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## THE VANISHED ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF CALIFORNIA'S EARLY METHODIST COLLEGES

Four colleges sponsored by religious groups presently affiliated with the United Methodist Church existed in northern California during the nineteenth century. These entities were: the University of the Pacific (1851- ) and Napa College (1885-1896), established by the Methodist Episcopal Church; Pacific Methodist College (1861-1902), established by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and, San Joaquin Valley College (1883-1897), established by the United Brethren. By 1880 all of these colleges had erected substantial buildings none of which survive today. These vanished structures are the subject of this brief study.

### The University of the Pacific

During the early 1850s, the University of the Pacific erected its first buildings in Santa Clara. Shortly thereafter, the Civil War caused enrollments to decline markedly and the straitened financial circumstances which were a direct result of that decline made expansion unnecessary and impossible for the ensuing twenty years.

The older of these two earliest college buildings in California was the "Female Collegiate Institute," a two story, modified Federal style frame edifice that was erected (May 1852) on a lot next to the present-day Santa Clara Methodist Church. This building provided both dormitory and classroom space for all female students at UOP until the University moved to nearby

College Park---a University-owned enclave just north of San Jose (1872). Research has so far been unable to discover any description of the interior of the building, although it seems logical to suppose that classrooms occupied the ground floor and dormitories the upper floor. The University Catalogue (1867-1868) indicates that one room was used as a chapel. There is an extant photograph of the exterior of the "Institute" (c1872). This photo---which was published in Rockwell D. Hunt's History of the College of the Pacific (1951)---shows the building to have been a long, low, rectangular structure entered through a central portal and adorned only by a balcony that extended from one end of the building to the far edge of the portal. Following its move to College Park, the University sold the Female Collegiate Institute building and it became a private residence. The structure functioned as such until it was torn down early in this century (1917). The University Archives possesses a photograph of the exterior of the building taken shortly before it was razed.

The "College," or men's building (Spring 1853), a plain, rectangular three-story brick structure, apparently stood in an open field on the edge of town. Research has discovered three descriptions of this edifice, although there seems to be no extant photograph. The best delineation of the exterior of the College building (found in J.P. Widney's "Reminiscence" appearing in the California Christian Advocate, Jan. 7, 1909) states that

the building stood "in the center of a portion of a block of land in the southerly section of the town of Santa Clara, with untilled fields and squirrel holes all about it." Widney characterizes the structure itself as "a rickety three-story brick building somewhat the shape of single brick stood upon end." The Archanian Clarion (Feb. 4, 1859) noted cryptically that "in the third story of the building is an apparatus room containing all the philosophical machinery necessary for the manufacture of electricity and hydrogen gas." The University Catalogue states that another room was used as a chapel. Since several sources agree that male students boarded in the town rather than in the "College," it would appear that the remaining interior space was devoted to classrooms. When the University moved to College Park, the "College" was torn down and the bricks were used for other structures at the new site (1872).

The first building begun by the University of the Pacific at its College Park site was an all-purpose classroom structure that soon came to be known as West Hall. This building was dedicated in September 1870 and completed in the Spring of 1871. It was located near the southwest corner of the new campus, facing the Alameda. What is probably the earliest picture of West Hall is an anonymous engraving published in the Thompson & West Historical Atlas Map of Santa Clara County (1876). The engraving credits "T. Lenzen" as architect. The University Archives owns many photographs of the exterior of this building, one of which



Rockwell Hunt included in his History. These images show West Hall to have been a rather grand three story, hybrid Italianate/Second Empire frame edifice with Mansard roof, third floor dormer windows and a coupola. The California Christian Advocate (Dec. 1, 1870) published a thorough description of the interior of West Hall which states that:

"A hall ten feet in width extends through the lower story lengthwise. The hall on the second story is somewhat irregular, the central portion of it being designed for a cabinet or museum. There are twelve commodious recitation rooms on the first and second floors. These rooms are well-lighted, well-ventilated, and have ceilings fourteen feet in height. They are warmed by a furnace in the basement from which pipes are well-distributed through the several partition walls. The chapel is in the third story. It is surrounded by deep galleries on three sides. There are four rooms on this floor designed for use of the literary societies. There are a number of other rooms on the different floors that may be used for offices or music rooms. There is a wide double stairway in the front of the building and a single continuous flight from the first floor to the chapel in the rear of the College."

