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Eye of the Tiger: Books, Geography, Movies, and Mascots

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Pacific held classes in downtown Stockton before the current campus was built. This building can be spotted behind a fence at the East Washington Street entrance of the Stockton Record newspaper plant. Although it is still there, it is almost unrecognizable.

Eye of the Tiger: Books, Geography, Movies, Mascots
by Michael Wurtz, Archivist

The dedication of the Pacific Memorial Stadium (now the Amos Alonzo Stagg Memorial Stadium) in the fall of 1950 was punctuated by the donation of a live 450-pound Bengal tiger. Lowell Berry, regent and one of the principal supporters in the drive to build a stadium, purchased "Tommy Tiger" from the Chase Wild Animal Compound in Egypt, Massachusetts after he was considered too wild for circus use. Appropriately enough, Tommy was transported from the East Coast via the famous 1st American Volunteer Group the Flying Tigers. When in Stockton, Tommy was occasionally kept in one of the old Quonset huts on campus. His handler, Rod Seifert, would trot the bewildered animal out for home games and parades for the next year and half. His off-season home was the Fresno zoo where he mysteriously died in 1952.

The lore of the university's mascot and colors, as well as movies made on campus, books about the history of the institution, and the geography of Pacific's statewide reach was recently explored in an exhibit in the library's main lobby, Eye of the Tiger: Books, Geography, Movies, Mascots.

In 1992, Cindy Spiro (BA '76 MA '84, now Senior Associate Director of Athletics) researched the foundations of the school's mascot and colors. She suggests that the earliest mention of orange as the college color is in an 1866 newspaper article describing the university's baseball team. Although there is no hard evidence, it is believed that the color was chosen to reflect the California Poppy that adorned the landscape around the early campus in the Santa Clara Valley. Adding support to this conclusion, the year the California state legislature made the Poppy the official flower in 1890, the university yearbook Naranjado ("orange" in Spanish) was decorated with the flower. Black, as a secondary color, is first noted in 1897. In 1905, orange became the official color of the University. Twenty years later, black became the official "second college color."
American Academy of Asian Studies at 2030 Broadway in San Francisco had Doctoral and Master's programs that explored the "Far-East, South Asia, and Islam and North Africa."

Movies Filmed at Pacific

All the Kings Men [Broderick Crawford] (1949)
High Time [Bing Crosby, Tuesday Weld, Fabian] (1960)
Summer Kill TV movie (c. 1969)
RPM [Anthony Quinn] (1970)
World's Greatest Athlete (1973)
Poetry in Motion (a.k.a Blood Sport) [Larry Hagman] TV movie (1973)
Senior Year TV movie (1974)
BJ and The Bear TV Movie (1978)
Friendly Fire TV Movie (1979)
Raiders of the Lost Ark [Harrison Ford] (1981)
Dreamscape [Dennis Quaid] (1984)
The Sure Thing [John Cusack] (1985)
Flubber [Robin Williams] (1997)
Inventing the Abbots [Liv Tyler] (1997)
Dead Man on Campus (1998)
Illegal Aliens Attack (2005)

Spiro dispels the legend that Pacific copied the mascot and colors from Princeton University in "Tigers, Traditions and Teams: Football and Its Influence on School Customs at the University of the Pacific." Spiro found that the September 1908 issue of the Pacific Pharos (a monthly magazine for students) probably included the first mention of tigers as a mascot. The rugby team had just ordered new suits that mixed the orange with black, "and when the team appears in action they will wear the 'Tiger' stripes."

By 1925 the Tiger was the official mascot. Throughout the years, the logo was drawn as everything from a ferocious beast to the friendlier Tommy Tiger. In 1999, the University unveiled its new logo called "Powercat."

Geographically, Pacific orange and black has covered much of California. The university's influence could be found as far north as the Feather River Inn next to the northern Sierra Nevada town of Blairsden. The Inn was used for retreats and other events from 1977 to 2005. On the southern tip of influence is the Santa Clara Valley. Here the University was founded in the town of Santa Clara in 1851 and moved to San José in 1871. To the west, the Pacific Marine Station on the coast near Bodega Bay, students could earn a degree in Marine Science from 1948 until 1978. The tiger claws dug into Napa where Napa College was consolidated with Pacific in 1896, in the late 1800s and again during the 1970s Pacific has had medical schools in San Francisco. In 1962 one of those schools became Pacific's (Arthur A. Dugoni) School of Dentistry. Between 1954 and 1959, the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco was affiliated with Pacific. In 1966, the McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento came under the grip of the tiger. The principal domain of Pacific today is Stockton. The campus moved to the Valley in 1924, but for a full year before that, students could attend classes at the downtown business office of Pacific at 129 S. American Street.

When Pacific moved to Stockton, the architects designed the campus to look like the famous ivy covered halls of the eastern colleges. This similarity was not lost on the film industry that may have found the pleasant climate and proximity to Hollywood helpful. The campus has been featured in the blockbuster Raiders of the Lost Ark, the irreverent Dead Man on Campus, and many made-for-TV movies. Perhaps the film with the most recognizable campus scenes is RPM (Revolutions Per Minute) starring Anthony Quinn and Ann-Margaret.

Non-fiction written accounts of Pacific history are plentiful as well. History of the College of the Pacific, 1851-1951, still serves as a solid history of Pacific's first century. Tally Knodes of Pacific: Homen, Teacher, Minister, College President, Traveler, and Public Speaker concentrates on Knodes' 27-year administration as president of the college. Pioneer or Perish: A History of University of the Pacific during the Administration of Dr. Robert E. Burns 1946-1971 was published in 1977 to document the 25-year administration of the man for whom Burns Tower is named. Harold S. Jacoby, former student, professor, and administrator, published Pacific: Yesterday and the Day before That, which contains a collection of stories about the people and places that make the University of the Pacific the distinguished institution that it is today. A Century of Smiles: 1896-1996, One Hundred Years of Excellence at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, University of the Pacific, School of Dentistry, San Francisco, California, documents the medical schools in San Francisco.

The most recent publication of the University's history was The Professor Who Changed My Life: A Sesquicentennial Celebration of Educational Interaction at University of the Pacific. Charles Clerc, professor emeritus in English, authored this tribute in 2001, which includes recollections from dozens of students, a history of the University, and a photo essay documenting Pacific at the beginning of the 21st century. Lastly, in 1989, Sally Rinchert Norton published 55 copies of We. This book has some Pacific history, but concentrates on the lives of 10 women who graduated from Pacific in the early 1940s.

The University Archives, kept in the Holt-Atherton Special Collections in the Library, continues to be a wealth of subject matter for research on the rich history and geography of Pacific. The Special Collections department is open to all researchers from 10-5 Monday-Friday.

Live tigers have made periodic trips to campus. In 1972, this one was brought to campus for the filming of Disney's The World's Greatest Athlete.