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Edited by Vernon Aubrey Neasham

SITE of the COLLEGE of CALIFORNIA

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Lois Ann Woodward

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SITE OF THE COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA

The site of the College of California in Oakland occupied the four blocks bounded by Twelfth, Fourteenth, Franklin and Harrison streets. Incorporated as a college in 1855, the school was organized in 1853 as the Contra Costa Academy, which began its existence in a small rented house at Fifth and Broadway. After two years the academy moved to its permanent location. There it continued as a college preparatory school until a class was ready for college instruction and the College of California opened its doors in 1860. The college continued until 1868, when it merged with the Agriculture, Mining and Mechanical Arts College to form the University of California. On the old College of California site the university was conducted for four years until the buildings and grounds of the university site at Berkeley were ready for use.

The College of California came into existence as the outgrowth of a movement for the creation of a college or university which had its beginning when first American settlers came to California and established permanent homes. Among the early pioneers there were a few who were interested in establishing an institution of higher learning in the State even at that early date. Prominent in the college movement and especially for his work in the interests of the College

of California was the Reverend Samuel H. Willey, New England clergyman, sent out to California in 1848 by the Congregational Home Missionary Society. He has written concerning the interest in a college in those first years:¹

Among the crowds of young men that were then coming to California for gold, there were some who came to stay, and make homes and help 'build a State here.' They did not at first know each other. All were strangers then. But gradually they got into correspondence. As soon as there were mails and post offices, they began to get acquainted.

One of the first subjects written about and talked of by those who had faith in a State to come, was that of education. To be sure, there were very few English speaking children here at that time, and most people thought it too soon to plan for schools. But some thought otherwise. They thought that there would be children here to be taught, quite as soon as schools could be made ready to teach them. They thought that schools would bring children here, doing away with one of the greatest objections to the removing of families to this country. There are some who went so far as to include the college in the forecast of their educational plans. Not that the college would be wanted soon, but they meant to see it well established, if possible in their lifetime.

To make this more sure, they

1. S. H. Willey, "The College of California," Overland monthly, VI, No. 31, July 1885, 26-27.

thought that it would be worth while to get land given while it was cheap, toward the foundation of a college endowment. There were wealthy ranchmen who owned their leagues and 'city lots' were being rapidly surveyed, mapped and offered for sale in San Francisco, San José, Benicia, Sacramento and Stockton,... It seemed possible to get donations of such and probable that it might become so valuable as to be a material help when the college should want it. I do not know how extensive the correspondence about that matter was, but I know that Sherman Day, John W. Douglas, S. V. Blakeslee, T. L. Andrews, T. D. Hunt, Frederick Billings, J. A. Benton, Frederick Buel, and the present writer took part in it at the same time; and it was the earnest purpose of all concerned to secure the coöperation of all friends of higher education in some practical college plan.

These pioneers of the college movement began immediate efforts in behalf of a college. Grants of land were requested of the wealthy men in the State, several of whom agreed to make donations for a site whenever a board of trustees was legally incorporated to receive them. The government of the new State still had to be organized and furtherance of the college movement awaited the first meeting of the legislature, which passed a law on April 20, 1850, for the incorporation of colleges.² Meanwhile, the men interested in the college movement continued to look

2. W. W. Ferrier, Origin and development of the University of California, 103.

for a suitable site and to solicit subscriptions. The more favored location was at San Jose, then the State Capital. An application to charter a college there was submitted in 1850, but was refused by the supreme court because the titles to the land had not been settled or the land sufficiently described to determine its value and make the property sure.

Following denial of the college charter in 1850, a little more than two years elapsed before the college project was resumed. Nevertheless, the idea was kept alive by its leaders, who worked for it continuously, laying the foundations for the college at Oakland. Mr. Willey wrote concerning these activities:³

But that did not hinder work looking toward the college. The friends of the movement held meetings; preliminary measures were discussed. All of us were busy about our own affairs, pushed to the last degree. None at that time could stop to look up a teacher, or to do other needed things to get together a school preparatory to a college. But yet information was sought from every quarter bearing on the plan; extended correspondence was had with members of the faculty of Yale College and the government of Harvard College, touching on the best methods of procedure (sic) in circumstances like ours. Letters full of encouragement and counsels drawn from experience came back, aiding us greatly in our plans.