It is known that a room on the first floor was used as the University library. One of the second floor rooms functioned as a gymnasium. The University Archives has photographs of a commercial classroom, laboratories, the library, the President's office, and the gymnasium. Although none of these images is identified on the photographs themselves, and although most of them were taken after 1890 (by which time other classroom buildings had been erected on the campus), it is safe to assume that most of these views are of rooms in West Hall. The hall was

damaged by the earthquake of 1906, but continued in use until it burned to the ground a few years later (Jun. 1915).

The Historical Atlas engraving cited above depicts a total of three structures on the University of the Pacific campus (1876). The first building to be completed after West Hall was South Hall---a "Ladies' Boarding Hall." South Hall was under construction by September 1874 and apparently in use by 1875-76. The many photographs of the exterior of South Hall in the University Archives collection depict a two-story, Italianate/Second Empire frame building with Mansard roof, elaborate portals and considerable surface ornament---an appropriate mate for the West Hall classroom building. The Archives also owns a photograph (reproduced in many University Catalogues between 1890 and 1910) of a "typical" South Hall dormitory room. The building was used as a women's dormitory until it was displaced in that function by the new Helen Guth Hall (1909). According to the President's annual report (1910-11), a practice organ was then placed on the ground floor of South Hall and the second floor above the organ was removed to create a chapel with a seating capacity of about 250 (1910). This room was used both for small concerts and as the meeting place for the YWCA. South Hall survived after the College of Pacific moved to Stockton (1924-25). The Roman Catholic Church purchased the campus in 1927 and there created Bellarmine College Preparatory School. The University Archives has a photograph of

the building as it appeared in 1948. At that time it housed administrative offices. South Hall was razed sometime before 1987.

Central Hall, initially a men's dormitory and refectory, was in use by 1876-77. University Archives photographs reveal Central to have been a plain, two story, rectangular, Federal style frame structure. Central Hall was so plain that it lacked even a second floor balcony of the sort that adorned the 1853 Female Collegiate Institute building---which it otherwise resembled. The Thompson & West engraving of the University campus places Central Hall in the wrong location and shows it to be identical in appearance to South Hall. That the engraving is in error on both of these points may indicate that Central had not yet been constructed when the engraving was made (1875 or 1876). When a much larger, brick, men's dormitory, East Hall, was erected (1885), Central Hall continued in use as the dining hall for the entire campus. Upstairs rooms were used as classrooms. Central burned to the ground in 1914. The University Archives has a photograph of the site in the aftermath of the fire.

All other buildings on the University of Pacific's second campus were built between 1885 and 1915. These include two important nineteenth century structures: the already cited Italianate East Hall and the Pacific Conservatory of Music building (1890). The latter was of unusual Romanesque Revival



design, perhaps influenced by the recently completed quadrangle buildings at Stanford University. It was by far the largest and most important building on campus, housing a recital hall/chapel, many classrooms, practice and student club rooms.

#### Napa College

According to Rockwell Hunt's History of the College of the Pacific, the cornerstone of the main building of the Napa Collegiate Institute was laid in June 1859. This structure was erected "at the head of Polk Street" in the northwestern part of Napa. The building was a rectangular, three story, Federal style brick structure containing "chapel, recitation rooms, dining hall, and parlor, besides private rooms for the boarding students." The University of Pacific Archives has a photograph of the exterior of this building as it appeared (c1867) before the Methodists acquired it. Surviving records of Napa College are also in the UOP Archives.

