manner in which bids for school supplies were decided. In a letter to the editor, a citizen felt that the bids should be opened and acted on at once in the presence of the full Board of Education, not just 2-3 people, as is the present practice.⁶⁶
2. Purchase of a microscope for the high school at \$125.
3. Routine maintenance at the Sunol School included replacement of some shade trees and erection of two hitching posts.⁶⁷
4. The Hester school district payed the San Jose High School for tuition of one of its students.⁶⁸

Big excitement was aroused over the decision to build a new schoolhouse for the Hester school. The entire process is visible in the Board meeting minutes. 1)An election was held to establish 10 year/5% bonds. The voters rejected the proposal. 2)A meeting was held to decide how to pay for the school. 3)A vote was held

⁶⁶San Jose Mercury, January 17, 1884.

⁶⁷Board Meeting Minutes, Hester School District, February 1, 1884.

⁶⁸Board Meeting Minutes, Hester School District, May 23, 1884.

for an additional tax to pay for the building - this time it was accepted. 4) Bids were accepted for plans, contractors, etc.⁶⁹

A very complicated bit of corruption was exposed in 1884. Apparently, some employees of the school district were forced to contribute to the purchase of the San Jose Daily Times. The proprietor of the paper was a member of the School Board. The charges basically affected the principal and janitor of the high school.⁷⁰ The details were not clear, but it was a sticky situation.

In 1885, the eight grade elementary system was established. School subjects included morals and manners and physical fitness. On the state level, a uniform textbook series was established that became a basis for the education for the state, San Jose included.

In 1886, two new schools were started: Oak Street School (\$15,162), and Second Street Kindergarten (the second kindergarten on the California coast).

From this point on, little happened in education until the start of the next decade. Schools had reached their limit; there was no room for any more students. In coming years this situation would have to be improved.

⁶⁹ Board Meeting Minutes, Hester School District, February 12, 1884 - May 23, 1884.

⁷⁰ San Jose Mercury, February 19, 1884.

BETTERING

1890 - 1899

The 1890's brought several new advances in the San Jose School system. The district was starting to get quite extensive, and more and more like what it is today.

The first new school of the decade started in 1890. It was San Jose's second kindergarten - the Guadalupe Street kindergarten.

In 1892, all the city schools were given new names as follows:⁷¹

Santa Clara Street School=====>Horace Mann

First Ward School=====>Longfellow

Empire Street School=====>Grant

Reed Street School=====>Lowell

Fourth Ward School=====>Lincoln

Oak Street School=====>Washington

Second Street Kindergarten=====>Peabody

Guadalupe Street Kindergarten=====>Sarah B. Cooper

A published copy of the Superintendent's report for 1892 remains. First an introductory quote: "The rank your schools take among others in the State is best evidenced by the large number of families coming here from all parts of the Coast to educate their children and

⁷¹James, p. 114.

the high standing of our pupils in the higher institutions of learning."⁷²

The page of general statistics is also very interesting to analyze. (See appendix)

The Superintendent's views on discipline were as follows: "I do not believe the time has come when we can afford to abolish corporal punishment in our schools entirely. . . We can do more for the boys and make better men of them to keep the rod by our side a while longer. . . There should be some rules restricting its use." 436 cases of corporal punishment were recorded for the year.⁷³

Kindergartens seem to be the new advancement during this period. In addition to the two already in existence, Park Kindergarten was added in 1892 and Quincy Shaw and Home Kindergartens in 1894.

Physical Education became an organized part of the school system in 1893, when the services of a certain L. Webber were donated by the Turn Verein Society. He was later hired for the rest of the year.⁷⁴

During this period, much overcrowding was evident. Sheds were built beside the present inadequate structures to handle overflow. The Superintendent of Schools

⁷²F. P. Russell, Annual Report of San Jose Public Schools. (San Jose, 1892), p. 10.

⁷³Russell, p. 30.

⁷⁴Russell, p. 31.

recommended that for safety reasons classes be limited to 45 students each, even if students had to be turned away.⁷⁵

Here are some interesting statistics from 1897:⁷⁶

		% gain in 20 years
Students	4940	151
Expenditures	\$104,335	109

1897 was the big year of the decade as far as education was concerned. The major advancement was the building of a \$100,000 high school on Washington Square (San Fernando and Seventh Streets). This was a three story structure of brick and stone intended only for high school use. When notice that bids were being accepted for the high school appeared in the newspaper, the editor made it very clear that this building project should be done by a San Jose contractor - there was no reason that San Jose contractors should not be able to compete with those from other cities. He said "our people want the best that can be put up . . . all the latest improvements." The editor also questioned the need for kindergartens for he felt that the money that was used for their upkeep could be better spent in the high school setting.⁷⁷ The high school building became very famous

⁷⁵James, p. 114.

⁷⁶James, p. 114.

⁷⁷San Jose Daily Herald, July 7, 1897.

for its day, and was the subject of much publicity.

Also in 1897, a larger school was built on the corner of Lincoln and Minnesota (part of the Willow Glen district).

The building of the high school and the start of several kindergartens were major improvements, but with the coming of the next decade, many of the advancements of this period would turn to tragedy.

