

# CALIFORNIA'S PRACTICAL PERIOD

A Cultural Context of the  
Emerging University,  
1850s-1870s



Gunther Barth

Chapters in the History of the University of California  
Number Two

Carroll Brentano, Sheldon Rothblatt, Editors

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Center for Studies in Higher Education and  
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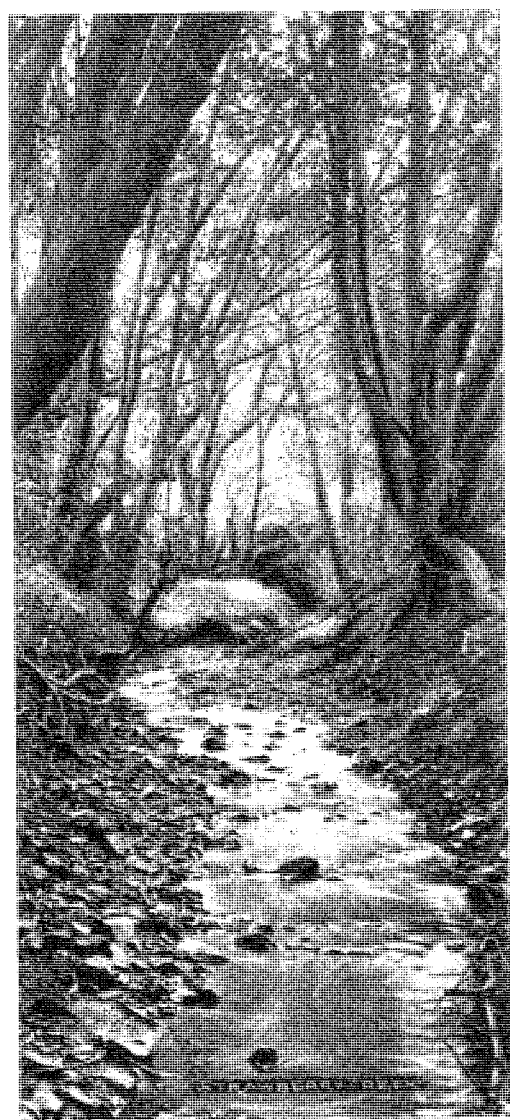
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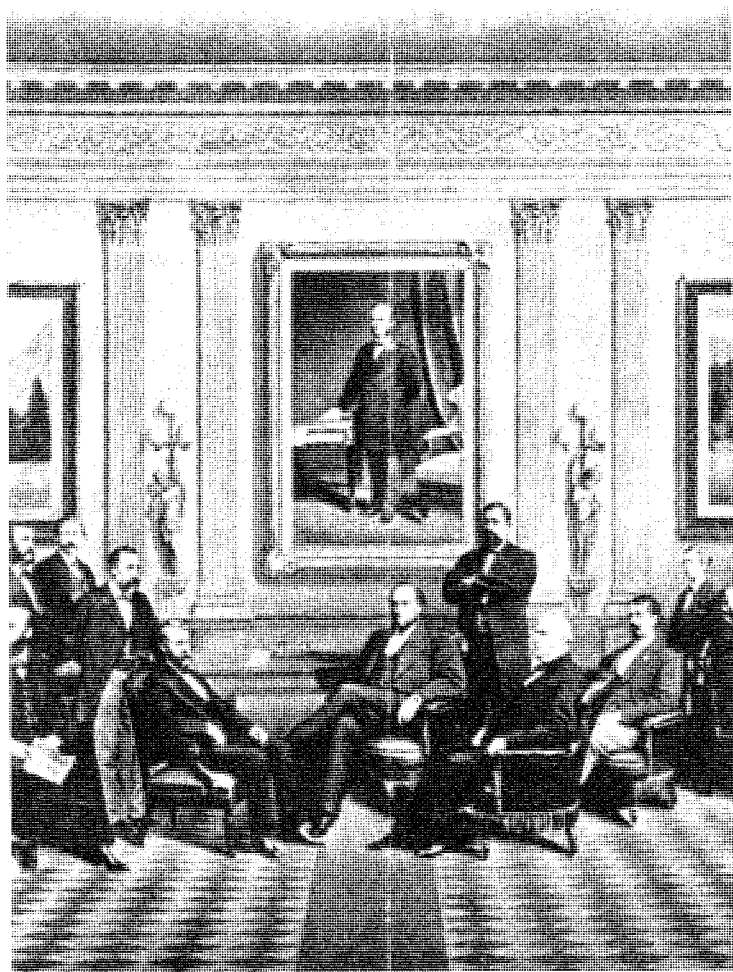


In honor of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the University of California, the Center for Studies in Higher Education at Berkeley, in cooperation with the Institute of Governmental Studies, takes pleasure in publishing a series of "chapters" in the history of the University. These are designed to illuminate particular problems and periods in the history of U.C., especially its oldest and original campus at Berkeley, and to identify special turning points or features in the "long century" of the University's evolution. Histories are stories meant to be read and enjoyed in their own right, but the editors cannot conceal the hope that readers of these chapters will notice facts and ideas pertinent to the decade that closes our own century and millennium.

*Carroll Brentano and  
Sheldon Rothblatt, editors*



*Frontispiece: Officers of the Bank of California, 1874,  
"Practical Men"*



## FOREWORD

We are very pleased to be presenting the second in our series "Chapters in the History of the University of California," and to add our thanks to The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for their support of our project.

In another work, *Fleeting Moments*, Gunther Barth grapples with the sometimes invigorating, sometimes painful, duality of nature, and, or versus, culture. In that book he illustrates nature with an account of the early attempts to find a waterway across the North American continent, and illustrates culture's edge by the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1805. Then, under the title "Engineering Nature—Engineering Culture" Barth traces the history of the rural or garden cemetery in the United States and its immediate successor and companion, the public urban park, as it too advances from east to west.

In this essay, he goes into another field: the newly plowed one of higher education in nineteenth-century California. Here he draws the connections between the 1855 College of California (and its successor, the 1868 University of California), and the earlier cemetery and park traditions. He lays great stress on the character of the men of this "practical period," defining their habits of public political, economic, and intellectual behavior. Another author, the University's first twentieth century historian, Verne Stadtman, has also written of these men:

The first dreamers were practical men. They saw education as a necessary grit to polish the roughness from their territory. . . . The practical men . . . were inclined to regard California as a Western empire,

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destined to have culture, commerce, moral and ethical values entirely its own. Such a civilization would need a center of higher learning native to the land.<sup>1</sup>

Gunther Barth, not a native to the land he writes about, is perhaps for that reason more acutely aware of the interconnections of land and idea—and of dream and practicality—and he captures for us the ironies of their juxtaposition in the special setting of California.

*Carroll Brentano*

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<sup>1</sup>Verne Stadtman, *California Campus* (Berkeley, 1961), 5.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the assistance my work has received. As always, Ellen W. Barth has shaped my thoughts and prose. James H. Kettner, William M. Roberts, Sheldon Rothblatt, William B. Slottman, and L. T. Wallace generously placed their knowledge at my disposal. Daniel J. Herman helped with the research and Carroll Brentano with finding the pictures.

*Gunther Barth*



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*Figure 1: Birdseye View of San Francisco, 1868*



## CALIFORNIA'S PRACTICAL PERIOD A Cultural Context of the Emerging University, 1850s-1870s

In the late 1860s, two influences converged in the Bay Area that contributed to the rise of the University of California: the educational commitment of California and the college tradition of New England.<sup>1</sup> The two strands have been delineated most recently by Verne A. Stadtman in his centennial publication, *The University of California: 1868-1968*.<sup>2</sup>

One strand points to the emergence of the University through acts of the state legislature. On March 31, 1866, that body set the legislative process into motion, quickly creating an Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College. As a result California qualified, before the offer expired, for land from the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862, which inaugurated a system of state educational institutions aided by the federal government.

The other strand relates the emergence of the University to the aspirations of the College of California at Oakland to expand into a university. Without funds to do so and to relocate its campus on a permanent site in the Berkeley hills, on October 9, 1867, the college turned its property over to the Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College. It was understood that the College of California would be added as an academic college to the state institution to establish a full-fledged university.

From 1849, when the constitutional convention of the nascent state charged the legislature with the creation of a university, until 1868, when the California Legislature char-



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tered it, other influences also affected the rise of the University. Rooted in California's cultural context of the 1850s and 1860s, they delayed the emergence of the University for almost two decades and then contributed to the establishment of the University within two years.

California needed roughly 20 years to create its University. The University of Michigan, which served California legislators as a model state university, was established in less than a year. Michigan became a state in 1837, and in the same year its legislature created the university, which had been called for in the constitution of 1835. Instruction began in 1841, but so-called branches of the university operated earlier and allowed some students to enter as sophomores.<sup>3</sup> These comparisons give rise to the speculation as to why California, more affluent and more populous, needed two decades.

Some of the reasons for the delay are rooted in the heritage of the Gold Rush. It accounts for the restless character, the speculative temper, and the relentless pursuit of self-interest, which characterized nineteenth-century California society. The state's practical men, so greatly admired by nineteenth-century Californians, embodied these traits. Assessing their attitudes and activities during the first two decades of the state's history will show how they not only delayed but also hastened the establishment of the University and throw light on its general cultural context.

At a glance, the characteristic that seems to distinguish California's practical men from their counterparts in other sections of the country is their reluctance to undertake anything that did not yield immediate advantages. At a close look, the distinction is less noticeable because quite a number of California's practical men combined chasing fortunes with supporting public causes and institutions. The panache with which they tackled these tasks sets them apart more clearly.