For most of the first twelve years of its existence, this building was the sole edifice of a private boy's preparatory school operated by the Rev. William S. Turner. In 1870 the Rev. Turner sold the school to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which operated it as a coeducational preparatory school until 1884. The Methodists added a fourth floor, a covered first and second floor porch and balcony festooned with Eastlake trim which ran all the way around the building. The new tenants also encased



the entire structure in Portland cement (1871). Hunt published a photograph of the building in this form in his History. An article in the Napa Classic (Oct. 1889) records that the men's rooms were on the third and fourth floors. Commercial classes, classics, music, art and science were all taught in recitation rooms on the first and second floors and it "was the regular thing to hear several pianos and elocutionists making the air vibrate at all times of the day and evening." The first floor chapel doubled as a recital hall and meeting room. "It was there," reports the Napa Classic, "that our literary societies met and our orators held forth...that our final examinations were given, and there we held our daily receptions." Classes at the Institute/College were always coeducational, but according to the Napa Classic (Oct. 1889), "one flight of stairs to the upper stories of the Main Building was for ladies, the other-- alongside--for the gentlemen. Young men were forbidden to speak to young women during school session without permission---a regulation that was seldom heeded." When the school became a college (1885), the Main Building continued to perform most of the same functions as before. After Napa College merged with the University of the Pacific (1896) the Main Building was razed (1898).

The Napa Collegiate Institute campus also featured three other structures: a ladies' hall, a primary school dormitory, and the principal's cottage. The University of Pacific Archives has

exterior photographs of all of these buildings. All seem to have been erected when the school was acquired by the Methodist Episcopal Church (1870). All were razed (1898) and the property was subdivided after the Methodists consolidated Napa College with the University of the Pacific (1896).

The original ladies' hall was an unadorned, square, Italianate frame two story building surmounted by a small roofed observation platform. This building was replaced by a larger, more ornate, two story Eastlake structure in about 1888. An attractive engraving of the exterior of this second women's hall was published in the Napa Classic (May 1889).

The primary school dormitory was a rectangular, two story, Second Empire frame building. It was converted to science classroom space after the preparatory department was abolished (1887).

#### Pacific Methodist College

This Southern Methodist college was first established in Vacaville (1861), then moved to Santa Rosa (1870), where it operated until the Church closed it permanently in 1902. According to the Santa Rosa Collegian (Jul. 1874), the original campus featured a two story wood frame classroom building and a boarding house of similar size and construction. No photographs or other illustrations of either of these

structures have survived. Upon learning of Lincoln's assassination, angry citizens burned the college building to the ground (Apr. 1865). Temporary classrooms were created in the boarding house until a new school building was erected (1866).

The new classroom building was a plain, two story, Federal style brick structure surmounted by a wooden bell tower. The University of Pacific Archives has a photograph of this building that was published by Limbaugh and Payne in their Vacaville: The heritage of a California community (1978). Other surviving papers of Pacific Methodist College are in the Pearl Sweet Collection at the University of Pacific Library's Holt Atherton Department of Special Collections.

In 1870 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South chose to move Pacific Methodist College to Santa Rosa where they hoped to be able to recruit a greater number of students. They sold their Vacaville buildings to the Baptist Church, which then operated California College in them until 1881. In that year, the city of Vacaville itself acquired the buildings and operated the California Normal and Scientific School (the town's first high school) in them until increasing costs forced this school, too, to close its doors (c1888). The local Congregational Church occupied the site from that date until a severe earthquake so damaged the buildings (1892) that they were torn down. Bricks from the classroom building were used to pave Vacaville's Main Street.



The City of Santa Rosa gave the Southern Methodists a ten acre site half a mile east of the Plaza (1871). On this site, they erected a three story, Italianate/Second Empire frame, Mansard-roofed, dormer-windowed classroom building. Here they operated the College until 1889. By that date, the real estate on which the campus lay had become so valuable that the Church decided to sell it to developers and move to a less valuable location. This they found in the Elliott Subdivision of the Norwood Tract Addition one mile north of the county court-house. It is unclear whether the old Main Building was moved to the new site, but this was probably done. At the time of the move, the Southern Methodists erected a new two story, Queen Anne style frame Ladies' Hall (1890). This building featuring large rooms "with good light and ventilation and no 'inside' rooms," according to the Pacific Methodist (Dec. 1889). By 1890 the "College" had very few college-level students and, although the primary department thrived until the Church voted to close the College (1902), Pacific Methodist was never able to compete as a "college" against the likes of Stanford and the University of California---or even the University of the Pacific. After the school closed, its buildings probably remained unoccupied until they were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake.