BEGINNING AGAIN

1900-1906

The events of this period are centered solely on the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. This earthquake did devastating damage to the San Jose school system.

The first and most tragic loss was the San Jose High School. This massive structure was demolished after only eight years of service. It was recognized immediately that the building must be torn down and only used for scrap. Guards were placed around the structure to protect the citizens.

The first action of the Board of Education was to close the public schools for thirty days to allow them to somewhat get the school system under control.⁷⁸ One important problem was that the school census was due at this time to provide school financing for the next year. Somehow this had to be completed even under these difficult circumstances.

The schools emerged from the disaster as follows:

Grant: Salvage whatever possible, but must destroy
structure

Lowell: Would cost \$3,300 to repair and still not
adequate

Horace Mann: Weak from age

⁷⁸San Jose Mercury, April 21, 1906.

Longfellow: Originally declared safe but realized that
neither parents nor teachers would go near
it so decided no use to save.⁷⁹

Lincoln: Safe - Open May 7.

Washington: Safe - Open May 7.

The board recognized that it was a big
responsibility to be sure the schools were safe. They
needed to immediately rebuild four grammar schools and a
high school. Until this could be done, schools were on
double session. The high school was held in the Lincoln
school, and stores, churches, skating rinks, and tents
were rented to serve as school rooms.⁸⁰

The schools were rebuilt, new schools were added,
and life went on - but that's another story!

⁷⁹San Jose Mercury, April 28, 1906.

⁸⁰San Jose Mercury, May 7, 1906.

CONCLUSION

The early years of San Jose's education are fascinating, but they can not be looked at in a vacuum. They were influenced by traditions before and were the foundations for what would come. Several trends are evident throughout these early years, some positive and some negative.

First, let's look at some of the continual problems in San Jose's early education. One of the most obvious problems is money. The schools never really had all the money they needed. In the 1850's and 1860's, it was a struggle to make public education free, and in later decades it continued to be a struggle to raise money to build school houses and pay teachers adequate wages. Money was a problem the day San Jose's first school opened, and this problem has continued to exist. Another negative trend evident in the early years was overcrowding. No matter how hard they tried, the School Board could not keep ahead of the population growth and provide enough schools. Racial problems also existed. From the 1860's on, black families petitioned the School Board continually to allow their students into the "white" schools - often with little success. One final persistent problem in San Jose's education was teacher's rights. In the early years, teachers were hired on a

yearly basis, and could be fired at any time for any reason. This problem slowly improved with time.

The early years of San Jose's education also laid a positive foundation in several areas. One of the most foundational ideas was that, education was to be a priority in San Jose. The city fathers were strove for the best school system they could create. A real effort was made to hire the best available teachers. When a schoolhouse was built, the citizens of San Jose would settle for nothing but the best. The teachers and administrators of the school district tried to keep the parents and community involved in education and make educating the youth of the city a team effort. Finally, since their start, San Jose schools tried to keep modern and up to date. In several cases when a new school was built, it was said to have "all the latest advances"; a new microscope was bought for the high school; text books were constantly being reviewed and updated.

The negative trends are far surpassed by the positive ones. Overall, the early years of San Jose's education were a solid, highly important foundation for the years to come. San Jose was and is a city of excellent public schools with teachers and community working together to prepare the city's students for the future.

EPILOGUE

Whatever happened to the old school buildings?

Lincoln The original building built in 1874 was used as a school for 57 years, as a school and district office for fifteen years, as just the district office for another fifteen years, and then from 1961 to about 1975 used as a district warehouse. In 1975 the structure was razed after over a century of service.⁸¹

Washington The original Washington school was torn down in 1948.

Thirteenth Street This structure was moved to the Horace Mann school site in 1877. The building was still being used by the Adult Education Department in 1969, but has since been torn down.⁸²

Horace Mann The original building was destroyed by the earthquake of 1906, but the trees remained. There were two different buildings on the same site, and in 1983, when the school closed for good, the district also shut

⁸¹ San Jose Mercury, May 30, 1975.

⁸² San Jose Mercury, February 7, 1969.

down what may have been the oldest school site in San Jose.⁸³

Hester The Hester School, built in 1897, stood until 1914 when a new school was built at the same location.

Sunol The Sunol School survived the earthquake and remained standing until it was razed in 1955.

It is sad that none of the old school buildings have been preserved, but new structures have taken their places and have faithfully served the changing needs of San Jose's school system.