Their dash for success shaped the actions of California's practical men and set the tone for their dominant attitudes towards economic, political, and social issues. Derived from

their exposure to the powerful magnetism of gold, their outlook on life was shaped by chance, and chance sustained the attitude. The approach of California's successful men to most tasks reinforced their attention to those features of the transmitted culture that ensured the immediate operation of courts, churches, and schools, and the benefits of a political system ensconced in the structure of a state. Ingenious people, these practical men had their eyes fastened on the necessities that allowed them to pursue what they considered the chance of their lifetime.

They often displayed contradictory characteristics. Sometimes coarse and vulgar, sometimes refined and fastidious in manner, they could mingle and deal with all groups of people, but they avoided communal responsibilities. Given to thought, they abhorred thinkers. Intellectual and artistic dreams they treated with cold practicality, in the same ways in which they handled finance and politics. They were self-reliant and thought and acted with little regard for the opinions of others, but when their minds fastened on a goal considered essential, their actions, at times, served the public good as well.

The characteristics of California's practical men shaped the two decades that provide the context for the emerging University. Their pursuit of utility in the political arena and the economic sphere increased the number of years it took to establish the University. Two sets of events, taken from the late 1840s and the late 1860s, show the range and the complexity of their goals. They reveal attitudes that in conjunction with other circumstances accompanying the rise of the University throw light on the cultural context.

In 1847, the utilitarian mind of the Alcalde of Yerba Buena, Washington Bartlett, put his struggling town on the map. Bartlett, a Spanish-speaking lieutenant of the *Portsmouth* and the highest municipal officer under the conquerors' new regime, believed that successful town promotion and real estate speculation would ensure urban growth. He immediately arranged a new survey to facilitate speculation in town lots.

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His fellow-officer, Captain Joseph L. Folsom, got the message, bought real estate, and picked the town as the depot for his quartermaster department.

With events now moving rapidly, Bartlett blocked the use of the familiar geographic name, San Francisco Bay, by speculators promoting rival towns and harbors around it. He had no authority to change the name of Yerba Buena, but he simply published a proclamation in the *Yerba Buena California Star* on January 23 and 30, 1847, ordering henceforth the official use of the name "San Francisco," and after a while the military governor who did have the authority made the change official. That Bartlett may also have been sensitive to the Spanish past of the site is a probability pleasant to contemplate. The town could easily have been called New Boston, New Philadelphia, or New New York.

Twenty years later, in the late 1860s, practical men engineered the most unlikely enterprise undertaken by nineteenth-century San Franciscans, the building of Golden Gate Park. They had patched the city's cultural fabric together with borrowed and innovative solutions. In the absence of a common past, they did not readily conceive of a common future and aimed all projects at the present. They looked for immediate success and showed no interest in the idea of a public park that would take decades to produce trees and meadows.

However, certain features of the nascent park project irresistibly attracted practical men. The long contest about the ownership of the land, on which the park came to be built, caught their attention, since they might profit by speculation in its future use. When a large part of the land was set aside for a park they quickly recognized their opportunities because the desolate site would have to be developed extensively before it could be used.

The miles of windswept sand dunes that became Golden Gate Park had long fascinated speculators, settlers, squatters, and builders (Figure 1). Ownership depended on the outcome

of the protracted dispute over pueblo land rights, which dated back to the Mexican War. The contest provided the daily bread for several groups of practical men. As the successor to the Mexican pueblo, San Francisco claimed the pueblo lands from the United States, which in turn placed its claim on the 1848 peace treaty with Mexico.

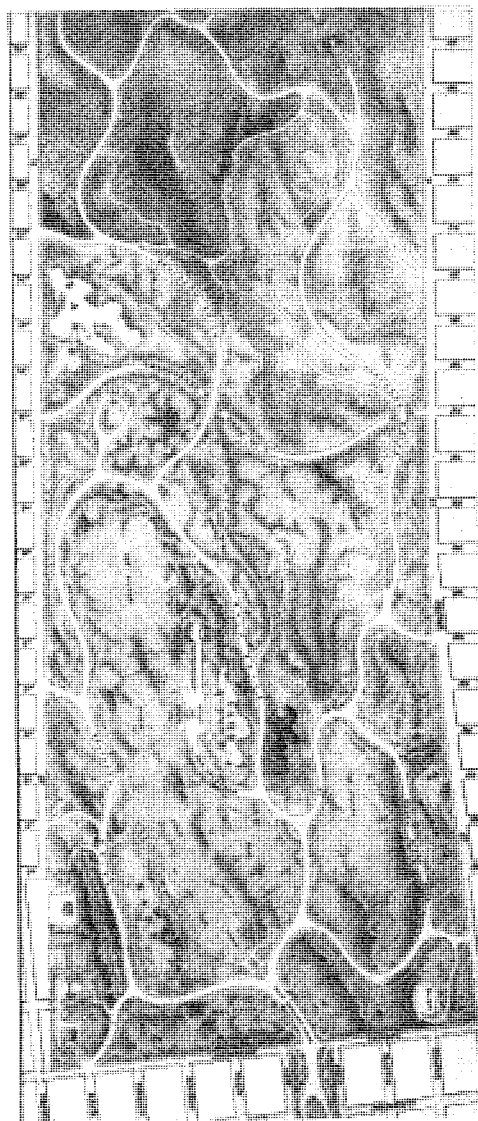
In 1860, a decision of the California Supreme Court made San Francisco the owner of the pueblo lands. Although litigation continued for eight years, the subsequent court actions offered an opportunity to work out a compromise with the practical men who held parcels of Outside Lands. They gave up fractions of their holdings and received clear titles to the remaining lands. Charges of municipal corruption and claims of political wisdom accompanied the transactions.

In the end, the city's practical men avoided yet another legal process that presaged interminable litigation. San Francisco obtained as a park site the dunes stretching four and one-quarter miles long, by half a mile wide, from the Pacific towards the built-up sections of the city (Figure 2). With the projected park went a city-block-wide strip of land, known as the Panhandle, which pointed in the direction of the projected new city hall.

The attention given to the wrangles over the use of the Outside Lands epitomized the practical men's concern for quick gains. The same attitude delayed the creation of the University for two decades. The idea that supporting a college or founding a university might yield practical advantages only slowly entered their minds. Support for the early California colleges came from the religious groups that founded them and, in the case of Santa Clara College (now Santa Clara University), also from an ethnic group. Founded by Italian Jesuits at Mission Santa Clara in March 1851, but not chartered until April 1855, the college's all-male boarding school attracted a large Hispanic student body throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

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*Figure 2: Golden Gate Park Commissioners' Report, 1873-74*



Without the benefits of Santa Clara College's role as mediator between the old culture of the Californios and the new culture of the conquerors as a crucial source of support, the Methodists' California Wesleyan College, chartered in July and launched at San Jose in October 1851, "started with . . . little actual substance," as its historian explains, but was "rich in faith and confident of its real mission." Within a month its name, "half laughing and half prophesying," as one of the founders remembered, changed to "The University of the Pacific."<sup>5</sup> In the following year it moved to Santa Clara; but the changes did not bring in money, and the college depended primarily on Methodist church support. In the meantime, in 1855 ethnic support contributed to the establishment of San Francisco's St. Ignatius College, which was founded by Italian Jesuits with the help of the city's Italian community. The four men's colleges, chartered in antebellum California, all had church-affiliation. The first institution of higher learning in southern California, St. Vincent's College in Los Angeles (now Loyola University of California) established in March 1865, developed with similar support.

The College of Notre Dame at Santa Clara, which later moved to Belmont on the San Francisco Peninsula, also traced its founding to 1851. In August of that year instruction began, but Notre Dame was not chartered until 1868, when it became the first chartered women's college in California.<sup>6</sup> The Young Ladies' Seminary at Benicia, which had been established as a Protestant, but nonsectarian, school in 1852, came close to bankruptcy several times until 1855, when Mary Atkins, who had served earlier as assistant principal of Oberlin's "Ladies Department," became principal and proprietor. Her business acumen, her organizational powers, and her outstanding position as an educator ensured the future of the seminary. It contributed to the development of Mills Seminary (now Mills College), which was opened in 1871 in the hills south of Oakland by Cyrus and Susan Mills, a missionary couple who

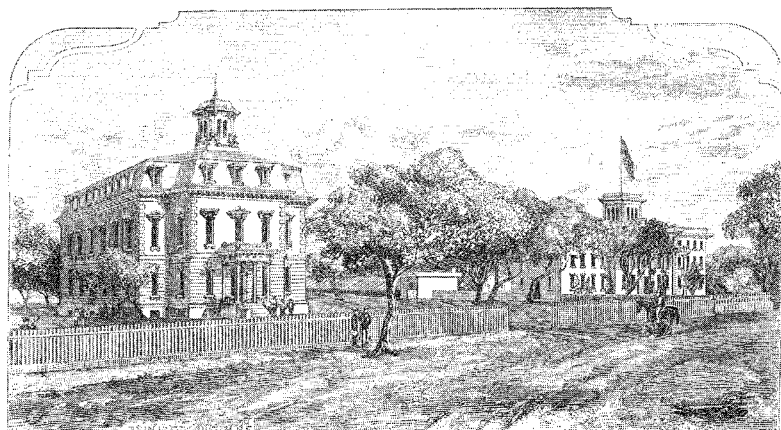
had run the Benicia Seminary for a year during Atkins's trip to the Far East.<sup>7</sup>

Money for a college, not to mention a university, was difficult to come by in California. The College of California, for example, was short of money from its beginnings as an Oakland preparatory academy in 1853, although among its founders were practical men who used their ingenuity to keep the school afloat. Henry Durant, its head, at times was called an organizer and was even more an improviser. As soon as he found a house on Broadway and Fifth and recognized the potential of Oakland as a real estate venture, he went after a better lot, the highest above tide water in what became downtown Oakland. When streets were laid out the so-called College Blocks were located between Twelfth and Fourteenth streets and Franklin and Harrison streets (Figure 3).