San Joaquin Valley College

According to Celia Myers, whose article "San Joaquin Valley College" appeared in the San Joaquin Historian vol. 13 (1977), citizens of Woodbridge raised money for a preparatory school and erected a building in 1878. Following a contract dispute with the man selected to run this school, they turned the building over to the United Brethren in Christ Church, who opened the school as Woodbridge Academy (Spring 1879). In 1883 the Church incorporated the Academy as San Joaquin Valley College, which then awarded advanced degrees from 1885 until it closed permanently in 1897. The highest yearly enrollment was 180 students, of whom about half were candidates for college degrees.

The College's two story, Italianate/Second Empire frame building (with bell tower) stood on three acres at the southeast corner of Lilac and Academy streets. According to a school catalogue, it contained "comfortable recitation rooms and a capacious hall for chapel, rhetorical and other exercises." The San Joaquin County Historical Museum, which holds the remaining papers of the College, also has many photographs of the exterior of the building, several of which were published with the Myers article cited above. The structure was used as a classroom building until 1897, after which time it stood vacant until 1903, when it was reopened as Woods [public] Grammar School. It

continued in use as a public elementary school until it was razed and replaced by a new school building after World War I (1922).

Male students at Woodbridge Academy/San Joaquin Valley College boarded in area homes. Female students, however, first boarded in a "large building formerly used by the Pacific Insane Asylum." Ray Hillman notes in Cities and Towns of San Joaquin County since 1847 that this structure had been erected by Dr. Asa Clark (1871), who, with Samuel Langdon, had operated a private asylum that contracted with the state of Nevada and the territory of Arizona to care for all of the mental patients of these entities. Clark and Langdon moved their operation to Stockton in 1877. Research has not unearthed any photograph, or other image, of this building. The College abandoned the asylum building when a new two story, Eastlake frame boarding house with basement and covered porch was completed (1891). This structure was erected at the southeast corner of Orange and Carolina streets (possibly on the Asylum site), about two blocks from the classroom building. Myers published an engraving of the exterior of this women's dormitory in the San Joaquin Historian article cited above. The 1891 College Catalogue states that in addition to bedrooms, the boarding house contained a reading room, a library of more than 1000 volumes, a basement dining room, and a meeting room for the women's literary society. Research has not determined when this structure was razed.



Afterword

With a few intriguing exceptions, the larger college buildings erected during the nineteenth century by Methodists in California followed the fashion of other local public buildings of their time. Those constructed before 1870 were in the main done in Federal style, while those built between 1870 and 1885 were most often hybrid Italianate/Second Empire designs.

Wood was the preferred medium of construction because it was cheaper and more readily obtainable than brick or stone. It is fair to say that standards for brick and mortar-making and for construction in brick were not well-controlled in California before the 1870s. In at least one instance---the Pacific Methodist College classroom building at Vacaville---brick-work had to be redone because the mortar used contained adobe soil which caused excessive settling. Contemporary descriptions of the University of Pacific's mysterious first brick classroom building at Santa Clara indicate that that building swayed and trembled as though in the throes of an earthquake whenever students ascended the stairs.

Between 1850 and 1870 it was common to carry out all functions of a college in a single structure. These early structures---the Female Collegiate Institute in Santa Clara, the Napa Collegiate Institute, or the Pacific Methodist College classroom building in Vacaville---tended to be multi-storied,

barn-like rectangles that were sufficiently capacious to accomodate their respective student bodies and the requirements of the classical curriculum taught them.

If there is a single tendency which could be said to characterize early higher education in California, and Methodist education there in particular, it is coeducation. This orientation derived naturally enough from an initial paucity of students and perhaps from a peculiarly western appreciation for the potential self-sufficiency of women; but, whatever its source, coeducation---even on a small scale---seemed to require separate campus accomodations for women. The "Ladies' Hall" was inevitably the second building erected on these new campuses---and sometimes the only adjunct structure ever raised.

By 1870 California college "campuses" were defined by the presence of separate classroom and dormitory buildings. The elaboration of the separate and distinct functions of these two types of structures, as student enrollment increased and the curriculum came to include the arts and sciences, was a major preoccupation of late nineteenth century college campus planners.

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