3. Willey, Op. cit., 27-28.

The educational needs of California and the efforts of leaders to establish a college here appeared in articles in religious magazines in the East. The Reverend Henry Durant, Yale graduate and head of a seminary in Massachusetts, became interested in the opportunities in California and arrived in May 1853, to take an active part in the college movement. At that time most needed in beginning the school was a teacher to organize it and become its head. Mr. Durant brought letters of recommendation from the East and immediately called on Dr. Willey in San Francisco, who wrote of the interview:⁴

We were soon in each other's confidence, and he stated at once his purpose in coming. It was, he said, to work for the establishment of a college in this new State. He was personally fond of college life and had seen considerable of it, having served as tutor in Yale for several years after his graduation at that college, and now he felt like engaging in it again. He thought he could do the most good by beginning the work in a new state where such an institution is always needed, and should be founded early. This announcement was a surprise and delight to me, and I knew it would be to the others, for a few of us had been planning for work on this line for three or four years. And now to have a prominent man come of his own accord to take it up and give himself to it - seemed almost too good to be true!

The men connected with the college movement were anxious to accept Mr. Durant's services and resume the work

4. Ferrier, Origin, 124-125.

to establish a college. At a meeting of the Congregational Association of California and the Presbytery of San Francisco held at Nevada City in May 1853, definite plans were made. Mr. Willey, who was among the members attending the meeting, wrote of their activities:⁵

Outside of church work, our main attention was given to the subject of higher Christian education. All were agreed on beginning an academy at once, to be developed (sic) into a college.

At this meeting a committee was appointed, composed of Reverends Willey, Bell, Benton, and Hunt, to assist Mr. Durant in working out a plan for the creation of a college. They were authorized to obtain the organization and incorporation of a board of trustees of which they were to be members and to serve as representatives of the Presbytery and Congregational Association to obtain the necessary endowment and land for the school.

In 1853, San Jose was no longer considered as a site for the college. The capital had been moved to Sacramento, and a more central and accessible place was desired. Oakland had been considered as a possible location and soon after the meeting at Nevada City the committee went to Oakland to examine that area. It was chosen as an ideal college site.

5. Ferrier, Origin, 125.

Mr. Willey, in describing the place, wrote:⁶

A wheezy little steamer had got into the habit of crossing the bay two or three times a day to carry passengers. It was pretty regular except that it was apt to get stuck on the bar now and then. In this case it took us safely over. Oakland was found to be indeed a land of Oaks, having one street, Broadway, extending from the landing towards the hills, with a few buildings here and there on either side, and a few houses scattered about among the trees.

Upon inquiry, one single house was found vacant. It was situated on Broadway, where now is the corner of 5th st., and it could be had monthly at a rent of \$150 gold coin paid in advance.

The building was rented and the academy opened there in June 1853, with three pupils. A man and his wife were hired at \$150 a month to take care of the building and do the cooking and housework. Funds were obtained by subscriptions and from tuition and room and board receipts.⁷ As soon as the school was organized every effort was made to assure its success. Advertisements appeared in the current papers and religious magazines, one in The Pacific for June 1853, reading:⁸

The spacious and comfortable house lately the Washington Pavilion on Broadway in Oakland has been procured and will be devoted exclusively to the use of a Family High school for Boys, under the

6. Willey, "The College of California," in Overland monthly, VI, No. 31, July 1885, 28.

7. F. C. Merritt, History of Alameda County, California, I, 338.

8. Ferrier, The College of California, 130-131.

superintendence and instruction of the Rev. Henry Durant, lately arrived from New York.