In later years, after his two-year service as first president of the University of California, Durant recalled several instances that did him credit as a practical man of great panache. At one time he charged into a crowd of squatters intruding on his choice land, lectured them on the importance of education, pleaded the cause of the College, and changed their minds; at another time he stood off armed property owners seeking to repossess College housing. Without money to make large acquisitions, he was ever ready to organize just one more subterfuge to keep his college going.<sup>8</sup> Half a century later, Durant's actions had become College lore: "All other seminaries of learning have been commenced by rearing structures; we, with the living man. . . . Nothing in the world, but THE MAN!—Henry Durant"<sup>9</sup> (Figure 4). Constantly in search of support, the College made two major fund drives in the East. Both drives received glowing endorsements from Presbyterian and Congregational ministers and educators, but when the fund raisers contacted the eastern men of money, 9 out of 10 times, they were told: "You are rich enough to endow your own College. Why come here for money when there is so much in California?"<sup>10</sup>

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*Figure 3: Former College of California, Oakland, 1870s*





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Indeed, there was plenty of money in California. It was highly visible as the criterion of status, and the first published ranking of San Francisco and Sacramento residents by wealth appeared as a pamphlet in 1851.<sup>11</sup> Within the 20 years from 1851 to 1871, real estate speculators, railroad magnates, and silver kings replaced lucky miners, daring importers—and each other—as the richest men of the state.<sup>12</sup>

These men, who thought in terms of the present moment and the immediate yield, did not view a college or a university as a place to put their money. In 1866, Samuel H. Willey, vice-president of the College of California since 1862 (Figure 5), reviewed its progress in the first year after the Civil War. He reported that fund raisers had solicited donations in vain from men who during the war had reaped extensive profits from exchanging California gold into eastern currency.

The frustrated Willey, who, as pastor of San Francisco's Howard Presbyterian Church, had worked hard for the College from its beginnings in 1853, listed the large gifts some of the eastern colleges had received at the same time. Again, the College of California did not share the windfall because the eastern donors knew well that California had many rich men. "But those rich men were making money too fast with their capital," Willey explained, "to feel ready to invest any adequate sums in endowing a college in California."<sup>13</sup>

There were other reasons that made it difficult to obtain adequate endowments for the College. In the 1860s, skillful fund-raising campaigns were still in the distant future, and the systematic appeal to groups and sizeable pledges from individuals were inconceivable in nineteenth-century California. The young College had no chance to succeed with its infinitely more modest efforts of the early 1860s because it also lacked a well-established group of alumni. Including the class of 1866, the College of California had 12 alumni. Finally, philanthropy, already heavily taxed in nineteenth-century America, could not keep up with the demand for money as the failure rate of colleges in the country demonstrated.

*Figure 4: Henry Durant*



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With his incurable optimism, Professor Durant postulated at the College commencement exercises in 1866 that there ought to be at least 100 graduates that year. "I doubt if there will be seven," he conceded.<sup>14</sup> His acquaintance with the Catholic and Methodist colleges at Santa Clara must have enabled him to guess fairly accurately the total number of California college graduates that year. Four of them were from the College of California. That year its enrollment was 25 students. The College School, as the preparatory department was called, counted 243 students.<sup>15</sup>

When they considered an academic education for their children, Californians frequently sent them East. Sons and daughters studying in the East provided links to the world they had left behind. Their attachment to it remained strong, even after they realized that they lived, for better or for worse, in California. "As the people of the American colonies long preferred to send their children to Europe to be educated," one of the early histories of California explained in 1866, "so hitherto the custom has prevailed in California of sending the boys to the colleges and the girls to the seminaries of the East."<sup>16</sup>

Sending their children to study in the East also came quite naturally to some of California's practical men who themselves had attended eastern colleges and academies. When they accounted for the education that enabled them to get ahead in life, however, they referred to the lessons learned in the "school of hard knocks." Not given much to reflection, they seemed less affected by failure than ordinary men and bounced from a failing scheme to another project. Often they did not seem to care what happened and expressed their attitude towards formal education with the colloquialism, "not to care whether school keeps or not." If they thought at all about formal education, they probably agreed with the conclusion of an article in the 1869 *Overland Monthly*, a regional magazine established in San Francisco one year earlier. The author had reviewed various approaches to

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*Figure 5: Samuel H. Willey*



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university teaching and emphasized: "Let us have a many-sided, truly symmetrical, and thoroughly practical education."<sup>17</sup>

Californians who exulted in the success of practical men were generally silent about their outstanding characteristics. Practical men from other parts of the country, however, during their visits to California spotted their far western counterparts. As newcomers to the scene, they invariably noted the kindred spirits. Their activities in California as well as their comments said much about the varieties of practical men.

Vigorous, footloose Californians, moving from job to job and from place to place, impressed Frederick Law Olmsted during one of his early visits to San Francisco in October 1863. He had taken a leave of absence from the superintendency of New York's Central Park at the outbreak of the Civil War, and after his Washington service as general secretary of the United States Sanitary Commission, he had become the administrator of a large gold mining operation, the Mariposa Estate, owned by New York financiers. "I have been in the streets this morning," he reported to his wife in Bear Valley. What he saw struck him as "New York, East & West shook together, and the weak and old men shook out." His fascination with the many young, energetic people he saw in San Francisco carried over into a later visit when he counted 600 passers-by from his Montgomery Street hotel window and estimated that only two were more than 40 years old.<sup>18</sup>

Concern for his own health may have alerted Olmsted to the many vigorous people around him, but he also recognized an affinity. He himself was constantly on the move, exploring new areas of work, with his restless mind seeking new opportunities to make money as well as to serve the public. Disillusioned with the Mariposa mines, he began working again as landscape architect in the Bay Area. Meanwhile, he continually bombarded friends in the East with various projects, such as acquiring a well-established San Francisco newspaper, investing in quicksilver, gold, and oil, and even buying city bonds and waterworks stocks.

Another San Francisco visit in 1865 reminded him of a 1849 visit to the New York storehouse of the American Tract Society. That recollection suggested to him the formation of a New York association of book buyers with distribution centers throughout the country. After having met the San Francisco banker William Ralston, Olmsted wrote a report about California wine production with reference to Ralston's Buena Vista vineyards. While all this went on, he continued corresponding with his New York Central Park associate Calvert Vaux about working together on Brooklyn Park.<sup>19</sup>

When practical men from the East commented about their California counterparts, they also told much about themselves. "Energy and a glorious audacity are their leading traits," observed Clarence King, who shared the characteristics. Fresh out of Yale's Sheffield Scientific School, he had come to California on horseback in 1863, joined the Whitney Geological Survey and was on his way to becoming an eminent geologist, the author of a good book about the Sierra Nevada, and Henry Adams's "best and brightest man of his generation."<sup>20</sup> In 1871 he summed up his impressions about Californians: "Aspirations for wealth and ease rise conspicuously above any thirst for intellectual culture and moral peace," he wrote, without realizing how soon this assessment would characterize him too.<sup>21</sup>

When these practical men, described by King and Olmsted, settled down, they thrived on the economic momentum of the growing state and its major city. Successes and failures were recorded by a dotting press that fueled the California cult of the practical men. Efforts abounded to emulate the success of the practical man in fields other than business, industry, and speculation. Ultimately, even higher education caught their interest, but only after attempts at other unlikely fields, such as the journalist Ralph Keeler's venture into California belles-lettres.

In the 1860s, Ralph Keeler explored several practical ways to ensure his place in California literature with his San

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Francisco novel. The aspiring writer submitted his description of the splendid Rincon Hill mansions to an architect for authentication. He wrote and rewrote his joyous and his sad paragraphs until he felt certain that the reader could not help but laugh or weep. The description of his invention, a patent window frame answering the craving of San Franciscans for more sunlight, was one of the highlights of the book, which promptly flopped when published in Boston in 1869.<sup>22</sup>

As practical men branched out into various fields, their profile as a cultural ideal of nineteenth-century California expanded. It was no longer obligatory for a successful man to conceal the role of higher education in his life, and it became quite acceptable to point at the practical features of higher education—at least, as long as the insights drawn from so-called “real” life ranked higher than those drawn from libraries and laboratories.

Henry George, the economic reformer, edited newspapers in the Bay Area between 1869 and 1874 and published *Progress and Poverty* in San Francisco, in 1879. He extolled the virtues of practical men to faculty and students of the University in March 1877. Before the lecture, George had hoped that it might earn him the chair of political economy at Berkeley. His hopes vanished when he attempted to impress upon his audience “the real simplicity of what is generally deemed an abstruse science.” For the study of political economy, he emphasized, no special knowledge, no extensive library, no costly laboratory was required. “All you need,” he stressed, “is care in reducing complex phenomena to their elements, in distinguishing the essential from the accidental, and applying the simple laws of human action with which you are familiar. . . . A monkey with a microscope, a mule packing a library, are fit emblems of the men . . . who pass through the whole educational machinery, and come out learned fools, crammed with knowledge, which they cannot use.”<sup>23</sup>

President John Le Conte did not invite his friend to another lecture, but other influences reinforced the cult of the

practical men on the periphery of the University. Support came early from men and women who embodied the ideal or sought to enshrine its memory. One of the earliest sizeable gifts to the University came from James D. Lick, cabinetmaker, horticulturist, real estate magnate, and California's first philanthropist. In 1875 he decided to give to the University a \$700,000 observatory to be built atop Mount Hamilton.<sup>24</sup>

The University owes a great debt of gratitude to the generosity of Phoebe Apperson Hearst (Figure 6). The "Alma Mater Berkeleyensis," to quote a visiting Austrian professor's felicitous phrase of 1904, among her numerous gifts created a memorial to her husband, the Hearst Mining Building.<sup>25</sup> During its dedication in 1907, the president of the University, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, quoted so freely from a memorial tablet of George Hearst in the entrance hall of the building that it became obvious Wheeler endorsed the text or had written it himself.

