

Bellarmino College Preparatory

**An Essay Presented to the California
Pioneers of Santa Clara County**

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Introduction

The history of Bellarmine College Preparatory dates back to the foundation of Santa Clara University in 1851. For years, students of all ages were part of what was known then as Santa Clara College. Part of the initial success of the school had to do with the lack of public institutions that could provide education to the growing population of the valley. Another reason for Santa Clara's success was the fact that the school was well known for its discipline and for its academic excellence. The high school moved to its present location in 1925, due to a shortage of space at the Santa Clara campus, and adopted the name Bellarmine College Preparatory. Among the many children who attended the school during the early days, are the children of such pioneers as James Alexander Forbes, Martin Murphy, Jr., Abel Stearns, William M. Keith, and Alpheus Thompson.

Bellarmino has continued to be an important institution in the Santa Clara Valley, not only because of its academic and athletic programs, but because of the impact that its graduates have in many aspects of our community. Pablo Morales, an Olympic Athlete, is only one example of a Bellarmine alumnus who continues to participate in events that benefit young people in our community. Moreover, every current student participates in community service projects as a graduation requirement.

Like any institution, Bellarmine had an uncertain future at first. The fact that it survived many challenges and that it became what it is today constitutes a piece of our valley's fascinating history.

The Dream

In 1844, Jesuits were encouraged by other Jesuits who were settled in California to come and perform religious and educational work. "California was not a field of Jesuit missionary activity before 1849."¹ Jesuit missionaries had migrated around northern Mexico and reached Baja California in the mid 1700's. In Baja, missions were spreading, but the Jesuit Order was suppressed by the Pope in 1767 before it could extend to Alta California. However, in 1849, Father Michael Accolti and Father John Nobili traveled to San Francisco with ambitious dreams of establishing a school. The first dilemma that these two men faced was the location of the school. Accolti was convinced that San Francisco was "the leading commercial place of California and will soon be such of the entire world."² In contrast to this, Accolti was concerned that the city was not "well suited for a college in view of the ebb and flow which prevails there."³ Therefore, San Jose, "one of the oldest cities in California," was chosen as the location to establish the school.⁴ Accolti discovered that the children in the area were "entirely bereft of any sort of instruction" and that parents showed their interest to open schools "as soon as possible."⁵ Accolti also claimed that "there are no schools except those of the Protestants who make any effort to show the inadequacy and sterility of Catholicism."⁶ He emphasized his dislike of Protestant education by expressing that if the school was not established, then "the Protestant ministers are there to appropriate all the Catholic youth."⁷ Accolti's professions led to the opening of the Santa Clara College, which was for boys only, in May of 1851.

Challenges

Santa Clara College faced some problems during the beginning years. One problem was that there was a lack of an adequate faculty. Nobili discovered that “capable teachers were scarce and that a salary of \$100 a month was not sufficient to retain a man in a classroom.”⁸ Another problem the college encountered was the funds to pay for the maintenance of the school and other expenses.

Though Santa Clara College faced some obstacles, the institution was able to overcome them. Firstly, Missionaries worked in place of professors and accepted the low pay. Secondly, the college received private donations and they were used to pay the cost of maintaining the school. Lastly, the school’s population increased and the cost of tuition paid for other expenses.

Conditions in the 1860’s

During the expansion years in the 1860’s, “requests for admission exceeded the capacity of the school’s facilities.”⁹ A day in the life of a student living in the dormitory was filled with chores. “The pupils slept in a loft over the school rooms, made their beds, and helped to slaughter and cut up the cattle which supplied the table, and to make the bread needed for general use. . . . A fountain in the mission garden gave water both for cooking and washing and morning ablutions were made in the open air at all sessions.”¹⁰ The faculty lacked rooms of their own in the dormitory and they were served the same

meals as the students. The students and the faculty faced many hardships living in the boarding facilities but the conditions improved later on.