It will be opened for the reception of pupils on Monday the 6th of June, as the commencement of what is designed to be a permanent school. The beauty and salubrity of the spot, its accessible position on the Bay of San Francisco, its attractions as a place of residence for families; the wholesome shade and classic air of its ancient oaks, the taste of its increasing population, and the munificent regard to the cause of education manifested by the present proprietors of the soil, contribute to make this one of the most desirable situations in the State for the proposed Institution.

The branches of study to be pursued will comprise, besides those taught in High Schools, the Latin, the Greek, and if desired the French, German and Spanish languages. The price for board, washing, domestic care, and school instruction will be \$12.50 per week, payable monthly in advance for tuition alone, \$10 per month. Each boarder will provide his own chamber furniture.

The house stands on Broadway, direct from the landing, at the distance of about five minutes' walk. The place may be reached from San Francisco by the Kate Hayes, Capt. Edwards, from Pacific Wharf in one hour, leaving at 10 o'clock a.m. and returning at 4 o'clock p.m. and at 5½ p.m., returning the next morning.

The location of the school in rented quarters was regarded as only temporary, and the trustees soon sought a permanent site of their own. At that time much of the land in Oakland and vicinity was occupied by squatters. It was as a result of an episode dealing with them that the college secured for its permanent site the four blocks bounded by

Twelfth and Fourteenth, Franklin and Harrison streets. Professor Durant, who selected that location, told of the incident:⁹

Just at this time 'Jumpers' as they are called, a certain order of squatters, assembled in pretty large numbers at the end of Broadway (near 14th) - two or three hundred of them. It seems that a plan had been arranged and they had been gathering in small numbers until there was a large number of them. They were discussing, haranguing, and working themselves up to the point of taking possession of all the unoccupied ground in Oakland. Learning what they were about - that they were about to take possession of the various lands and divide them off by drawing lots, giving each one something - I went down into that crowd, took off my hat, got their attention somehow, and proclaimed that negotiations were being had for the securing of four blocks for the purpose of building a college thereon. A motion was made that three cheers be given for the coming college. A committee was appointed to take charge of these four blocks, to keep them safe from interference from any quarter - to hold them sacred to the use for which they had been voted.

A clear title was obtained to the four blocks, an area of about eight acres. The land was fenced in and buildings were erected for school work, living accommodations for the students, and the principal's residence. These were completed and occupied by the academy in September, 1854. The academy be-

9. Ferrier, The College of California, 135-136.

came known as the "College School" because it was a preparatory school to the college which was to begin as soon as a class was ready for college work. Although the next few years were often financially trying for Professor Durant, the "College School" grew steadily. More people became interested in it and supported it by their subscriptions as its success was assured.

Application for the incorporation of the College of California was made on April 13, 1855.¹⁰ A board of college trustees was appointed which had as its members: Frederick Billings, Sherman Day, Samuel H. Willey, T. Dwight Hunt, Mark Brumagim, Edward B. Walsworth, Joseph A. Benton, Edward McLean, Henry Durant, Francis W. Page, Robert Simson, A. H. Wilder and Samuel B. Bell.

The first meeting of the trustees of the College of California was held in San Francisco, October 17, 1855. Mr. Frederick Billings was elected chairman of the board and Mr. Willey secretary. The trustees fully realized the new responsibilities and duties they had assumed with the chartering of the college, and commenced their task without delay. Much had to be done before the opening of the College of California, which they hoped to make at an early date.¹¹

10. "Application for the College of California and Declaration of Incorporation," in California miscellany, II, 5-6.
 11. Ferrier, Origin, 143-145.

