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Methodist Education in California (College of the Pacific & Napa College)

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METHODIST EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

for Cop history see pp. 13-23

A Paper

Presented to

Professor Owen C. Coy

the Department of History

The University of Southern California

VSC pp. 24-54
Stockton Seminary pp. 59-60

Pacific Methodist College pp. 65-69
Napa College pp. 69-72

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Course
History 216ab, California

by
Robert F. Oxnam

May 1947

PREFACE

The writer was born into a Methodist family; his father is a Methodist clergyman; therefore his association with the Methodist Church and interest in Methodist activities date from boyhood. Consequently when Professor Owen C. Coy approved a topic of Methodist educational efforts in California for the study in the course History 216ab, California, it was with real relish that the research was attempted.

The aim of this paper was to obtain as much information relative to the schools and colleges established by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, both now united into the Methodist Church, as was possible. The results of the study are spotty at best; in some instances considerable information was available on certain institutions, in others only the mention of the existence of a particular institution was found. Though the paper is the result of the reading and search of one academic year much more could be done to run down all of the threads of information obtained and turn up other threads not thus far found. The conference records of the two churches were a valuable fund of information; county and regional histories for the most part proved disappointing for when educational institutions were mentioned the denomination, for some unknown reason, was not disclosed. It is a pity that thorough research histories of all parts of this State could not be drawn up on the

pattern of Professor Coy's Humboldt Bay Region.

It was felt that the most logical manner of organizing this paper would be to present: first, a brief resumé of the earliest educational activities of the inhabitants of California; second, to discuss the two largest Methodist institutions which have survived to the present day; third, to note the other schools and colleges established by the conferences of the Methodist Church; and finally, to record a few brief conclusions regarding Methodist education in California.

When the people called Methodists came to this new land of California they brought with them definite ideas of their duty to provide Christian education not only to the youth of their own denomination, but to the youth of the new land as a whole. There has been an attempt to present in this study some of the outstanding results of the burning desire of those Methodist educational pioneers.

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CHAPTER III

COLLEGE OF THE PACIFIC

With the advent of American control of California came a desire on the part of many of the inhabitants for American educational institutions, which was followed almost immediately by the demand for the formation of an institution of college grade. "California had become a part of the Union in 1850, with less than 100,000 inhabitants, but before this time had occurred much discussion regarding the establishment of a university."¹

Early discussion. Discussion on the part of the Methodists crystallized in the form of correspondence between Isaac Owen and Dr. Durbin of the Methodist Episcopal headquarters in the east in the year 1850; Dr. Durbin advised Owen of the necessity of an institution of higher learning in the new field. Owen's background suited him well for the task of beginning Methodist higher education in California; he had served as agent for Indiana Asbury University (De Pauw University) and had obtained a large amount as the first endowment of that college. Bishop Taylor, at the end of the century wrote of Owen, praising him in the highest terms for the work

¹ Charles F. Thwing, History of Higher Education in America, 214.

he had done at Asbury and his interest in the founding of the college in California.

Isaac Owen was considered in his day the greatest beggar in America. . . . Merchants have told me that when they saw Owen coming they hastened to shake his hand and say, 'How much money will you have today from my concern? Here are ten dollars, Mr. Owen; you don't need to state the case.'

In the wonderful progress of Asbury (DePauw) and of the University of the Pacific the man who under God laid the foundations of both is mainly unknown to the present generation, but God 'will remember him in that day.'²

Isaac Owen had become the presiding elder and Professor Edward Bannister had been assigned to operate an educational institution by the Oregon and California Mission Conference in 1850. In January 1851 a conference met at San José with the intention of forming such an institution. Marian Broderick quotes reports of Owen to Dr. Durbin and to William Roberts which indicate the difficulties presented in the establishment of California Wesleyan College. To Dr. Durbin he wrote,

The committee on Education met at my house on the 24th (of June evidently) and proceeded to locate our contemplated University at Santa Clara in the San José Valley. . . . The committee appointed Brother Bannister, C. P. Hester, and myself a committee to secure a Charter and we have already commenced our work. We have \$27,500 toward the Endowment and over \$1,000 for building purposes and about 50 acres of land for the University Campus. We expect to proceed to erect one or more buildings between this and October next.³

² William Taylor, Story of My Life, 120.

³ Marian Broderick, "Methodist Episcopal Church on the Pacific Slope," 78.