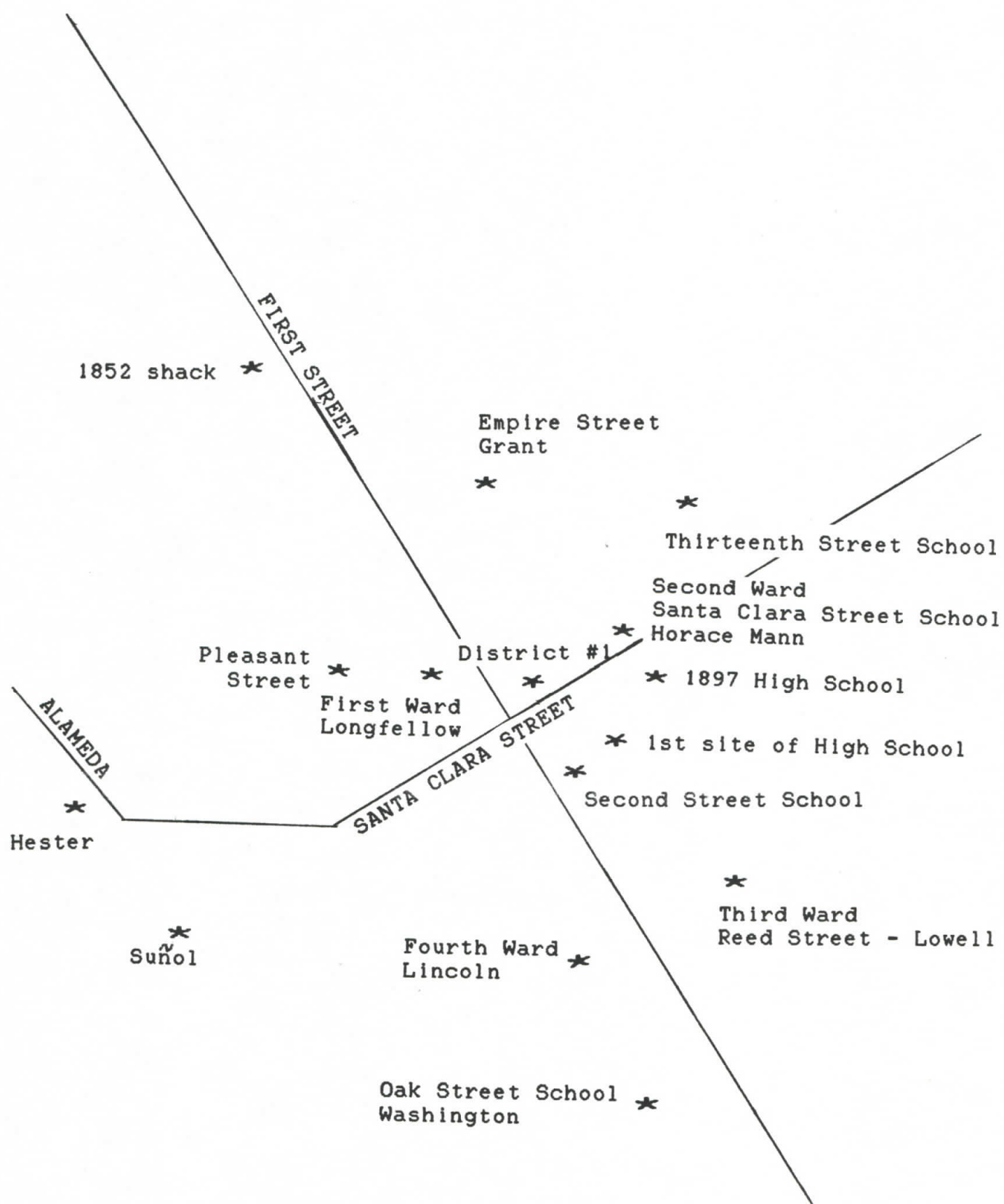
⁸³San Jose Mercury, April 25, 1983.