Five years elapsed after its incorporation before the college opened. The "College School" continued its preparation of students for the first college class. Its patrons contributed money for the construction of a new building and enlargement of the old ones. Professor Durant was able to increase his teaching staff. During that period, in behalf of the College of California, the trustees and friends of the institution spent a large part of their time in securing funds.¹² While on vacation in the East, Mr. Willey solicited from wealthy individuals, money and endowment for the college. The attempt to secure subscriptions in the East was not very successful, for most people there thought that California, with its gold and other resources, was sufficiently wealthy and did not need outside aid. It was equally difficult to raise money in California, due to business depression and generally upset conditions, 1856 being the year of the Vigilance Committee's activities.¹³

During the five-year interval before the college commenced, the trustees also gave considerable attention to the selection of a new permanent site other than Oakland for the college. They anticipated a rapid growth of Oakland

12. Merritt, History of Alameda County, 338-339.

13. Willey, "History of the College of California," in the California Historical Society, Papers, II, 36.

which within a few years would make the college location there undesirable. Finally selected was a tract of one hundred and forty acres in Berkeley, voted in March 1858, by the board of trustees as the College of California's permanent site.¹⁴

As plans for the organization and opening of the college proper took definite shape toward the end of 1859, there was some opposition to the school on the grounds that it was a sectarian institution. In order to clarify its position and the principles upon which the school had been started, which from the beginning were not denominational, the college trustees published the Organic Basis, which stated:¹⁵

The College of California is an institution designed by its founders to furnish the means of a thorough and comprehensive education, under the pervading influence and spirit of the Christian religion.

The bonds which unite its friends and patrons are a Catholic Christianity; a common interest in securing the highest educational privileges of youth; the common sympathy of educated and scientific men and common interest in the promotion of the highest welfare of the State, as fostered and secured by the diffusion of sound and liberal learning.

In accordance with these considerations, and in order that the institution may never come under the control of Church or State, or any branch of the

14. Ferrier, Origin, 157-185.

15. Wilby, "History of the College of California," in California Historical Society, Papers, I, 57-58.

one or denomination of the other, they adopt the following Organic Rules, and to observance thereof they publicly commit themselves, and so far as in their power, they commit their successors to the end of time.

Rule I. Such trustees shall be elected, from time to time, as shall fairly and equally represent the patrons and contributors to the funds of the institution, provided -

1. A majority of them shall always be members of evangelical churches, and
2. Not more than one-fourth of the actual members be of the same Christian denomination.

Rule II. In the election of professors, preference shall always be given to men of Christian character, and the President and a majority of the Faculty shall be members of evangelical Christian Churches.

Rule III. Founders of professorships shall have the privilege of naming them, and defining the branches of learning to which they shall belong, and prescribing the religious belief of the incumbents, subject always to the acceptance of the Board of Trustees.

The first freshman class of eight students was ready to enter college in the fall of 1860, when the College of California began its official existence. The trustees appointed as the faculty Henry Durant, professor of the Greek language and literature, Martin Kellogg, professor of the Latin language and literature, and Isaac Brayton, professor of Rhetoric and the English language. Professor Brayton was also principal of the "College School" and devoted only part of his time to the college.¹⁶

16. Willey, "The College of California", Overland monthly, VI, No. 31, July 1885, 31.

The first college year was successfully concluded and a new freshman class of ten entered for the college year of 1861-1862. It was apparent that with the incoming classes of the next few years the college would need to enlarge its buildings and increase its faculty. Additional funds were necessary to do this. The executive office of the president of the college had to be filled. Until a president could be selected, Mr. Willey was elected vice-president, to act as the executive head of the college.

Mr. Willey, on assuming the management of the college, made a careful study of its needs and presented them in a communication to the trustees. He recommended that new and larger buildings be erected with adequate equipment, the faculty increased, and that the money necessary for those increases as well as for a presidential endowment fund be raised by subscription. Mr. Willey wrote, in speaking of the action taken on these recommendations and their results:¹⁷

The committee subsequently reported, recommending the adoption of the measures proposed, and the immediate opening of a subscription to raise the necessary funds. The report of the committee was adopted by the Board, and determined the working plan of the institution. The real property of the college at this time consisted of the four

17. Willey, "History of the College of California," in California Historical Society, Papers, II, 84-85.

blocks and the included streets heretofore mentioned, in Oakland, and the buildings thereon, namely the Mansion House, Academy Hall, and the first small College Hall, valued then at \$18,600, amounting in all to \$35,600. Against this property was very little if any indebtedness. Toward current expenses, I found a small amount of unpaid subscriptions, previously obtained, a limited tuition income, and whatever remained from the receipts of the College School, over and above its expenses. The catalogue for 1862-63 showed that the Junior class consisted of six members, the Sophomore class of eight, and the Freshman class of three, and the number in the College School was one hundred and twenty-eight.