The language of the tablet presents a quite tidied-up version of Hearst and testifies to the cult of the practical men at the beginning of the twentieth century. "This building stands," the text reads, "as a memorial to George Hearst, a plain, honest man and good miner. The stature and mould of his life bespoke the pioneers who gave their strength to riskful search in the hard places of the earth. He had a warm heart towards his fellow men and his hand was ready to kindly deed. Taking his wealth from the hills, he filched from no man's store and lessened no man's opportunity."<sup>26</sup>

Tributes to the practical men abound. Their resourcefulness, resilience, and level-headedness are frequently praised. Rarely is the praise diluted with references to some of the disastrous long-range consequences of their activities. As a group these men embodied what their obituaries liked to call the genius of California. But not all of it produced success. Their "continuous overconfidence in the rapid development of the wealth of the country," the philosopher and historian Josiah Royce explained in 1884, caused the economic collapse



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*Figure 6: Phoebe Apperson Hearst*



of 1854, starting the cycles of bust and boom that marked nineteenth-century California.<sup>27</sup> Hard times limited the range of new speculations and steadily guided the practical men to newly developing forms of higher education that produced knowledge about running a hardrock mine or raising the crops of a bonanza farm.

Despite the intellectual isolation of prerailroad California, the idea of a scientific school that shaped American universities at mid-nineteenth century touched the minds of California's practical men too.<sup>28</sup> In the 1840s, the establishment of the Harvard Lawrence Scientific School and of the Yale Sheffield Scientific School were major steps in a process that began at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in the 1820s and culminated in the rationale for and the reality of the American land-grant college of the 1860s.

Since the advent of the Enlightenment in America, the classical-religious curriculum had been modified by the addition of medicine, law, and modern languages. With the rechartering of the College of Philadelphia as the University of the State of Pennsylvania in 1779, the term "university" came into use in the United States for an institution of higher learning that consisted of several colleges and professional schools and, in addition to offering courses in a steadily increasing variety of subjects, also conducted scientific research in most of these fields.

The development entered its final stage when the New York legislature chartered Cornell University in 1865. Two practical men, Andrew D. White and Ezra Cornell, who had met in the state senate as chairman of the committee on education and as chairman of the committee on agriculture respectively, fused the practical vocationalism of the land grant college with the spirit of scholarship of the university movement reinforced by the teaching of science and technology. New York added its share of the federal land grants of 1862 to the \$500,000 contribution of Ezra Cornell, which allowed him to name Andrew D. White president of Cornell.

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The governing boards of these universities would be laymen, as had become clear during the eighteenth century, removed from the tasks of teaching, and not the professors or fellows as in the colleges of the English universities. Here were no privileged communities of scholars, protected by collegiate and university charters from political pressures, but groups of practical people who recognized the need for such institutions, created and controlled through the legislatures. The faculty shared in the governance but did not have the full legal responsibility.

The establishment of universities west of the Mississippi was largely an affair of the states. Most of the universities adopted policies of support and modes of control that had been developed by the state universities of the Old Northwest. They owed their inspiration and initial support to a tradition of federal land grants embodied in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

The University of Michigan, inspired by scholarly ideals of German universities, combined in the 1850s the goals of a true university of advanced scholarship with responsiveness to popular need. "To fulfill its mission of uplifting the state to continuously higher levels the university must," the historian Frederick Jackson Turner summed up the challenge in later years, answering it in the words of the British jurist, historian, and diplomat James Bryce, "serve the time without yielding to it."<sup>29</sup>

The growing interest of California's leading men in the benefits of university education paralleled shifts in the mentality of many residents of San Francisco as an instant city that had telescoped the protracted urban growth from wilderness to city into the experience of a single generation. They discovered the benefits of urban institutions that served not only the moment but also the future. From the vantage point of the second generation, James D. Phelan, a graduate of San Francisco's St. Ignatius College, who had studied law for one year at the University, gave one example for the about-face.

His father, an Irish immigrant, had acquired enough education as a New York grocery clerk to make a fortune in California and to become a San Francisco banker. The banking magnate's scholarly, debonair son outlined the practical men's great adaptability and many-sided character in an address on the eve of his election as San Francisco's reform mayor of the 1890s. They came with "no set purpose of settlement," James D. Phelan stressed, "nor inspired by any civic pride in the founding of a commonwealth. There was no community of interests." Thus he summed up his views of the Gold Rush generation.<sup>30</sup>

The discovery of the city as an intellectual resource occurred gradually. During its first decade, San Francisco's culture was shaped by the practical men's concern for the present. Exposed to chance and change, they fostered a culture for the moment that worshiped fortuitous achievement. The attitude explains the mixed response to early scholarly institutions. Those libraries considered useful were welcomed. The Mercantile Library, established in 1853, and the subscription library of the Mechanics' Institute of San Francisco, established in 1855, flourished. The appeal of the Mechanics' Institute, enhanced by its annual fair, grew so much that the 1868 charter of the University made the Institute's president a member of the Board of Regents.

Scientific institutions faced a struggle. The California Academy of Sciences, the oldest in the Far West founded in the flush year of 1853, had a tough time. There was plenty of money, the California historian Theodore H. Hittell stressed in his 1903 sketch of the Academy, but "the general public took no interest in and paid no attention to" the Academy.<sup>31</sup>

In 1860, the establishment of the Geological and Biological Survey of the State of California brought "new life" and two eminent geologists into the Academy, J. D. Whitney and William H. Brewer, who for a time served as president and secretary respectively.<sup>32</sup> In 1863, Whitney, in his role as state geologist, served on a board of commissioners that recom-

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mended to the legislature establishing a state museum as an initial step for creating the University. Such a museum would have provided an excellent storage for the specimens of the geological survey, but the legislature adjourned without taking up the recommendation.

San Francisco's medical schools fared better than the Academy of Sciences. In the early years when men pulled a derringer without thinking and later when they pulled it with deliberation, good surgeons were in demand. From time to time, the spectacular circumstances of a fracas reinforced the concern. In 1856, the treatment of a muckraking editor whose shooting by a county supervisor led to the establishment of the second Vigilance Committee, exposed the physician, Dr. Hugh H. Toland, to accusations of malpractice.

The San Francisco surgeon Elias Samuel Cooper founded California's first medical school, which later joined the College of the Pacific, which at that time had ceased to call itself a university. Two years after his death in 1862, most of the staff of the Cooper Medical School joined the Toland Medical College, which Toland founded in 1864. Nine years later, Toland gave his college to the University as the base for its medical school, while the remaining members of the former Cooper Medical School ultimately became the nucleus of the Stanford University Medical School.

Although lawyers flourished in early San Francisco, there was no rush to establish a law school. Business created by the gold rush had attracted graduates from eastern law schools and other lawyers who passed the bar reading law in the office of an established lawyer. These practices dominated until 1878, when Hastings College of the Law was established. Its historian considered Serrano Clinton Hastings, the first Chief Justice of California and founder of the college, worthy of the tradition of the worldly founders of medieval universities. He was "a man of affairs, not an academic, in the service of the state."<sup>33</sup>

San Francisco's cultural ambience as an instant city, which shaped these public institutions, spoke clearly from the circumstances surrounding the beginning of the work on Golden Gate Park. With natural obstacles of mammoth proportions, a unified plan was far more expensive than San Franciscans were willing to spend for a park. They had little knowledge of landscape gardening and none in reclaiming massive sand dunes. Long-term reclamation did not agree with the spirit of the instant city. San Franciscans had built their city by relying on steam shovels, paddies, and lorries to dump any dunes blocking the spread of their buildings into the bay.

One feature of San Francisco life actually supported the idea of a big park. Its creation was a part of that metropolism that distinguished some residents: the tendency to emulate the patterns of older cities in the East regardless of their vast distance from San Francisco. The attempt to inaugurate a style and tone of life typical of great cities made residential parks early on a part of the San Francisco cityscape. The spirit of metropolism spoke from a memorial, signed by many residents, to the Board of Supervisors in 1865. "The great cities of our own country, as well as of Europe, have found it necessary," these citizens emphasized, "to provide large parks . . . for . . . the people. . . . No city . . . needs such recreation grounds more than San Francisco."<sup>34</sup> The board consulted Frederick Law Olmsted who found neither trees nor grass in San Francisco, elements essential for the type of park he had created in New York. Since he assumed that handsome trees would not grow, he suggested designing "pleasure grounds" with compact ornamental sections, protected from the wind, linked by an elaborate system of walks, promenades, and drives.<sup>35</sup> The public response to his practical ideas was mixed, and the costs defeated the plan.