In his Annual Report to Roberts he stated, with relation to the difficulty in obtaining a charter,

[the] supreme court who alone is authorized to grant charters, decided that they had no power to grant a charter for a University.

In addition to the endowment funds there have been suitable grounds adjacent Santa Clara obtained for the College Campas and about eleven hundred dollars for building purposes.⁴

Establishment. One month later, on July 29, 1851, Owen wrote again to Dr. Durbin,

Since our last, we have succeeded in obtaining a charter for our institution. We could not get a University charter as was desired, for the reason, the Statute of California has not made a provision for a University charter. But our College Charter has University power and privileges. And we only failed in the name not the thing. . . . We hope to get one recitation room by October next.⁵

The first decade. The name first given to the school was California Wesleyan College, but one year later, in 1851, it was changed to University of the Pacific. Though offers of land had been received from Santa Clara, Vallejo and San José, it was decided to build in Santa Clara. The work began in September 1851 in San José but, as soon as the buildings were completed in Santa Clara, the institution was transferred

⁴ Broderick, "Methodist Episcopal Church on the Pacific Slope," 78.

⁵ Loc. cit.

there in the spring of 1852. Edward Bannister was the principal; he was assisted by Mrs. Bannister in the operation of the institution. Prominent in the list of the first Board of Trustees were Isaac Owen and William Taylor. Isaac Owen, who had shipped to California about two thousand dollars worth of books and with them founded the Methodist Book Concern in San Francisco, wrote with relation to the University of the Pacific in his diary, "The future is not very flattering. If something is not done soon our educational interests on this coast will not amount to much!"⁶ It would seem apparent that money in those days would be readily available for such activities; the history of the University of the Pacific does not indicate such a conclusion, however, for the record of the men interested in its operation and the reports of the Committee on Education at the Annual Conference clearly show the almost continual financial difficulties in which the institution found itself.

Martin C. Briggs was elected to the presidency of the University of the Pacific and his election was confirmed by the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1854.⁷ He became thereby the first president of the

⁶ William W. Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 190.

⁷ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Annual Conference, Minutes, 1854, 19.

institution and was destined to serve for two years in that capacity. He had come to California in 1850 and as editor of the California Christian Advocate had been instrumental in preventing division of the state into slave and non-slave section, with the admission of the slave section into the Confederacy. He had previously served as one of the trustees of the University. In 1854 a brick building was completed in order to provide space for the growing school; the construction, however, embarrassed the school financially for the endowment they had obtained had been utilized and they found themselves in debt. Isaac Owen's ability as a "beggar" was taxed to the utmost to replace the endowment. They had a practice of offering scholarships for the subscriptions by means of which they obtained money to pay for the building; these scholarships were presented at the next session of the school which reduced their tuition income greatly causing them further difficulty. The instructional personnel as well as the administration served for years at the most pitiful salaries; if it had not been for the devotion of the professors, the president, the ministers, and the few lay friends in the Conference the University might well have gone the way of many like institutions in those first few years. Methodist educational enterprises had expanded in the first decade following California's admission to the Union; it had overexpanded and many of the institutions founded or taken under the patronage of the Conference were forced to close their doors. The

Annual Conference of 1860 recorded that the University of the Pacific was the only education interest it controlled,⁸ at the same time a committee was appointed to locate no more than four academic schools (of secondary level evidently); no financial responsibility could be incurred however.⁹

The next three decades. A collegiate institute for young women had been added to the University and it proved to be the most profitable venture undertaken; for, while the scholarships were offered to the young men of the community, the young women usually paid for their instruction. Barnister, who had acted as the first Principal of the school, returned in 1861 as the President.

The name "University of the Pacific" was retained until 1911 though the school had never risen above the size of a college and had not aspired to larger size. To be sure a medical department had been located in San Francisco in 1859,¹⁰ which later was to become a medical college in its own right.

Though the Minutes of the Annual Conference stated that the University would not be moved in 1863, for Santa Clara was quite accessible and would be even more so as soon as the

⁸ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Annual Conference, 1860, Minutes, 36.

⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰ C. V. Anthony, Fifty Years of Methodism, 81.

railroads had been completed,¹¹ it was moved to a new locality between Santa Clara and San José, called College Park in 1866. By 1872 an endowment plan had been decided upon by the Conference; an endowment was raised, only the interest of which was turned over to the trustees, in order that the initial money might not be diverted from its intended purpose.