My first work was to obtain an enlarged subscription to meet the current expenses of the College. It was war time. Interest was high. The public mind was intensely excited. Very large contributions were called for in various ways for carrying on the war. Consequently it was thought best to ask individuals for an annual subscription no longer than three years. It was hoped that before that time expired, affairs would be more settled, and that the way would be opening for obtaining funds for a more permanent endowment. The three-year subscription was fairly successful, notwithstanding the adverse times, not only in San Francisco and vicinity but in the interior towns as well. When this subscription was far enough advanced to meet current expenses, as proposed, the plan for a new college building was taken up. Architects were consulted. Drawings and estimates were studied. Finally a plan was selected for a handsome, two story building to contain a chapel, recitation rooms, and a library room, to be built on the northwestern block of the college property. The contract price was \$75,000. A subscription was

The contract was \$7,400. A subscription was at once opened to raise the means to put up this building. It proved successful. The building was erected. It was far more ornamental than any that had preceded it. Its high tower overlooked the oaks that then covered the entire encinal. It was a proud day when the college entered its new and commodious rooms. Next came the effort to raise the Presidential endowment fund, which was placed at \$25,000. The high interest paid for money in California at that time made that amount sufficient, certainly as a beginning. To obtain subscriptions to this fund, in sums large enough to make it up within a reasonable time, was a much greater undertaking than those that had preceded it. Many days, and even weeks, I walked the streets, and climbed stairs to visit offices, and press the claims of the college upon business men. Sometimes it seemed as if all prospect of success was about up. Then a successful application would change everything, and I walked the streets as if on the tops of mountains. At last the final sum was obtained and the endowment subscribed.

The college year, 1862-1863, ended with the raising of the junior class to senior standing and for the first time, in the year 1863-1864 the college was composed of four classes. That term the college opened in its new buildings. The faculty then included, Vice-president Willey, Professors Durant, Kellogg, Brayton and Brewer; F. D. Hodgson, instructor in mathematics and natural philosophy; C. L. Des Rochers, instructor in French; T. C. Barker, German; and W. H. Cleveland, Spanish. The curriculum was similar to that of the old Eastern
ern colleges, wit

colleges, with slightly more emphasis on modern languages.¹⁸
 Indicative of the collegiate atmosphere of the institution,
 Vice-president Willey wrote:

The college bell used to ring
 strictly 'on time' and all college
 exercises were punctually attended.
 There was the genuine spirit of col-
 lege life, both thorough and manly.

Towards the end of the college year 1863-1864, elabo-
 rate plans were made for the graduation of the first college
 class. The college wanted to make this, the first regular
 commencement, a special occasion. "The object was, to plan
 something that would call together educated men, and induce
 them to give a day to learning and revival of college associ-
 ations, and at the same time interest them in the college and
 give emphasis to our first commencement."¹⁹

The college having no alumni, an invitation was
 sent from the faculty and students of the College of Califor-
 nia to all college graduates in the State to attend a general
 alumni meeting the afternoon and evening of May 31, 1864, the
 day preceding the commencement. One hundred and twenty-five
 persons, representing some thirty-five colleges, attended and
 many more responded by mail. Following a program with an

18. Willey, "The College of California," Overland monthly, VI,
 No. 31, July 1885, 32.

19. Ibid.

oration by John B. Felton, the guests enjoyed a luncheon on the college grounds. A gala occasion, it brought many of the prominent and educated men of the State together for the first time and inspired in them a greater interest in the College of California and in education generally.