Despite the problems, the dunes captured the interest of practical men because wresting land from nature for human use was a traditional feature of San Francisco's development and, perhaps more importantly, a great source of profit. They

had pushed back the bay steadily and had created new waterfronts. The extension of the shoreline and the grading of hills sustained the thinking of people who recalled the profits from the so-called water lots. Others hoped the dunes towards the Pacific would one day yield to real estate developments attracted to a magnificent park and linked to the downtown area by streetcar companies in the hands of the right people (Figure 1).

Eventually all kinds of practical men rallied around the park project. A staunch supporter was Frank McCoppin, who lost his reelection as mayor in September 1869. As the major stockholder of the San Francisco Grading Company, he saw the shifting dunes as a source of profit, if not by creating a park at least by grading the dunes and for additional profit dumping them as fill into the tidelands of the Mission District. He had already filled some swamps with dirt hauled from the hills that once surrounded Lone Mountain at the edge of the built-up city, as if intent on justifying the name of the mountain.

William Hammond Hall, who became the first superintendent of the park, fortuitously related McCoppin's plan to General Barton S. Alexander of the Corps of Engineers. During his San Francisco assignment, Alexander had collected much experience with sand drifting into gun emplacements on the coast. He convinced the park commissioners that grading the dunes would remove the natural bulwarks against the afternoon winds, the westerlies, and greatly endanger not only the proposed park but also the city itself.

The role of metropolism, which shaped the rise of Golden Gate Park, increased through the Bay Area and modified the mindset that had delayed the establishment of the University. The creation of useful and prestigious public projects along the rim of the bay serving the future led the way. One that stood out was the building of Oakland's Mountain View Cemetery during the final stage of the Civil War. Olmsted's share in the project soon involved him in the design of the so-called

College Grounds four miles north of Oakland for the trustees of the College of California. His plan and his report drew on the college form developed by college towns and campuses on the East Coast.

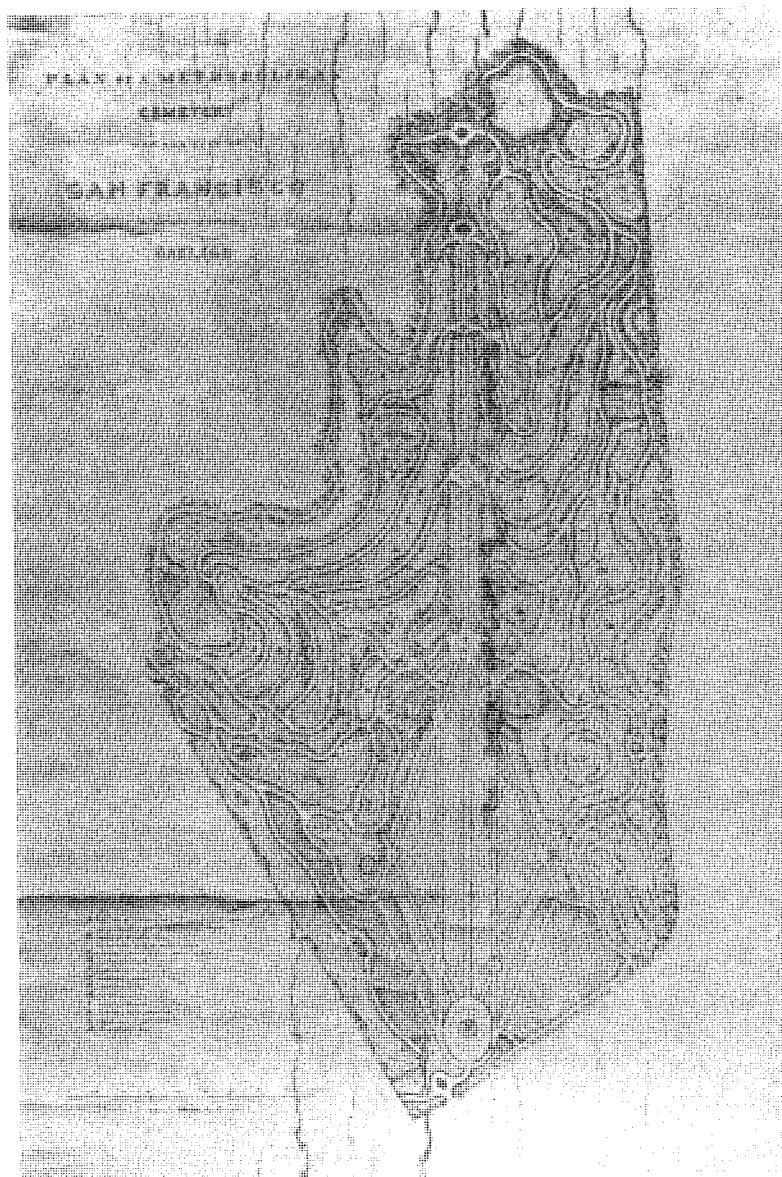
The steady stream of newcomers ensured the continuing transmission of visible components of American culture and enhanced the concern of the Bay Area's practical men for local accomplishments. In the 1860s, migrants from the East Coast, leaving the Civil War behind, increased the population of California. It grew from 379,944 in 1860 to 560,247 in 1870, and in the Bay Area from 86,303 to 215,320.<sup>36</sup> The sheer presence of these many newcomers challenged old assumptions about the involvement of practical men in enterprises for the public good.

The Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland marks the place where, in 1865, the park cemetery reached the western rim of the continent (Figure 7). It was a new type of burial ground in a sylvan setting, modeled after Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery of 1831. The 13 trustees of the cemetery association, who had asked Olmsted as "landscape architect" and "architect of Central Park" to design their burial ground, were prominent in an area that attracted outstanding men. They came from the East Coast, predominantly from New England and New York. They were merchants and bankers, politicians, judges and lawyers. Two were clergymen.

The chairman of the trustees had been a brevet brigadier-general in the Quartermaster's Department during the Civil War. One trustee, Reverend Isaac H. Brayton, who had sold 200 acres of land to the association, had also been Professor of Rhetoric, Belles-lettres, and English in the College of California since 1860. These men dealt and competed with each other, but the Mountain View Cemetery struck them as a suitable joint undertaking for hard-driving men. Undoubtedly, they had a deep concern for the proper care of the dead, but it is rather difficult to suppress the thought that they also had



*Figure 7: Olmsted Plan for Mountain View Cemetery, 1865*



their own future in mind when they joined forces and began thinking about a park cemetery (Figure 8).

The creation of Mountain View Cemetery and some other accomplishments marked a change in the practical men's attitude, which for almost two decades stood in the way of a university. "There is a prejudice . . . in favor of the self-educated man," John B. Felton had stressed in his oration at the fourth anniversary of the Oakland College School in October 1858. That prejudice "has done much to disparage the advantages of the University education," explained Felton, a trustee of the College of California, a lawyer, a Harvard graduate, and a brother of a classical scholar who two years later would be chosen president of Harvard College. "Heaven forbid," Felton softened his iconoclastic remark about the practical man, "that I should refuse my sincere tribute of admiration to the noble spirit that stems adversity and rises superior to obstacles!"<sup>37</sup>

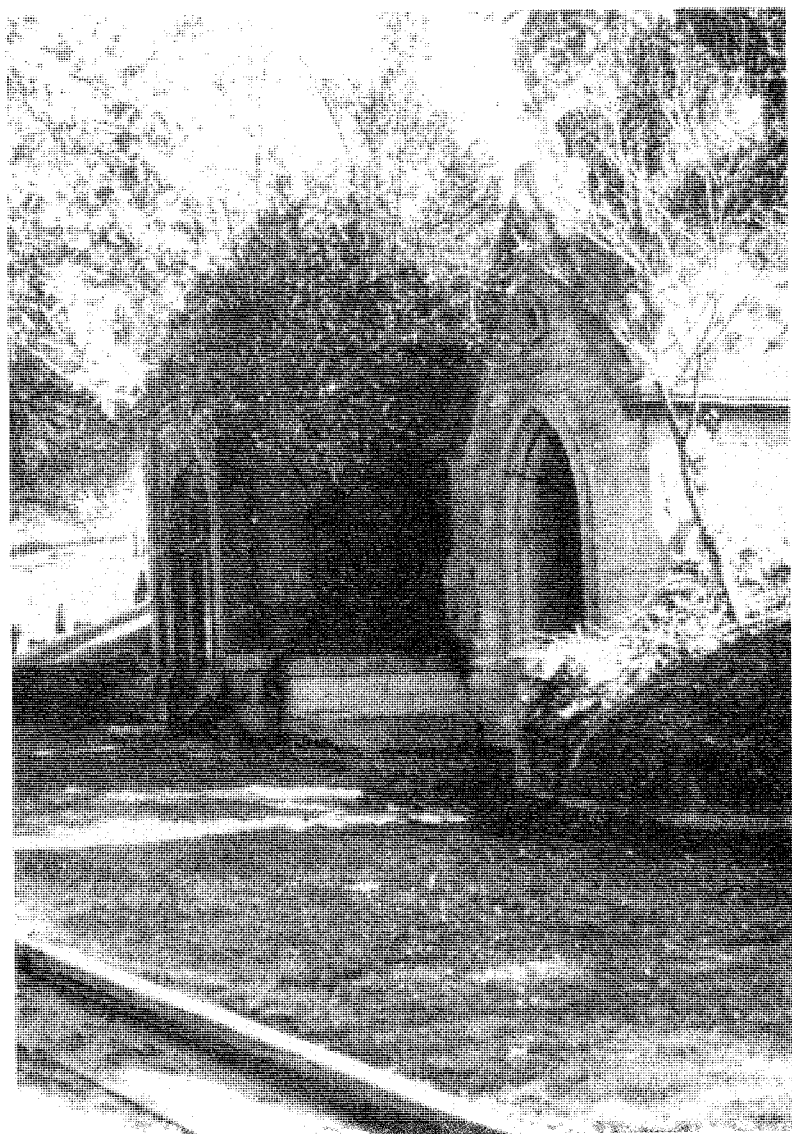
Irrespective of his rhetoric, Felton had a solid streak of the practical in him too, which came through at opportune moments. One year after his oration, he lobbied in Sacramento for a group of speculators who tried to control San Francisco's expansion into the bay. Felton helped push a bill through the legislature that gave speculators control of the wharves in return for constructing a seawall to protect the shoreline, but the governor, in 1860, vetoed their Bulkhead Bill in the last minute.