A student's daily class schedule involved attending a liturgy at eight in the morning. Then, the morning classes ran from nine until noon and two hours later the students would be back in class until five o'clock. The evenings were dedicated to "familiar scientific conversation and exercises in the languages."¹¹

Move to Elm Street

In 1924, the enrollment at Santa Clara College was at 455 students.¹² One-hundred and sixty-six of those students were in high school.¹³ Taxes increased and it was too expensive to keep the high-school students at the college. It was evident that it was necessary to separate the high school students from the college students. Therefore, a decision had to be made about where the high school students would attend their classes.

In November of 1925, the College of the Pacific (later known as University of the Pacific in Stockton) property in San Jose was purchased for \$77,500, with Bank of Italy officials acting as purchasers.¹⁴ In 1926 the high school moved to the property which is located between "the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and Emory, Elm, and Hedding streets."¹⁵ The separation of the high school from the college was "a consummation devoutly wished by the college administration since the very inception of Santa Clara college."¹⁶

New Campus

The seventeen acre campus was quickly put to use with the construction of a classroom building. This building was of wood and beaver board and the roof was covered with brick and tar. The structure, which cost \$20,000, was 225 feet long, 75 feet wide at the wings and 60 feet in the center.¹⁷ The building housed nine classrooms and an office. Previous buildings from the College of the Pacific were on the campus, but this was the first building that was built for the high school. Also, the College Park station was built in 1926 for the students who commuted to Bellarmine by train.¹⁸

New Challenges

The faculty and students faced many challenges during the first few years in their new location. In the library there was an inadequate supply of books, and boxes were used as shelves. The chapel was also poorly furnished. The altar was dingy and during the rainy season, the roof leaked which caused flooding. The students had to "wade through puddles to get to the pews."¹⁹

In 1927, residence halls, such as Kostka Hall and Kenna Hall, were filled with students who boarded at the school. The faucets in Kostka Hall leaked and the drains would overflow. The drainage system for the showers in Kenna Hall did not work too well, and the sewer systems caused trouble. One can only imagine the struggles of students who, in addition to feeling homesick, had to put up with less than perfect

facilities. Life in the dorms faced a few hardships, but as time went by conditions improved.

The rest of the campus was also in great need of repair. The Jesuits had to work hard to come up with the money to pave a sidewalk on the yard side of the classroom buildings. The gardens were neglected, and the priests did not even have money for vestments and altar linens. Thanks to generous donations from Mrs. H. Donahue and Mr. Reiter, a few improvements could be made, including the placement of two statues in the gardens, in 1934.²⁰ Every improvement came as a result of generous donations from people in the community.

Student Life on Elm Street

The auditorium, formerly know as the "Conservatory of Music of the College of the Pacific," was an august structure that was purchased when the Jesuit Fathers bought the seventeen acre campus.²¹ Stained glass windows adorned the building and brought the light of day into the auditorium in a motley fashion. The auditorium was converted into a library, a social hall, a chapel, and was used for graduations. In 1938, the building had to be torn down because it was too expensive to repair. Other buildings were constructed to replace the auditorium.

In 1938, a co-op, used as a social hall, was constructed in place of the auditorium.²² The building was Spanish-style with a mission tiled roof. Inside the co-op students could buy books and other school supplies. Students could also buy, sodas,

sandwiches, candy, and ice cream. Space was available for students to eat, socialize, or study by the fireplace during the cold winter months.

Sports

In 1937, a new football field was built. The Dads club “made all of the plans and funded the construction of the field.”²³ Tennis, a sport relished by the students, has always been a competitive sport at Bellarmine. New tennis courts were built for the Bellarmine tennis team in 1939. The new courts were said to be “an asset to the tennis team.”²⁴ Other sports such as baseball and swimming have been played at Bellarmine since the thirties.

In an all boys’ school, sports are expected to be quite important. The sports at Bellarmine include baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, water polo, and wrestling. Though it is difficult to be on a sport team, students do make it and succeed in the sport. Sports is a very competitive field but with determination and talent, Bellarmine teams always aim for the best. Not only is it fun to be in a sport, it is fun to watch a game. Bellarmine teams play games throughout the week and anyone can watch them play.