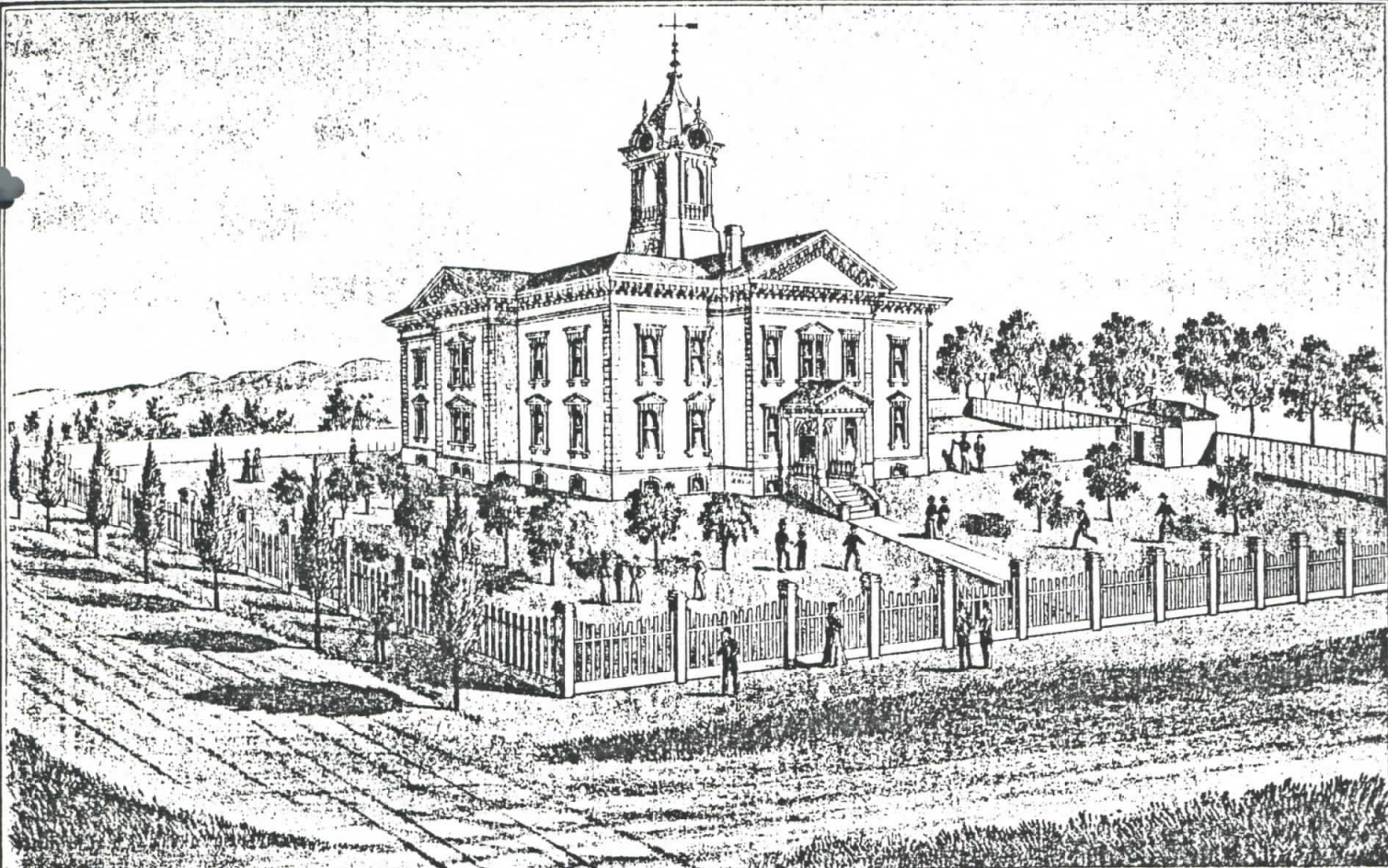
APPENDIX

FROM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - 1892

Number of teachers employed:	Men.....	11
	Women.....	72
	Total.....	83
Number of teachers:	High School.....	6
	Grammar Schools.....	26
	Primary Schools.....	37
	Kindergartens.....	9
	Evening School.....	2
	Music Teachers.....	2
	Manual Training.....	1
Number of days attendance.....		555,744
Number of days absence.....		15,199
Number of times tardy.....		3,019
Number of boys enrolled.....		2,147
Number of girls enrolled.....		1,999
Total number enrolled.....		4,146
Average number belonging.....		2,876
Average daily attendance.....		2,797
Percentage based on average number belonging.....		98%
Enrolled in High School.....		213
Enrolled in Grammar School.....		1,206
Enrolled in Primary School.....		2,150
Enrolled in Kindergartens.....		484
Enrolled in Night School.....		93
Average number belonging to High School.....		172
Average number belonging to Day School.....		2,422
Average number belonging to Evening School.....		46
Average number belonging to Kindergartens.....		236
Average daily attendance, High School.....		171
Average daily attendance, Day School.....		2,361
Average daily attendance, Evening School.....		44
Average daily attendance, Kindergartens.....		221
Percentage based on No. belonging:	High School...	99%
	Day School....	98%
	Evening Scho..	95%
	Kindergarten..	95%
Highest monthly enrollment:	High School.....	193
	Day School.....	2,750
	Evening School.....	62
	Kindergartens.....	287
Average number of pupils per teacher:		
	High School.....	32
	Day School.....	44
	Evening School.....	31
	Kindergartens.....	32
Percentage of promotions based on aveage daily attendance:	High School.....	77%
	Day School.....	70%
Cost per pupil based on number enrolled.....		\$19.04
	number belonging.....	\$27.45
	daily attendance.....	\$28.22
Expended for new buildings.....		\$2430.22
Furniture.....		\$1766.40
Insurance.....		\$ 699.75
Sewer.....		\$ 9.50