Eleven years after his College of California oration, Felton as Honorary Regent of the University arranged for the transfer of the Oakland property of the College of California to the University in a "friendly suit" in 1869. The California Supreme Court ruled that the trustees of the College, despite its philanthropic origin, could give away the University site and, if they desired, disincorporate the College and transfer the remaining property to the University.

The ruling came as a result of the College's brief, which had been prepared with Felton's help. Since the ruling in

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*Figure 8: Mountain View Cemetery, Catacombs*



effect settled the question of disincorporation as well, Reverend Willey, acting president of the College, felt betrayed because the decision destroyed any practical argument against immediate dissolution of the College. Willey embodied the strained relationship between the College and the University for almost 40 years until the diplomacy of President Wheeler healed the breach by drawing Willey directly into the life of the University.<sup>38</sup>

Felton received his reward when he was nominated for the University presidency. The failure of an initial, turbulent search for a president produced Felton's moment. In June 1869, Felton, then mayor of Oakland, was nominated for the office, but he declined. Perhaps, he knew that he was suffering from hemiplegia, which caused his death in 1877.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps, the experience of his brother gave him pause; Cornelius Conway Felton's death had been hastened by the strain the Harvard presidency for little more than a year had put on his impaired health.<sup>40</sup>

Through their involvement in many activities, California's practical men shared the characteristics of other practical men in mid-nineteenth century America, but the California variant thrived on a remarkable degree of serendipity. They had a knack for making advantageous discoveries at the right moment. Their penchant for speculation, reinforced by the gold-rush mentality of California society, sharpened their eyes for hidden advantages.

John W. Dwinelle, who in 1867 went to Sacramento as Assemblyman from Alameda County to see the University bill through the seventeenth session of the California legislature, had come to San Francisco in 1849 determined to make his fortune in the gold fields. On his arrival he met many acquaintances who all urged him to practice law in the city. He looked around for a day, realized that his "diggings were here," and put up his shingle.<sup>41</sup>

Not only serendipitous practical men but also the entire gold rush generation professed faith in the lessons of the

California scene. With a cockeyed optimism, clinging to illusory visions of a successful future, they pinned their hopes on a tomorrow that would bring a fortune. Even after the wane of the national rage of spiritualism in the late 1850s, they searched for clues in the scene and in the precognitions of special people. To the magic of fog and mountains, they added "the vision of the seer," which flourished, according to the spiritualist Emma Harding Britten, on a "powerful charge of human magnetism" created by the "wonderful transparency of the atmosphere," the "mineral magnetism" of the gold deposits, and the strong passions of the Argonauts.<sup>42</sup>

The strength of spiritualism supported a considerable range of activities, among them the determined struggle for women's rights during the early San Francisco campaigns of feminists. Lectures on spiritualism provided women with a platform for intellectual self-expression. In a society where child-rearing was one of the few subjects on which women could speak publicly with authority, practical women pursued the hidden dimensions of spiritualism for their cause as effectively as practical men the elusive gold veins of the Mother Lode for profit.

The reformer and feminist Eliza Farnham is sometimes credited with being the first teacher of spiritualism in California in 1849. During her 1868 campaign for equal rights, Laura de Force Gordon lectured at Maguire's Opera House on spiritualism and at Platt's Hall on feminism.<sup>43</sup> Her San Francisco lecture of February 19, 1868, at times was considered the first lecture on woman's suffrage in San Francisco and created the impulse for the founding of the California Women Suffrage Society two years later.

Practical men took note. They also took to heart Mark Twain's observation that in the late 1860s, spiritualism, "this wild-cat religion," became such an ordinary California feature that it did not produce more fanaticism than that which normally occurred among earnest Presbyterians.<sup>44</sup> In 1870, the year of the establishment of the California Women

Suffrage Society, the University admitted women. Three years later, the *Overland Monthly* urged the University to "add vigor to the development and perfection of a scheme that contemplates the fullest and broadest female culture" and heralds "the dawn of a more general intellectual excellence and eminence for women."<sup>45</sup>

Californians' faith in riches conjured up by the far western scene was endless, and in 1872 they fell head over heels for the Great Diamond Hoax. They took it for granted that their mountains, which contained gold and silver, would also yield precious stones when reports about diamonds in South Africa stirred their imagination. After two prospectors, who had salted a remote mesa in Colorado with diamonds and rubies, were exposed, a San Francisco newspaper marveled at the fraud: anybody could steal, rob a bank, or salt an ordinary mine, "but to plant diamonds . . . in the desert . . . and make them bloom . . . , this to our mind, is the highest evidence of business capacity."<sup>46</sup>

California's practical men who believed in the magic of their mountains, also felt the magic of the Bay Area hills. It affected the future site of the University as well as an individual like Henry George who drew some of his premises from the Oakland hills. In 1869, they provided his answer to the search for the relations of progress and poverty. The plan to extend the transcontinental railroad to Oakland had given rise to dreams of rivaling San Francisco. While land speculation swept the East Bay, George, editor of the *Oakland Transcript*, on one of his horseback rides in the hills, stopped for breath and asked a passing teamster, "for want of something better to say," about land values. When he heard that nearby somebody was selling land for a \$1,000 an acre, George realized "like a flash" that the rapid increase in land value "was the reason for advancing poverty with advancing wealth" and that he had found the answer that "has been with me ever since."<sup>47</sup>

The magic of the hills had touched the College of California men much earlier. They would have agreed with the spirit

of Josiah Royce's later observation that "you get a sense of power from these wide views, a habit of personal independence from the contemplation of a world that the eye seems to own." In 1856, Horace Bushnell, a leading New England Presbyterian and Durant's classmate at Yale, had combined a long California vacation to restore his health with an extensive search for a permanent campus site. Before returning to his pulpit in Hartford, he presented the results in a long report, making no definite recommendation but showing that he, too, was drawn by the magic of the Oakland hills: "The proposed University might excite a closer interest in San Francisco, and so might more easily gain its future endowment, if it stood in sight of the city on the opposite side of the bay."<sup>48</sup> A disclaimer followed the hint, but it may have been sufficient to influence the College of California men.

Felton's 1858 Anniversary Oration made the most of the magic of the site. His paeon paid tribute to the sheltered location, ensuring a healthy environment for students, and to the beauty of the scene. "Nowhere in the world," he predicted, "could a lovelier place be found" (Illustration, p. vi). When Felton ran out of hyperbole, the echoes of his classical education carried him along. "At a short distance stretches the great harbor of San Francisco," he gushed, "and on its other side is that restless and agitated city which . . . leaping into existence, as Minerva sprang from the brain of Jove, fully armed and matured, seems to crave the healthful and calming influence of a great university."<sup>49</sup>

Ultimately, the College men's enthusiasm rested on a solid layer of common sense, which checked out all aspects of the College Grounds, as the site was referred to before it was called Berkeley in May 1866. Its location, four miles north of Oakland, was just right, accessible to and yet distant from the turbulent city across the bay. When it turned out that the owners of the property liked the idea of a college on the site, the College men carefully investigated the water supply during the dry season but waited with their decision from November

1857, until March 1858, presumably to check on the winter rains, until they adopted the site as a permanent location.<sup>50</sup>

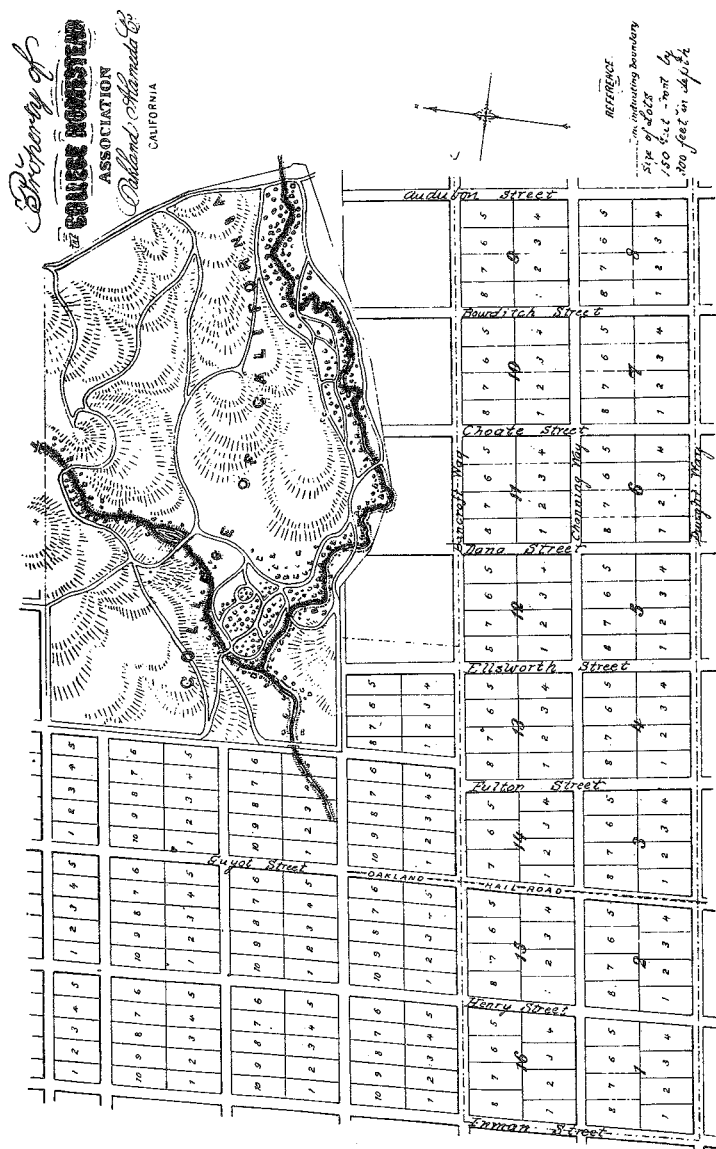
Financial difficulties delayed further action for two years, but on April 16, 1860, a few leading College men gathered in the northeast corner of the property at a place now called "Founders' Rock" for a dedication ceremony, which rekindled the magic of the site. "There is not another such college site in America," James A. Warren, the editor of *The Pacific* wrote a few days later, "if anywhere at all in the world. It is a spot above all others . . . where a man may look in the face of the nineteenth century and realize the glories that are coming on."<sup>51</sup>

