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The Past . . . PROGRESS

- Interpretive and symbolic Events
in the History of the College
- Views of the Past

Interpretive and Symbolic Events In the History of the College

by REGINALD and GRACE STUART

The story of an institution is often told through the biographies of its officials. Perhaps a more accurate understanding of its worth is obtained from a study of its motives and goals.

PIONEERING DECADES, 1851-1871

Important as the Gold Rush days were in themselves, they were of greater significance as symptoms. California had grown from a few score American citizens in 1846 into a full-sized state within five years. The men and women who had braved untold hardships in their journeys to El Dorado believed that no problem was insurmountable. Here in this new home, they demanded the best which they had known or dreamed of in the East. The climate was better, the land was more productive, and material accomplishments were more abundant. It was not surprising that they demanded, too, that the best educational advantages be made available to their children. The founding of this institution, within four months after the admission of California to the Union, was just one event that spelled out a determination to make this state an ideal place in which to live.

These two decades were, for the most part, spent in Santa Clara, the first year as the California Wesleyan College, and for the remainder as The University of the Pacific.

It soon became apparent that it took more than a charter, campus, and classrooms to make a college. Presidents and faculties came and went; the student body grew; and in one way or another, the bills were paid.

COMPLACENT DECADES, 1871-1891

Then came a friendly, understanding administration in a new home at College Park, San Jose. All the traditional trappings of eastern colleges were adopted. The setting was suburban and conducive to intellectual effort, but there seemed to be the lack of a great compelling motive. Professors were paid a bare subsistence, and the president lived for a decade on \$1800 per year. Nobody seemed to sense that death by starvation was quite as permanent as by some more disastrous method. What the students lacked in great and noble objectives they soon made up in aping the hazing antics of the effete East.

TROUBLED DECADES, 1891-1911

Again there were rapid "turnovers" of administrations and faculty. With no all-consuming purpose, an institution, like an individual, cannot remain in status quo.

If it does not advance it must slip back, and relatively speaking, that is what happened during this period. While administrators and faculty fussed and fumed about behavior patterns and problems, Pacific's contemporaries were not asleep.

TRANSPLANTING DECADES, 1911-1931

At last a president arrived who looked at the situation with understanding appreciation. The "University" had shrunk away from its clothing. It was, in reality, a small college, and this president was honest enough to say so. The name was changed to "The College of the Pacific." Then came another president who did greater things. He found admission requirements so lax that almost anyone could matriculate. He stiffened the rules—and the enrollment increased. Soon he discovered another problem: Pacific was stifled and root-bound in the educational nursery of the San Francisco Bay area. State institutions, a great church college, and a privately-endowed university were sapping away most of the nourishment from the scholastic field. The president and his trustees said, "Let's move!" Almost at once the adverse trends stopped. A great project was under way and this became the controlling motive in the lives of a devoted and dedicated faculty and student body.

REORGANIZING DECADES, 1931-1951

When the catastrophic Depression of the 1930's broke, Pacific was a solvent institution with new buildings and a trained faculty. In the days ahead, the College paid back to Stockton and the community in services every cent which had been expended by them in bringing the College to this area. Moreover, Pacific's president through countless addresses carried a message of hope and courage to every part of the state. Pacific cooperated with the City of Stockton in the establishment of a junior college—and turned it over to the City of Stockton when the city was able to carry the financial load.

NEW HORIZONS, 1951-

Within the past ten years, Pacific's young, friendly, and dynamic president has charted a challenging course for the College. In the first place, he questioned the absurdity of measuring excellence in terms of bigness. Pacific can never equal or excel a state institution's enrollment, nor the number of its classrooms, nor the amount of its expenditures, nor can it equal the quantity output in graduates.