Recently, Bellarmine’s athletic department received private donations to build a new aquatic center and a new track with bleachers. The football and baseball fields were also remodeled. Other sports facilities are the Wayne Valley Memorial Gymnasium, outdoor basketball courts, and the tennis courts.

Bellarmino has over sixty Central Coast Section titles which have accumulated over the past twenty-six years in sports. John Hanna, coach of the football team, had a thirty-one game winning streak that carried over to four seasons in the 1960's. Also, in 1965 the football team gave up only six points the entire season and it was a defensive score.

Excellence Then and Now

Since 1925, the curriculum has been the most important aspect of Bellarmine. A college preparatory curriculum has been taught at Bellarmine since the day it opened. A variety of math classes are offered from Algebra to Calculus. Science classes range from Biology to Anatomy and Physiology. Literary classes, such as a Holocaust Literary course or an American Poetry class, are offered. History courses, such as U.S History and a Social Justice class, are also offered. The languages offered at Bellarmine are French, Latin, Mandarin, and Spanish. Advanced Placement classes are available to the students, but they have to pass a test before they can be admitted to the class. For electives, students can take drama, a sketch and paint class, ceramics, and a computer science class. Currently, tuition to attend Bellarmine is \$5,200, which does not include books which can cost between \$200-\$600.²⁵ During the 1997-1998 year, the tuition to attend Bellarmine will be \$5,460.²⁶ The current population at Bellarmine is 1,367.²⁷ In the minds of some, there is only one problem with Bellarmine; it is not a coed school, it is an all-boys school. In January of 1997, Bellarmine officials voted to keep it an all-boys school for the years to

come. Though girls cannot attend the school, they can visit the campus for a day. Hopefully in the future, girls will receive the opportunity to attend Bellarmine.

New Facilities

Bellarmino's current classroom facilities are: O'Donnell Hall, established in the summer of 1965, Carney Science building, established in the summer of 1988, and Schott Academic Center (A.K.A. Old Town.), established in 1930's and remodeled in 1958. The Jesuit Priests live on campus in Saint Roberts Hall which was established in the mid-1950's. The Jesuit and faculty dining hall is located in the Lickardo Center established in 1964. Another academic facility is the library which is located in the Lickardo Center. The library is a place for the students to do research for a project, surf the Internet, do homework, or check out a book. All of these buildings have been funded by "private donations, alumni, or friends of the school. None of the cost has come from the tuition money."²⁸

A Noisy Campus

Bellarmino went through a time of turmoil when it sued the San Jose Airport. In 1973, the school filed an \$8.69 million suit against the city of San Jose for "inflicting a noise easement against the campus by operation of San Jose Airport."²⁹ "The campus lies 820 yards west of the center of the landing and takeoff south of the airport. Bellarmine officials complained that the school was the victim of excessive aircraft noise, resulting in

a type of inverse condemnation-damaging the school through operations of San Jose Municipal Airport.”³⁰ The inverse condemnation action was filed by attorney Gerald Hansen. The trial included twelve weeks of testimony and Bellarmine failed to prove it’s case; therefore Bellarmine lost.

School Life in the Nineties

Students at Bellarmine will never say that they are bored during break, lunch, or after school. At break, the students can go to the co-op, which is located in the basement of Liccardo, to buy candy, soda, donuts or the Famous Amos chocolate chip cookies. If the co-op is too crowded, the students can go to the Bell Market, which is about a half of a block down the street. At the Bell market, students can buy pizza, bread sticks, donuts, and other junk food that parents do not want their kids to eat.

At lunch time, the students cannot leave school because Bellarmine is a closed campus, but they can dine at Los Belenes a Mexican restaurant across the street. They can also buy lunch at the Bell Market, Bellamy (a deli with freshly made sandwiches,) or in the school cafeteria. For entertainment during lunch or after school, the students can go to the Bell Market to play video games, join an intramural sports team, or join a club. In the past few years, the amount of clubs has tripled. The clubs range from a Spanish club to Club Mud, which is a ceramics club. If a student does not want to join a club, he can try yearbook, band, try out for a play, speech and debate, or join a sport.