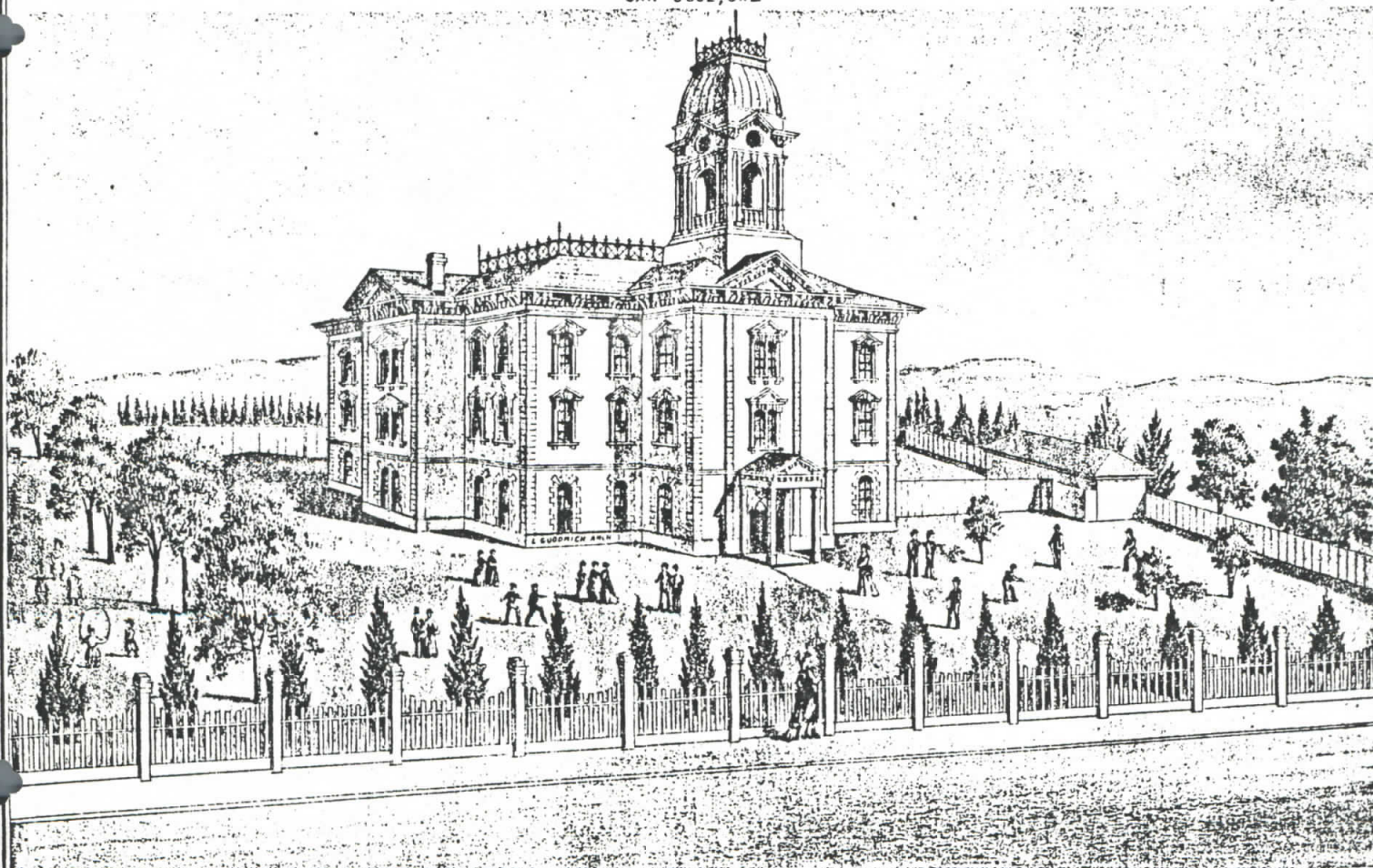
MAP OF SCHOOL LOCATIONS





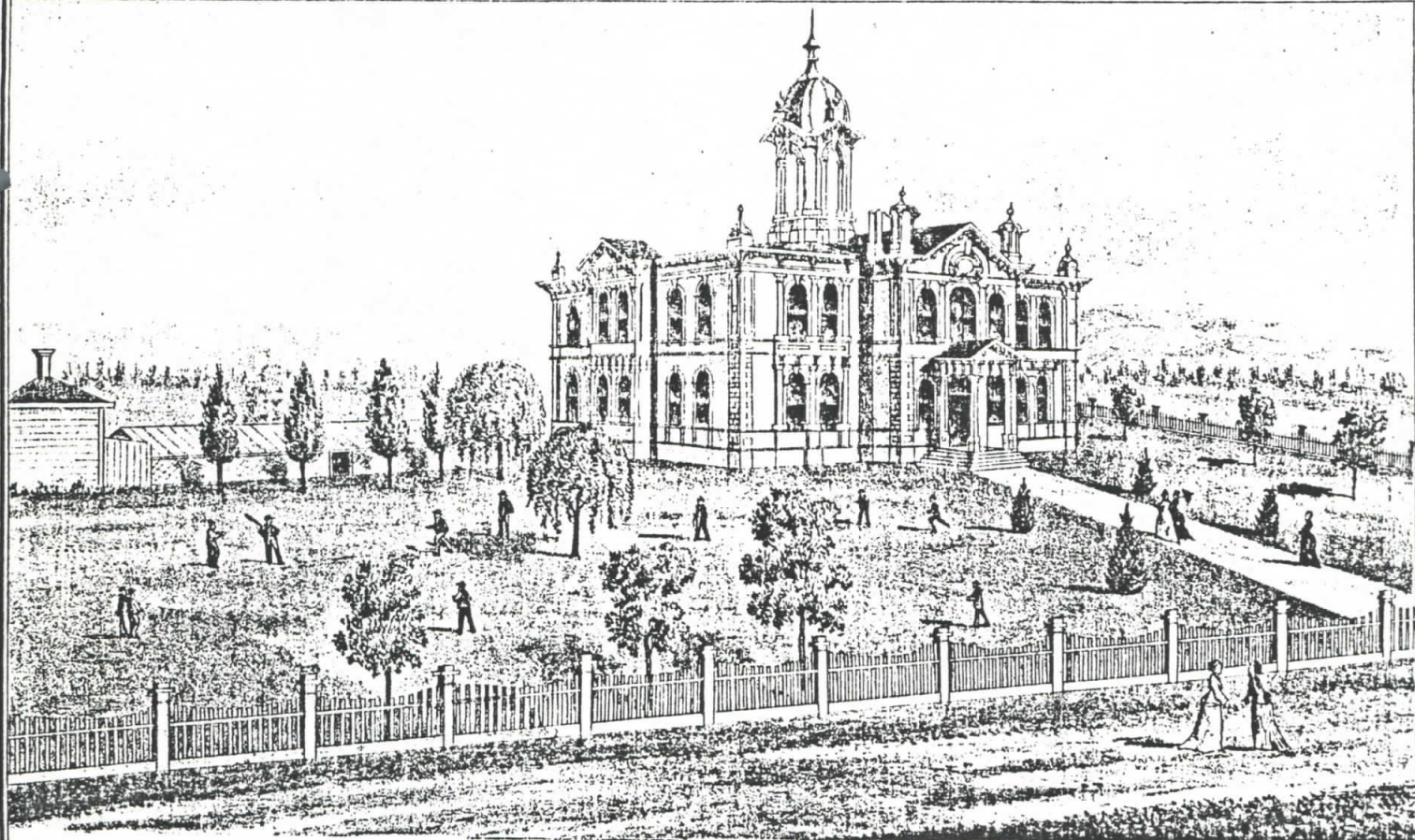
FOURTH WARD SCHOOL HOUSE,
SAN JOSE, CAL.