Their admiration of the beautiful site, the pursuit of education, and the speculation in water and real estate had brought practical men together to create a new campus for the College of California. In August 1864, the College closed the purchase of the land after lengthy negotiations. On the ferry boat to Oakland, after the execution of the papers in San Francisco, Willey experienced the magic of the hills. Despite the cloud cover over the Bay he saw the evening sun shine "clear and bright" on the purchased site, "which we had consecrated to the purposes of Christian learning."<sup>52</sup> The sale of some of the College property in Oakland now seemed to make it easier to improve the site.

The College men embraced the task of improving the wheat fields in ways that did them credit as real estate speculators. They made sure that they owned the entire watershed of Strawberry Creek and the water rights, and that water could be brought to the sites. They had the homestead ground surveyed, divided, mapped, and readied for sale (Figure 9). In order to obtain money for the development of the new campus, they sold \$500-shares for one-acre lots in a homestead association to be paid for in 20 monthly installments. Shortly, half of the 125 lots were sold. These lots bordered the permanent College site, that very tract of 124 acres between the branches of Strawberry Creek. In his reports to



Figure 9: College Homestead Association Map, 1866



the College trustees for 1864-65, Willey indicated that water and design would make the property "more and more valuable."<sup>53</sup>

The College speculators left few stones unturned. In the light of Olmsted's design for the Mountain View Cemetery and the connections between the trustees of both institutions, it is not surprising that Willey asked Olmsted to study the grounds and the landscape.<sup>54</sup> And if one recognizes the practical streak in all the College men, it is hardly surprising that they brought to the project a great degree of know-how and ingenuity.

The remarkable Willey who had felt in 1862, when the vice-presidency was offered to him, "that he was not trained for College work" and "wholly unaccustomed to business management," now showed his true mettle as a practical man.<sup>55</sup> The barren hills put a premium on trees, and Willey, anticipating the need, raised "quite a quantity of young trees" from seeds he had collected here and there.<sup>56</sup> In the dunes west of San Francisco, William Hammond Hall solved his tree problem in a similar way. He raised trees from seedlings in a greenhouse in a park corner so successfully that his ingenuity irked San Francisco horticulturists who had hoped to find the park a steady customer for their products.

Willey did not describe extensively his prowess as landscape gardener for the College cause, but Hall described in detail his utilitarian approach to a site seemingly unsuited for a big city park in ways that presaged his plan for the University campus of 1873.<sup>57</sup> As a practical man, Hall suited the task and the temper of the city, which called for immediate, inexpensive solutions. As a modest man, he was satisfied when the startling success of Golden Gate Park spoke for his work (Figure 2).

In the five years until his resignation in 1876, Hall got the project well under way by attracting many San Franciscans into their distant city park. Hall concentrated most of his resources on the part closest to the expanding city. There, he built a kind of showcase for those San Franciscans who

wanted a park instantly enticing them to the scene with tree plantations and flower beds. "A 30-year-old city being the possessor" of such a park, the *Pacific Rural Press* bragged in 1881, "must commend, abroad, our admiration of the beautiful, as well as the public spiritedness of our citizens."<sup>58</sup>

Hall's workmen experimented with the well-timed interaction of the growing cycles of quickly sprouting barley and slowly growing lupine seeds. Hall had known that the local lupine was the best vegetation for the main reclamation project, but he came across the usefulness of the barley accidentally in November 1870 when a saddle horse spilled its nose bag with soaked barley. Ten days later, Hall saw that the barley had sprouted vigorously, "as thick as hair on a dog's back."<sup>59</sup> His innovation, planting barley and lupine together to hold the dunes down, solved a major problem of the park.

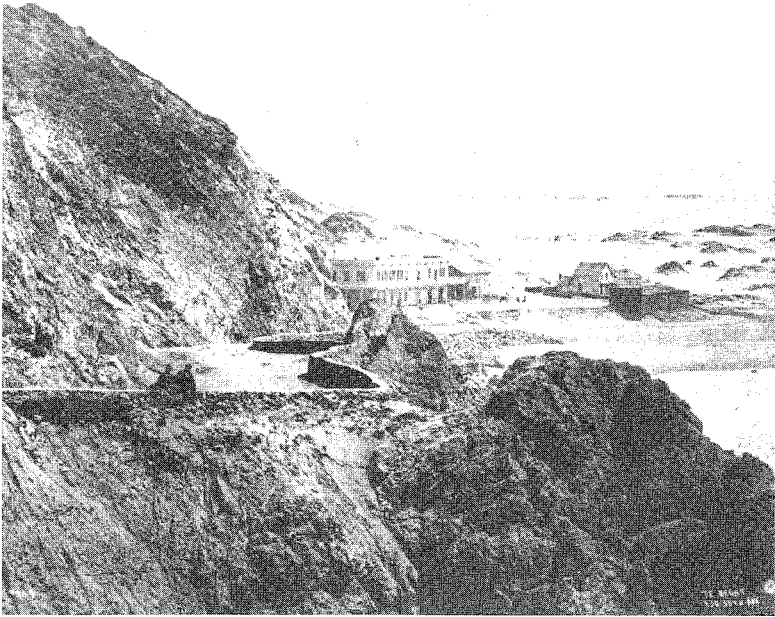
The section of the park near the Pacific Ocean called for a different method of reclamation. From Europe Hall boldly borrowed the seeds of European beach grass as a substitute for barley and lupine, which could not tolerate the salt in the recently washed-up sand. The design of the park drives was Hall's masterstroke. They provided travelers with good road connections to the Pacific Ocean and the Cliff House (Figure 10).

Hall's success particularly delighted San Franciscans when the newspapers reported that there was no macadamized road in the city that did not cost twice as much. They were not aware of his real accomplishment, securing the shoulders of the carriage drive and coordinating the stabilization of the banks with the daily progress of the road construction crew. The timing had to ensure that there would be cover vegetation on the banks to hold the sand from drifting onto the road bed and burying a completed section.

The task of creating Golden Gate Park out of moving dunes paralleled the task of raising the University from California's intellectually barren soil. In both cases practical men ultimately prevailed, but it took a considerable measure of luck

*Gunther Barth*

*Figure 10: Ocean Beach Road, San Francisco, 1865*



on the part of the College men. They felt good about their property's potential for a campus site, which had been further enhanced by Olmsted's comprehensive development plan. Apart from the magnificent site, the College men could point proudly at their success thus far. They also knew quite well that they lacked two things: a name for what until May 1866 was only known as "The College Grounds," and money to develop site and college into a university.<sup>60</sup> Washington Bartlett's lesson was not lost on them, and as practical men they recognized the importance of an attractive name for the success of their real estate venture.

In 1865, one year after the College had obtained clear title to the property, during the discussion of plans for a new town and the sale of lots, Willey consulted Olmsted about a suitable name. In his response, Olmsted outlined the principles of taste governing the choice and suggested more than 100 names for the site, but none of his suggestions suited the trustees.<sup>61</sup> One of them, Frederick Billings, a member of a leading San Francisco law firm, who had given the College his services and more money than anyone else, came up with the name "Berkeley" in the spring of 1866.

Visiting "The College Grounds" with other trustees, Billings quoted the last stanza from a poem of the British philosopher and churchman, George Berkeley. "Westward the course of empire takes its way," Billings began and immediately felt that these words suited an education site at the end of the continent. They also bestowed a destiny on the College that he and his companions, carried away by their own grandiose plans, hoped soon to turn into a university. Everyone accepted Billings's suggestion to give the philosopher's name to the property, and on the following day, May 24, 1866, the trustees of the College of California sanctioned the choice.