Community service hours are required for the students to do. Each year at Bellarmine, the students are to do twenty-five hours of community service. By the time

the students are seniors, they will have to have done one-hundred community service hours by May in order to graduate. Service hours give students a unique opportunity to give of their talents and to make an impact in the community where they live. Since service assignments vary from year to year, a student may tutor, work in soup kitchens, visit the elderly, help the handicapped, or volunteer at a hospital.

Bellarmino as it stands today is a testament to the dedication of both Jesuits and lay men and women who for many years fought to keep the school open. Unlike the Bellarmine of the twenties, the school today mirrors the rich ethnic diversity of the valley. Although the school is highly selective academically, any student who proves that he is ready to work is given the opportunity to attend. Every year generous benefactors give thousands of dollars through direct donations and a variety of development programs so that scholarships can be made available to those in need. Many of the benefactors are former students who continue to be involved in the life of the school. It is their way of making sure that Father Accolti and Father Nobili's dream stays alive.

Famous/Well-Known Graduates

Many talented young men have attended Bellarmine. Some of these men have attained prosperity as adults. Many of these men have become famous sports figures. Marv Owen, class of 1946, played for the Detroit Tigers. Conn Findly, class of 1948, was the first person to receive four medals in two different sports(Crew and Yachting.) Bill Macpherson, class of 1950, was the defensive coach of the 49'ers. Dan Pastorini, class of 1967, was the quarterback for the Houston Oilers. Terry Shea, class of 1967, was

the coach of the San Jose State football team. Steve Schott, class of 1956, is the current co-owner of the Oakland A's. Pablo Morales, class of 1983, swam in the Olympics in 1984 and in 1992. He earned medals in both of these years. Tim Martin, class of 1985, plays for the San Jose Clash. Ed Giovanola, class of 1987, played for the Atlanta Braves in the 1996 World Series.

Some well-known graduates from Bellarmine have striven in other areas besides sports. Lon Normandin, class of 1952, currently owns Normandin Chrysler in San Jose. Frank Dorsa, class of 1958, owns Classic Car Wash in San Jose. Lastly, Tom McEnery, class of 1963, is a former mayor of San Jose.