Approximately thirty thousand dollars were subscribed, the greater part of it by the members of the conference. . . . Throughout the ministers led the laymen in their devotion and generosity.¹²

The first class of the University had graduated ten students, five men and five women, in 1858. By 1888 thirty-one graduating classes had passed through the portals of the school, totaling two hundred and ninety-three graduates. The total attendance in that year was four hundred and sixty-four. The University was well on the road to becoming an established institution in California and known throughout the country as a strong bastion of Methodism on the Pacific Coast.

Dr. A. S. Gibbons, who had served as professor of mathematics beginning in 1854, became president in 1857 for two years and served in the latter capacity again for five years between 1862 and 1867. Another early president deserving of mention was Dr. Thomas H. Sinex, who like many of the early

¹¹ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Annual Conference, 1863, Minutes, 32.

¹² Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 191.

Methodists pioneers in California had graduated from Indiana Asbury University (De Pauw University). He was president from 1867 until 1872 and then served as a professor of the school for many years following his resignation as president; his strength as a trustee of the institution was thoroughly utilized for a long period of time.¹³

The self-sacrifice of the personnel at the University and the ministers of the Conference evidenced their absolute determination to establish on the west coast an institution of higher learning which would rival any of the older Methodist colleges of the east. The State Normal School at San José and Stanford University had become rivals of the University in the California field; it was felt, however, that the need for a religious institution was more than sufficiently great to maintain the University; it did pass through a number of extremely lean years as a result of the competition of the other two schools and the emergence of the University of California at Berkeley as the largest of the California colleges.

The merger with Napa College. In the early 1890's it became apparent to the members of the Conference that Methodist educational activity had become overexpanded again. In the 1860's Napa Collegiate Institute had been founded by

¹³ Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 192.

W. S. Turner, who turned the school over to the Conference rather than sell it to the Catholics. It had grown through the years and had changed its name to Napa College; it was intended that it should become a training ground for students who wished to continue their work at the University. Instead of a preparatory institution it became toward the end of the 1880's a competitor to the University and the movement for merger of the two schools took a prominent part in the considerations of the Committee on Education of the Annual Conference. The Minutes of the Conference indicate in 1892 the necessity of unification and suggested a college office to be maintained in San Francisco, with both schools retaining their own localities but under one headship.¹⁴ Two years later the plan was thought impractical and the consensus was that the Conference should contain its efforts to a single educational institution, which should be the University of the Pacific. Dr. Beard who had been the president of Napa, moved to the University and became its president in 1894; he too was a graduate of Indiana Asbury.

The turn of the century. The turn of the century again found the University in dire financial straits, which had plagued it since its inception. The movement for raising funds,

¹⁴ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Annual Conference, 1892, Minutes, 55.

however, met with real success and the school endowment moved above the one hundred thousand mark. The majority of the students were not in the college section of the University; of the two hundred and seventy-five students one hundred and nineteen were in the academy.

The twentieth century. The end of the first decade of the twentieth century found more non-Methodist students than Methodists. In 1911 the name of the school was changed from the University of the Pacific to the College of the Pacific which was more in keeping with its intended function.¹⁵

In 1920 President Tully C. Knowles, who had come from The University of Southern California, was inaugurated. He served as the administrative head of the institution from that time until the present. He has now become the Chancellor of the College and has turned over the administrative reins to Robert Burns, who acted as his assistant for many years.

The years 1922 and 1924 were outstanding in the development of the College of the Pacific. In cooperation with a national Methodist drive for educational funds in 1922 the efforts in California, directed basically toward the College of the Pacific, were crowned with real success. The City of Stockton pledged six hundred thousand dollars for the campaign;

¹⁵ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Annual Conference, 1911, Minutes, 94.

accompanying this was an offer of forty acres of land in the vicinity of the town.

The goal was reached four minutes to midnight on the day fixed for the closing of the movement-- June 29, 1922--and all California Methodism began to be jubilant.¹⁶

The College was granted an endowment and found itself for the first time resting upon solid financial foundations. The College was to be relocated in Stockton; in 1923 work commenced on the new campus and by September of 1924 the oldest institution of higher learning in the state opened in the new locality.

Though in the earlier years the competition of the University of California, Stanford University and the other large colleges and universities of the State had caused considerable worry for the administration and trustees, there is no doubt that in California there was and still is a real need for a Christian college. Nearly one hundred years ago the foundations for this Methodist college were laid in San José; the road it had travelled through the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth was by no means easy, but the devotion to Christian ideals indicated by the staff of the college, the members of the Conference, as well as the lay friends of the institution were sufficient to carry it through its darkest days and established it as one of the strongest Christian institutions on the Pacific coast.