There is no record of what the trustees thought of the second line of the last stanza of Berkeley's poem in his essay, *On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America*, "The four first acts already past." The line is often misquoted

as, "The first four acts already past," which seems to make the line more comprehensible. Billings standing at the foot of Founders' Rock, where in 1860 the trustees had formally dedicated the land to the use of the College, might have misquoted Berkeley too.<sup>62</sup> As practical men the trustees were satisfied that "those prophetic lines" served their purpose.<sup>63</sup>

After the trustees had found a name for the College site, their luck ran out. Despite a long search, it was easier to find a name than the money for a university, which they felt the site called for. As might be expected to happen in the case of serendipitous practical men, just as their luck ran out actions of the California Legislature produced a climate favorable to the support of higher education. Together, practical men of various backgrounds, from the legislature and the College, began applying their know-how to creating a university. Their cooperation linked California to "the practical period in American life," as a historian of Alameda County called the decade of the Morrill Act, "when thought, tired of pure classicism, tended toward those courses of study that . . . would help to make the student a self-supporting man or woman"<sup>64</sup> (see *Frontispiece*).

For many years, the practical men in the legislature had given little thought to a university. The intense struggles over the distributions of the state's political spoils, the issues of law and order and the use of nativism as a base for power absorbed their attention. Finally, on the eve of the Civil War, they fought to stave off the effect of the disintegration of the national party system on California's political alignments. Several university bills came up in Sacramento, but in light of their designs it was a blessing that the practical men in the legislature were otherwise occupied. Plans for the creation of a university as a military institute, the incorporation of all chartered colleges in the form of a university, or the establishment of a state museum died because they lacked utility.<sup>65</sup>

The physical and psychic costs of the Civil War brought these practical men together. Disenchantment with the futile

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search for a lasting peace, the hope of working for meaningful goals, and the relentless struggle to find ways out of the national impasse enabled them to put their individual goals and private ambitions in the background. Their willingness to compromise at once signaled the final flowering of San Francisco as instant city and the desire to answer the need for a university with a solution ensconced in the Bay Area setting.

Various indicators convinced California's practical men that the time was ripe for a common cause. In September 1868 the *Overland Monthly* stated that hostility to college learning was abating.<sup>66</sup> In the following month, the earthquake of October 21, 1868 belatedly added a touch of urgency. "With regular earthquakes you don't have time to get afraid," the *San Francisco News-Letter* quipped, "in the '68 earthquake you had."<sup>67</sup>

The time favored new beginnings and the restoration of old alignments. Extreme partisan politics on the national level favored compromises and different initiatives on the local level. The Union Party split the war-time alliance of Republicans and northern Democrats supporting the Union, and in the election of 1867 the Democrats captured the state. The arrival of the transcontinental railroad on the scene and the attempt of the Central Pacific to gain control of Goat Island (now Yerba Buena Island) united old foes in a common stand against the Big Four, the intruders from Sacramento.

The Second Street cut, which signaled the destruction of Rincon Hill as the city's fashionable quarter, pitted speculators against property owners and the San Francisco Supervisors against the California Supreme Court. San Francisco's fundamental space problem, the lack of level ground for commercial and industrial sites, intensified by the industrialism of the railroad age, seemed to make it more profitable to suffer temporary losses and inconveniences than to pass up participation in shaping the city's growth in their favor.

Within three years after the Civil War, which not only had heightened an awareness of the role of communication but

also had suppressed opinion, San Francisco newspapers flourished again. The *Chronicle* came into existence, and the San Francisco *Call* entered its impressive second phase under a new editor. The Congressional Reconstruction of the South also directed attention to aspects of the entire society in need of reconstruction, and the national movement for women's rights made headway in California.

During the cultural ferment of the post-Civil War years, the practical College men backing a university found themselves face-to-face with state officials who were forced to think college by a deadline of Congress. The California Legislature had until July 1866 to create a college in order to qualify for the federal college lands California had accepted from Congress. The lands were part of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862, which was supposed to develop a system of state educational institutions aided by the federal government. Three months earlier, on March 31, 1866, the legislature had passed an act for the Agricultural, Mining and Mechanical Arts College. In the practical spirit of their answer to the needs of higher education in California, the legislators placed all federal grants to California for higher education since 1853 at the disposal of the new institution.

The subsequent developments were orchestrated by a representative of that rather exceptional type of public-spirited practical man, Governor Frederick Low, who chaired the new college's board of directors. A self-educated merchant, former congressman, and friend of the College of California, Governor Low came close to speaking the same language as the practical College men. After both groups had convinced each other that the Berkeley site of the College of California was the right location for the Agricultural, Mining and Mechanical Arts College, the time was ripe for the long-delayed establishment of a university.

On June 6, 1867 the commencement speaker at the Sixth Anniversary of the College of California was Dr. Benjamin Silliman, professor of chemistry at Yale. As son of the Profes-



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sor Silliman, who had promoted what subsequently became the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, the speaker was well qualified to comment on the new college because of his involvement in science and in the university. He effectively criticized the state's Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College on two grounds: it was subject to the influence of party politics and a far cry from a university because it consisted solely of professional schools. Silliman's comments amounted to water on the mills of practical men.

On the evening of the 1867 College of California commencement, Governor Low speaking to the alumni raised the question of a joint venture between the College of California and the Agricultural, Mining and Mechanical Arts College. Between June and October, friends and trustees of the College of California convinced themselves about the failure of the improvement projects as well as the lack of support, and on October 9, 1867 they resolved to join the state.

The attitude of practical men pervaded the discussion leading to the resolution about a joint venture with the state. The language describing the necessary transfer of the College site to the future University, "which will include a College of Mines, a College of Civil Engineering, a College of Mechanics, and a College of Agriculture, and an Academic College," seemed to assign to the College of California the lowest place in the new order of things. When objections were raised, the language of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act was evoked to explain the ranking. Furthermore, Dwinelle, chairman of the committee introducing the resolution to the board of trustees, "thought that the Legislature, which would be composed of practical men, would be more likely to vote for the establishment of the University if its departments were proposed in this order."<sup>68</sup>

The practical Dwinelle soon faced the practical men in Sacramento under circumstances all of them liked best. On November 7, 1867 the directors of the Agricultural, Mining and Mechanical Arts College accepted the offer. In the same

months, the College of California men and other citizens of Alameda County succeeded in electing Dwinelle to the state assembly with the primary task of seeing a University bill through the legislature.

The seventeenth session of the California Legislature brought a cross section of the state's practical men together. Among them was also John Middleton, who had run for office for the express purpose of introducing near the end of his only term at Sacramento a bill that modified the grade of San Francisco's Second Street running over Rincon Hill, thus wrecking the early city's most beautiful site and furthering his real estate scheme for a convenient street connection for teams and teamsters between North Beach and South Beach.

The practical men acted swiftly when they recognized the opportunity to establish the University. Their expeditious action overcame the obstacles that had delayed the creation of the University for almost 20 years. The events did not move fast enough for Frederick Low, who had hoped for the establishment of a University under his governorship. After having served the first four-year term of a California governor, he did not seek reelection, the Union party split, and the election of 1867, which brought Dwinelle and Middleton with their different missions to Sacramento, also made the Democrat Henry Haight governor of California.

Dwinelle, with the help of Willey and other practical men, encountered no difficulties with the detailed bill in the legislature. Its provisions appealed to the matter-of-fact approach of the practical men there. Political and sectarian influences on the University were kept at bay. The balance between practical and academic subjects satisfied the spirit of the federal land grants. The provision that made the College of California alumni also University alumni upon the passage of the bill shifted the loyalty of the College alumni to the University. The representatives of miners, farmers, and mechanics felt reassured by the addition of the governor and the presidents of the State Agricultural Society and the Mechanics'

Institute as *ex-officio* members to the Board of Regents. The legislature approved the bill on March 21, 1868, and Governor Haight signed it two days later.

In their rush to establish the University, practical men crossing the dividing lines of politics and beliefs created an altogether new institution. Instead of a merger of the Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College and the College of California, a real university emerged. Governor Haight was a Yale graduate and a successful lawyer. As a practical politician who had changed his party allegiance several times, he had been far more distant from the College of California than his predecessor. He saw to it that no one group who had contributed to the establishment of the University had a chance to dominate it.

Haight's foresight earned him the enmity of the College of California men, which Willey expressed on several occasions. Governor Haight, he recorded, "never showed any friendliness to the College of California" and "always declined to contribute to its funds. Haight delayed the appointment of Regents and then chose," as Willey recalled, "some men of literary attainment, some successful businessmen of various faith, but who knew nothing whatever of college or university life or organization."<sup>69</sup>

The secular board Haight appointed reflected his concern to name regents who represented California's political, economic, and religious interests. In 1878 Haight's death produced the epitaph that went far to explain the success of the practical men creating the University in the context of the California of the 1850s and 1860s. Horatio Stebbins, the Massachusetts-born minister called by the Unitarian Church of San Francisco to take the prestigious pulpit vacated by Thomas Starr King's death in 1864, said in his memorial address about Haight: "The extraordinary thing in him was that there was nothing extraordinary, but a quite symmetrical combination of the usual faculties of men."<sup>70</sup> Stebbins, who in the year after his arrival in San Francisco became a trustee

of the College of California and soon president of the board, strongly supported the establishment of the University with his "planning wisdom and public skill" after Haight had appointed him to the first board of regents of the University.<sup>71</sup>

Haight as a practical politician deprived the young University of any person or group who might have attempted to direct the University through its difficult, undistinguished early decades. In light of the turbulent 1870s and 1880s, which strained the fabric of California politics, such an attempt by an individual or a group might well have ended disastrously. Haight's prudence ensured that practical men would muddle their way through the designs of factions seeking nothing but the control of the University. In the end, the University would pass through the experience intact as a state university, committed to teaching and research in all areas of scholarship as well as committed to the needs of citizens without being subservient to any of them.

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Photo: Dominic Barth

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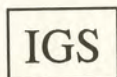
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