Conclusion

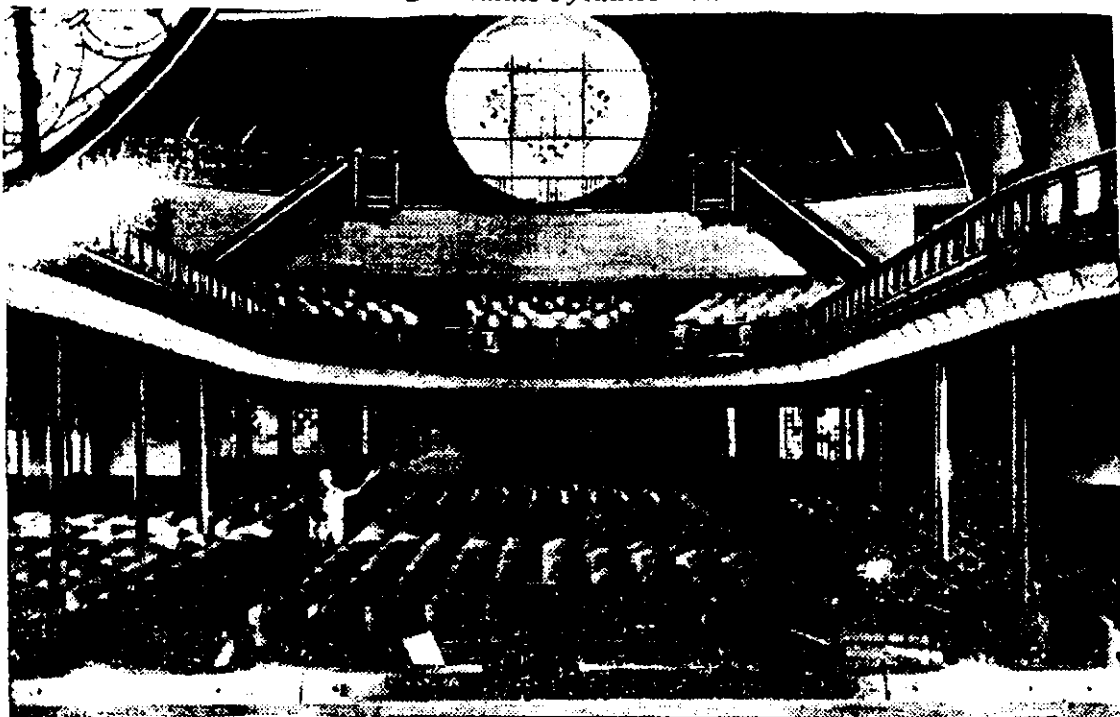
Bellarmino College Preparatory has achieved success in many ways since its commencement. The academics at Bellarmine have always been the main attraction for the students who attend the institution. The variety of classes which are offered at Bellarmine attract many ambitious students. The sports have also been a part of the students' attraction to the school. Perhaps the most important aspect of Bellarmine is their involvement with the community. Every students' participation in community service serves as a contribution to the unfortunate people in the city of San Jose.

Bellarmino's future is quite optimistic. The school has overcome many obstacles since the day it was founded. These obstacles have been dealt with and the school has moved on.

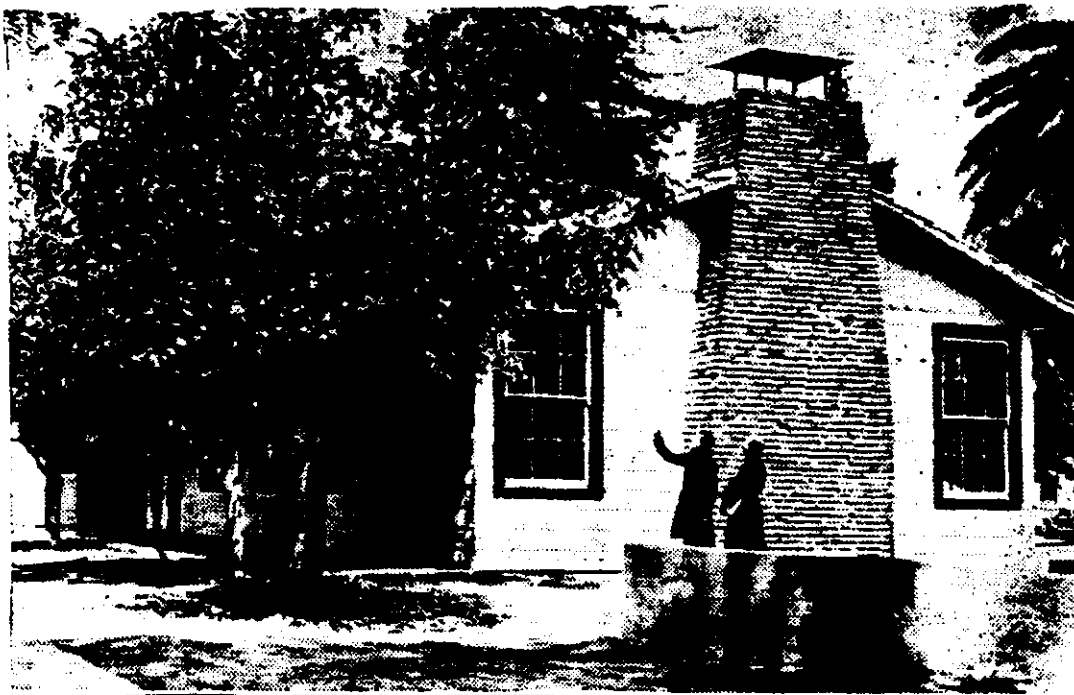
Overall, Bellarmine College Preparatory is an important institution in the Santa Clara Valley. Hopefully, the school will be filled with prosperity and good fortune. Also, many students will have the opportunity to receive a challenge in their education throughout high school. In the future the athletics department will continue to stay strong and win more Central Coast Sections.