1874



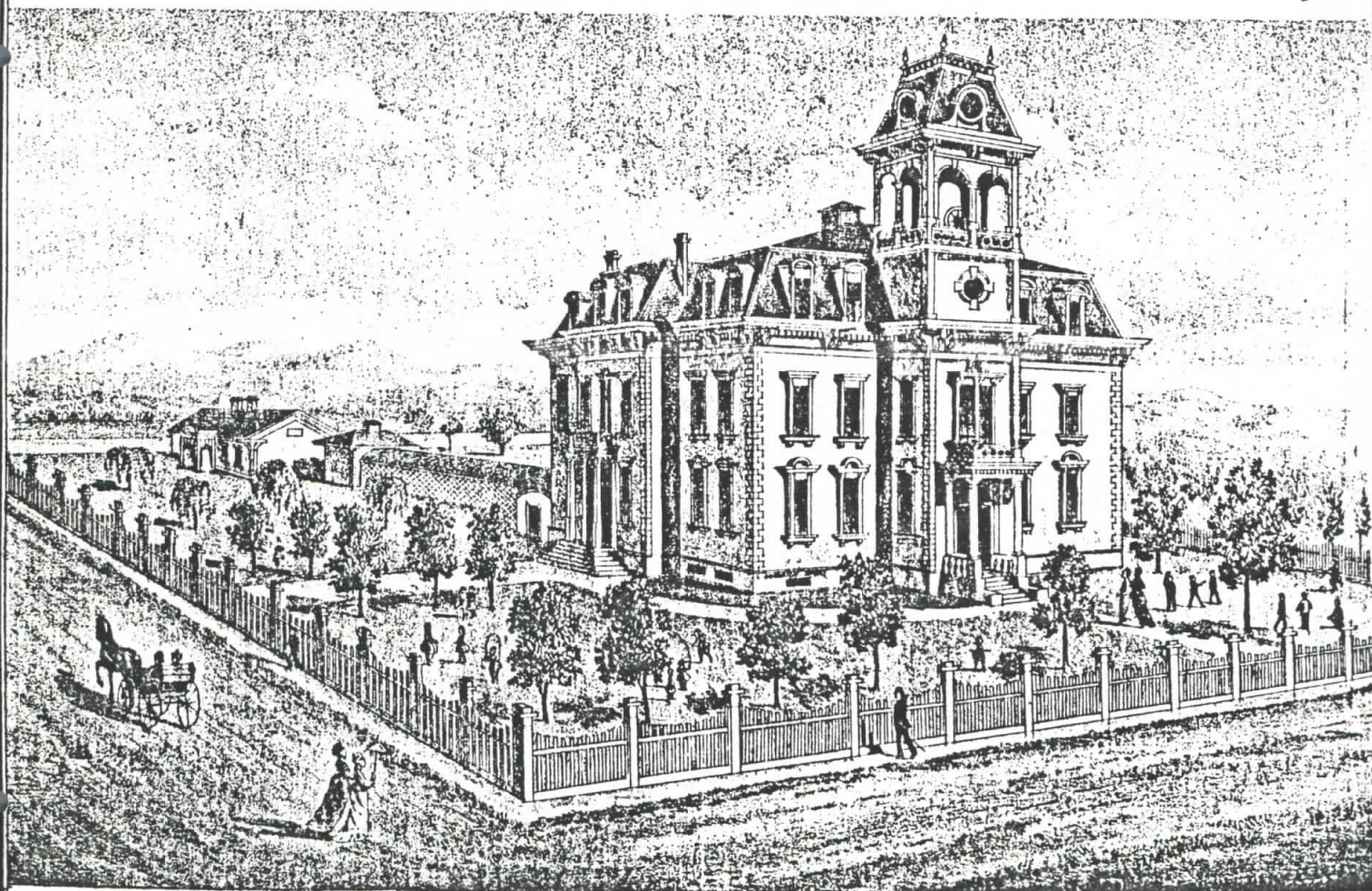
FIRST WARD SCHOOL HOUSE,
SAN JOSE, CAL.