¹⁶ Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 198.

of the College and the total registration had dwindled to sixty-four. In 1908 the Conference indicated that it might be continued as a junior college and contemplated transfer of the property to California Junior College.⁵² The College struggled along for a few years longer and then closed its doors; in 1922 the remainder of the fund, which was formed from the sale of the property was given to the Epworth University Church in Berkeley in order to aid the work of that institution which was serving the students at the University of California.⁵³

XIII. NAPA COLLEGE (NAPA COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE)

In 1862 a school which had been in operation for a short time previously, an entirely local academic institution, was taken by Reverend W. S. Turner and called the Napa Collegiate Institute.⁵⁴ That year Reverend Turner offered the school to the Methodist Episcopal Conference for its patronage, which the Conference accepted but with the provision that ". . . the Conference shall be held to no pecuniary responsibility in the case."⁵⁵ It was continued on a private basis with Turner the

⁵² Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Pacific Conference, Minutes, 1908, 29 ff.

⁵³ Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 254.

⁵⁴ Anthony, Fifty Years of Methodism, 87.

⁵⁵ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Conference, Minutes, 1862, 35.

operating and financial head for six years, at which time he had to relinquish control because of ill health. "I presented the school to the California Conference rather than take a good price for it from the Catholics, who were anxious to buy it of me."⁵⁶ In 1870 the school was offered to the Conference again and a committee was appointed to secure the property for the Conference in order to open its own seminary there.⁵⁷ During that year the school opened but did not come under the patronage of the Conference until the following year, with the provision that it should be definitely preparatory and in no way compete with the University of the Pacific and that the Conference would accept no financial responsibility for the institution.⁵⁸ Trustees for the Institute were appointed by the Conference at the same time that it was taken under the patronage of the Church. By 1879 the institution had assets of \$40,000 and an indebtedness of \$11,470; too, there were

⁵⁶ Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 194, quoting a statement made by Reverend Turner some years later.

⁵⁷ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Conference, Minutes, 1870, 19.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1871, 21. Perhaps the statement by the Conference as to the appointment of the committee to secure the property gave rise to the statement in Anthony, Fifty Years of Methodism, 87, which was copied by Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 194, that the Institute was taken under the patronage of the Conference in 1870, and the statement in the California Christian Advocate, 75, 55, September 16, 1926, that the Collegiate Institute was founded in 1870.

ninety students in the preparatory department and the advanced academic department had sixty.⁵⁹ In spite of the requirement of the Conference that the Institute should not compete with the University of the Pacific, the friends of the institution had other ideas and continued its expansion to include more and more teaching of a higher level. In 1885 the name was changed to Napa College;⁶⁰ the following year it entered upon a period of expansion which raised it definitely to the status of a college in direct violation of the directives of the Conference.⁶¹ Great advances were made by Napa College under the able direction of President J. N. Beard, who had graduated from Indiana Asbury, and had taken over the administration of the College in 1887.⁶²

The Conference was having difficulty enough supporting one institution of college grade and the movement to unify the two colleges grew rapidly. In 1892 a recommendation was presented to the Conference that the two institutions be unified; that the business offices should be located in San Francisco; that the two institutions should maintain their present locations; and that the name of the consolidated school should be

⁵⁹ Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 194.

⁶⁰ California Christian Advocate, 75:55, September 16, 1926.

⁶¹ Anthony, Fifty Years of Methodism, 88.

⁶² Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California, 194.

University of the Pacific.⁶³ That recommendation was later held to be impractical in 1893 and the following year the recommendation to close Napa College and merge it with the University of the Pacific was accepted. The College was closed and Dr. Beard became the president of the University of the Pacific.

XIV. GERMAN INSTITUTE, MARYSVILLE

In the basement of the German Methodist Episcopal Church in Marysville the German Institute was established in 1865 or slightly before that time.⁶⁴ G. A. Bollinger, a member of the German Mission Quarterly Conference, was appointed by the Annual Conference as Principal of the school in 1865.⁶⁵ Mention continued to be made of the school and of the principal for three years thereafter; no mention was made in 1868 or in the Minutes of the Conferences following that of the school; Bollinger's name appears frequently, however, at various assignments.

XV. WILSON COLLEGE

In 1874 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, took

⁶³ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Conference, Minutes, 55.

⁶⁴ Anthony, Fifty Years of Methodism, 87.

⁶⁵ Methodist Episcopal Church, California Conference, Minutes, 1865, 14.