Bellarmino has a long tradition of achieving excellence in academics and in athletics. It is an important educational institution and a vital part of the Santa Clara Valley.

Bellarmino's Auditorium



Bellarmino's Co-op and Social Hall



"Auditorium Dismanteled; Past History is Recalled." The Cardinal. 11 March 1938.
"New Co-op and Social Hall." The Cardinal. 30 September 1938.

Administation Building



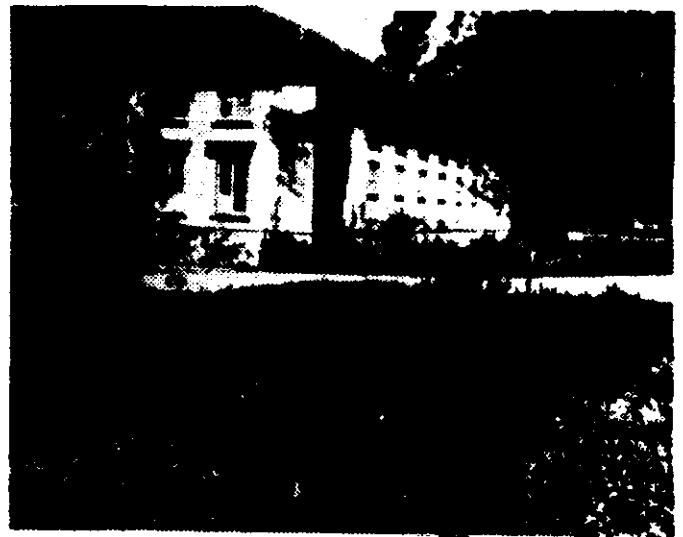
Swimming Pool



Kostka Hall



Gymnasium



"New School by '48." The Cardinal. 9 October 1947.

Airview of Bellarmine Campus



"New School by '48." The Cardinal. 9 October 1947.

Endnotes

¹Gerald Mckevitt, S.J., The University of Santa Clara (California: Stanford University Press, 1985) , p. 14.

²Ibid. , p. 19.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. , p. 20.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid. , p. 25.

⁹Ibid. , p. 37

¹⁰Ibid. , p. 44.

¹¹Ibid. , p. 45.

¹²Ibid. , p. 205

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ron Pine, "History of Bellarmine College Preparatory," Report. (Bellarmine College Preparatory, 1895) , p. 3.

¹⁵Leonard McKay and Nestor Wahlberg, A Postcard History of San Jose (San Jose: Hilary Graphics, 1992) , p. 122.

¹⁶McKevitt, Op. Cit. , p. 207.

¹⁷Pine, Op. Cit. , p. 5.

¹⁸Brian Stenthouse, Alumni director, San Jose, CA. Interviewed at 850 Elm Street, San Jose, CA. 3 April 1997.

¹⁹Ibid. , p. 9.

²⁰ Pine, Op. Cit. , p. 11.

²¹ "Auditorium Dismantled; Past History Is Recalled" The Cardinal 11 March 1938:
n. pag.

²² "New Co-op and Social Hall" The Cardinal 30 September 1938.

²³ "Work On Gridiron Gets Under Way" The Cardinal 5 March 1937.

²⁴ "Work Started On New Campus Tennis Courts" The Cardinal 8 February 1939.

²⁵ Stenthouse, Op. Cit.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Bellarmino in Big Suit on Airport" San Jose Mercury News 18 September
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³⁰ Ibid.

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Willow Glen High School

Advisor: Mrs. Kathryn C. Philp