Every effort was made to secure a man for the president's office, as Mr. Willey desired to relinquish his position as soon as he had aided the college through its financial difficulties and organized it on a sound basis. The Reverend Dr. Shedd of New York had been invited to assume the office, but declined. No other person being available, Mr. Willey continued his duties as vice-president.²⁰

About 1865, plans were begun to make improvements on the Berkeley property so that the college could move there without much delay. Fred Law Olmstead, New York landscape architect, in California on business, was requested to examine the Berkeley site and make a topographical survey of the grounds, laying them out for purposes of the college and the college town. In 1865, Mr. Willey moved from Oakland to Berkeley to supervise improvements of the site. In 1866, Mr. Olmstead sent the trustees a comprehensive plan which outlined the best use of the grounds, desirable type

20. Willey, "History of the College of California," in the California Historical Society, Papers, II, 102-104.

of buildings, landscaping and drainage problems. With that plan, the college trustees began to improve the permanent site.²¹

With the contemplated move of the college to Berkeley, a new financial plan, aside from the time subscription system on which the college had been started in 1850, had to be worked out. Again it was thought that aid might be had in the East, and efforts were made to secure assistance there. Again they were disappointed; for the funds secured there were very meager.²² At this point the idea was conceived of merging the college with the Agriculture and Mechanical Arts College, which the State proposed to build, and form a State university. The College of California held its seventh commencement in June 1867.

Governor Low, chairman of a legislative committee in search of a location for the Agriculture College, was present and remarked to the trustees:²³

You have here organization, scholarship, patronage, success, but you lack money; the State has money, but has none of these things: what a pity they could not be brought together!

21. Willey, "The College of California," Overland monthly, VI, No. 31, July 1885, 33-35.

22. Ibid., 35-37.

23. Ibid., 37

After consideration of the matter, the College of California trustees proposed to donate to the State the 140-acre college site at Berkeley, and, whenever the University of California was established, to disincorporate and pay its remaining assets and liabilities over to the University. The idea to combine the Agricultural College and the College of California to create a single well-endowed and supported institution in the form of a university was well received by the individuals connected with both schools. The legislature enacted the law establishing the university according to that proposal, and it was passed March 23, 1868.²⁴

The university had to be organized and secure its faculty before it could begin to function properly; therefore the College of California was requested to continue its work one more year, until 1869. The College of California graduated six classes, none of which were large, but the training was thorough and compared favorably with that of some of the Eastern colleges. Its graduates were a credit to the institution, many of them assuming important places in the State. The founders and patrons of the College of California could well be proud of the school they so successfully established during those hard early times. And they

24. Ferrier, Origin, 256-275.

could be even more proud of their sacrifice when, successful, they turned the college over to the common cause of education to form the great State university.

The University of California took over the work of the College of California in 1869. The university grounds and buildings at Berkeley were not ready for use that year, so the university began its existence on the old College of California site in Oakland. On the eastern half of the Oakland site, the "College School," then privately run by Mr. Brayton, was conducted. The university began its work in the college buildings situated on the western half of the grounds. George C. Edwards, entering freshman in the first University of California class, in an article entitled "Early Student Life at the University," wrote:²⁵

The college work was done in a small reddish-brown, two-story building, which had a lobby and two rooms down stairs, three recitation rooms upstairs. The little building stood among the oaks well back from the nearest corner, the junction of 12th and Franklin streets.

The University opened its doors for entrance examinations in September 1869. Twenty-five of us passed these examinations for freshman standing. In addition there were adopted from the College of California a senior class of three, a junior class of five and a sophomore class of two.

25. G. C. Edwards, "Early student life at the University in California," in Alumni fortnightly, II, March, 1918, 5.

The University had its first home on the College of California's Oakland site for four years, until 1873. After it moved to Berkeley the old college buildings were used for a number of years. Old timers knew them as Elite Hall or Dietz Opera House, Sunnyside House at Twelfth and Thirteenth, and the Old College Hall at Harrison and Twelfth. Today the site is a central part of Oakland's older business district.

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