1875



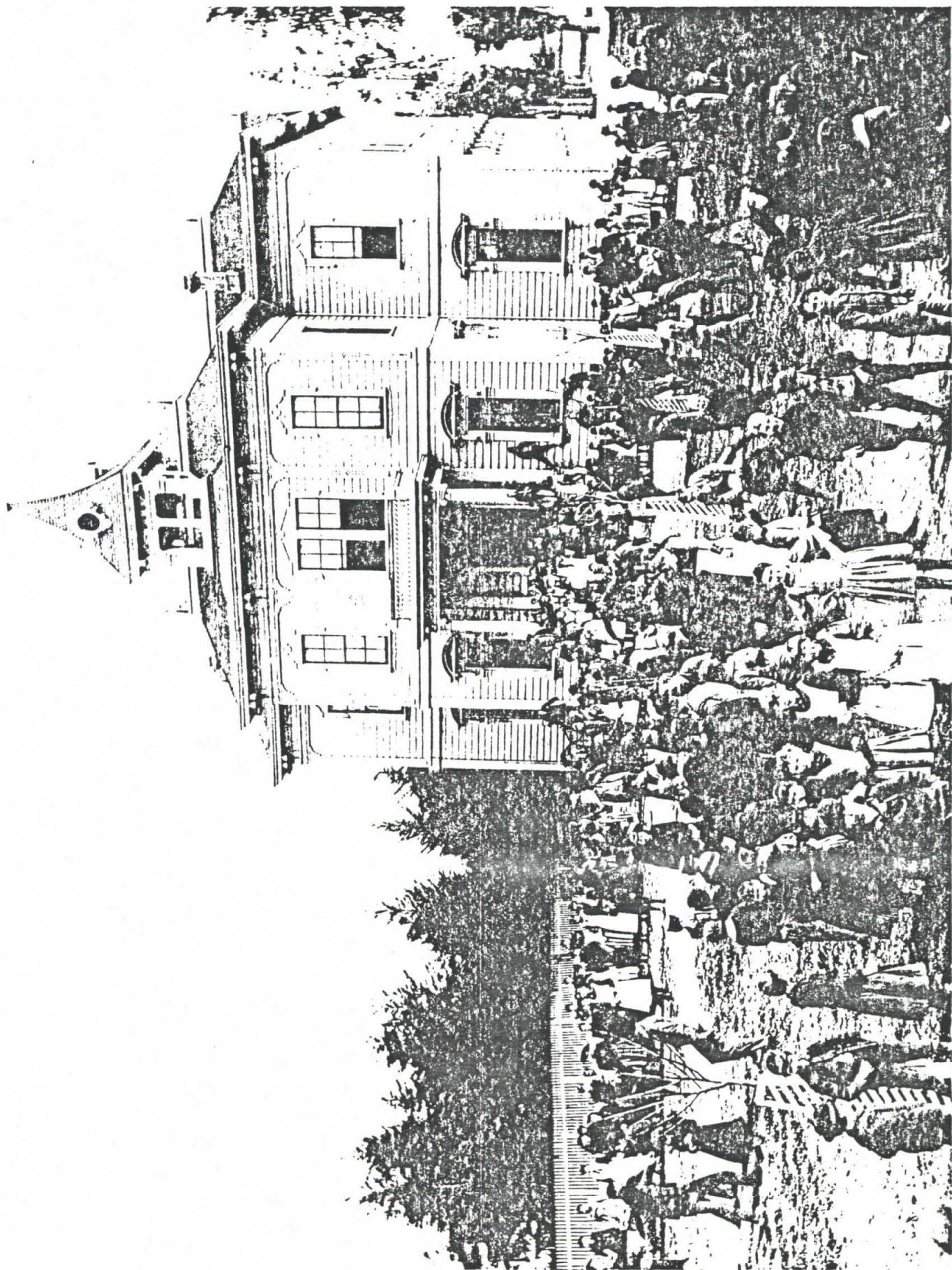
REED STREET SCHOOL HOUSE,
THIRD WARD, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA.

1870



SANTA CLARA STREET SCHOOL HOUSE,
SECOND WARD, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA.

1867

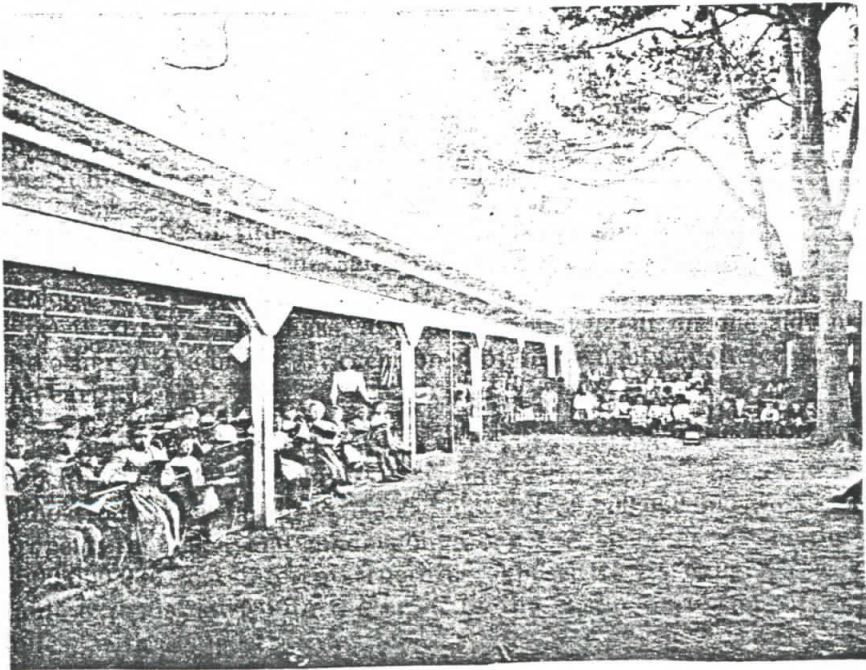


Hester



"OUTDOOR EDUCATION" IN SAN JOSE

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1906



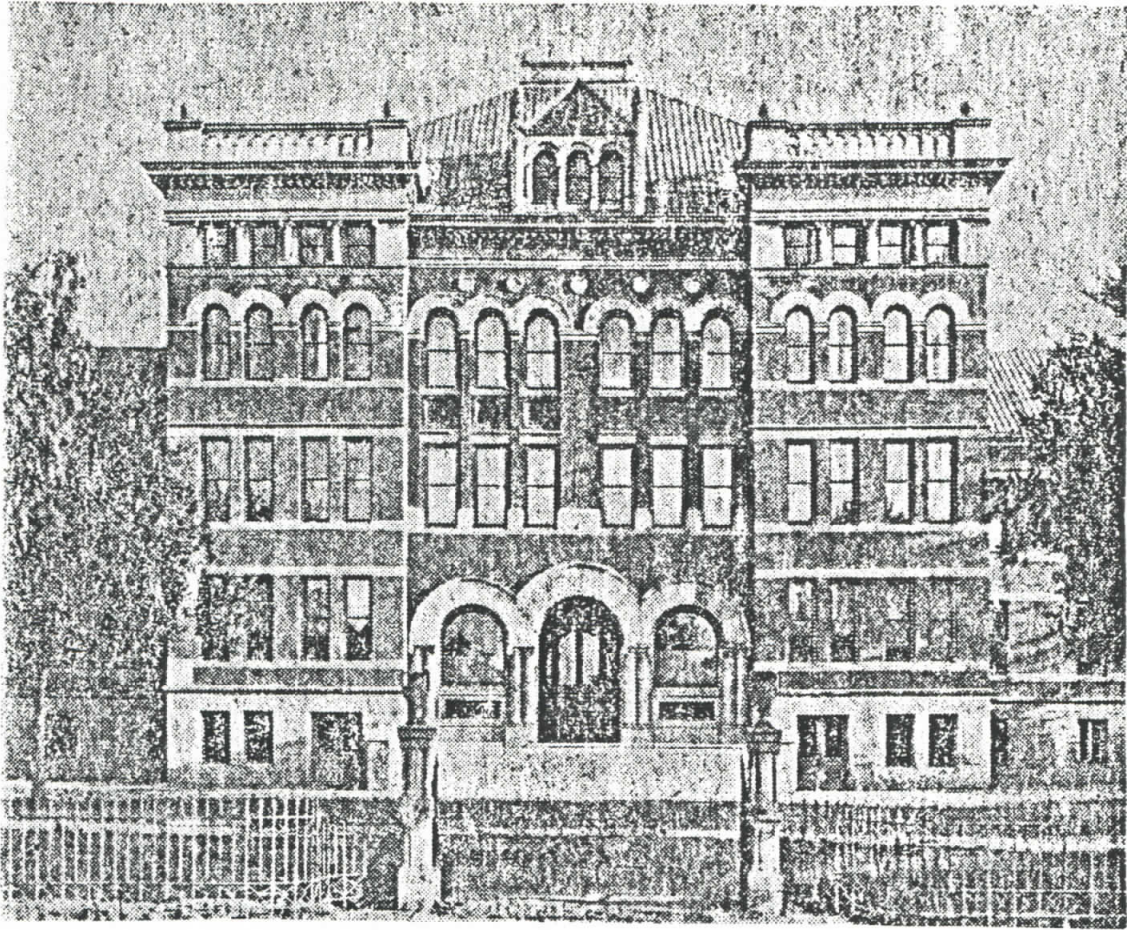
WILLOW GLEN SCHOOL



SCHOOL BUILT IN 1877



SCHOOL BUILT IN 1897



AS BUILT IN 1897



AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1906

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