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Narration of Pacific University [Letter to John Eaton]

Sidney H. Marsh

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Narration of Pacific University [Letter to John Eaton]

Description

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Cite As: Narration of Pacific University
PSHM- 3
Pacific University Archives Collection
Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon
Ashley McDonald and Chris Potter

Forest Grove Oregon
Oct 1871

Hon. John Eaton
Dear Sir

According to your request I send you a narrative of the history of our college. I wish it were shorter. I have arrived to write only what seemed necessary to a proper understanding of its character and position. The outline is correct I hope, although be very incomplete.

It should have been an [illegible text] perhaps if the college had been founded ten years later, but in 1852 there was a general expectation of a rapid growth for Oregon. The excitements that drew so many to California brought many ~~to Oregon~~ here also.

That a New England college should be founded was only a question of time. To the hopeful Home Missionary & the zealous friend of Western education at the East [illegible text] the writer enthusiastic in the cause that summons it to the Time to begin the work. The [illegible text] enthusiasm [illegible text] in the cavern that seemed to be the time to begin the work.

It was proposed to found the college under privileges contained in the charter of the Tualatin Academy. The Western college Society of which Rev. Theron Baldwin was secretary promised his aid with a yearly stipend and by its countenance and accommodation in the future applications for endowments to be made to the Eastern Publics.

Under such auspices and after collecting \$1000 for books and apparatus. I came to Or, ~~reaching Portland [illegible text] starting the same afternoon to Forest Grove in fact reached Forest Grove the next day.~~ He found his coming scarcely expected, that the friends of Tualatin Academy were not by any means enthusiastic in regard to the immediate founding of the college. That there were no students waiting for me, that were hardly a half dozen families at the place. Still. The college was to be built up, my hands were already of the plough. It seemed wise to take council only of hope and to push on. Besides there was work to be done The Academy building was a mere shell with neither clean floor or windows except in our room. Hauling lumber from distant mills--planning and laying flooring gave employment for several mules. In the fall a solitary student came during the winter. There were several and from that time there was always more or less who might by courtesy be called college students—They were of a higher class than the mass aspiring to disciplinary rather than the so call-d practical students. In the winter of 1853 a special college charter was procured from The Territorial legislation [writing?] the guardianship of the Institution in a Board of Trustees named the “Resident and Trustees of Tualatin Academy and Pacific University.” An independent corporation filling its own vacancies and under the control of no ecclesiastical body—This was the first Or charter [illegible text] conferred.

In the spring of 1854 the writer was inaugurated as President of the Institution.

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In 1857 there were two college classes organized the number was small it is true and their advancement was not usual to Their normal classification. Still they were pursuing collegiate studies. Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, surveying & studying the college classics—One man could hardly expect to conduct long the studies through so wide a range of preparatory & college classes. There were as many recitations as if there were 100 students. Besides in the atmosphere of the public opinion that prevailed it was difficult for college ideas and plans to [his?] at all—There was requisite not so much ability to instruct in the branches of study as influences both when the pupil and the community [illegible text] carry out any plans. And here let me say that the of building up a higher Institution of learning one that grows now out of a demand but is to exert our influence downward upon society is in our “democracy.” Not in securing teachers or funds or buildings difficult as these are--but in creating a true focused public opinion. That will cherish and support the Institution.

This is mainly done by the visible life-with its struggles & crises of the college itself[.] No arguments or description can alone create this public & popular ideal. The example produces it. This is true of the college all through its career but it is more difficult to build up such an institution in the chaos of a new society. Than to produce it in an old community.

There was therefore good reason for calling Rev Horace Lyman from his useful ministerial work at Dallas Or to the Professorship of mathematics. He was appointed and entered upon his duties in the summer of 1857.

In 1858 the stipend from the college society always irregular and behind [illegible text] seemed to fail altogether-

There was serious question of the expediency of continuing the enterprise ~~at all~~ curtailing it was necessary to [illegible text] if the verdict of the friends of the college at the East was, as it seemed, for its suspension. ~~A letter to this effect to reverend Dr. Baldwin shown to David Hoadley, Esq., president of the Panama Railroad RRC bought me a free ticket to Ny. [illegible text]~~

Where arriving I [illegible text] appealed to the known friends of the cause in conformity with [illegible text] of Dr. Baldwin acting upon The Theory That the Col society [illegible text] represented as an agency the educational policy and purpose of New England, New York with respect to The West and That its recommendation was the plea upon which funds could be secured. For almost a year I labored to obtain a subscription payable yearly for three years of \$1200—but with small success—In this struggle I found that the excellent secretary of the society was mistaken in his view—That the college did not ~~exist~~ [illegible text] by The Society but The society by the college and that the only way to raise money was to let the society alone & trust to the cause and to [illegible text] for success.

I Therefore began an independent effort to raise \$2000 and after more then a year and a half succeeded. At first there was some opposition from the society and its friends and there were many prejudices of recent origin to be met.

Before returning a large collection of books was made.

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Two years and a half were occupied in the effort.

This endowment gave new life. It was an endorsement by an able public of the undertaking. We had good reason to think that what they helped in such an emergency they would not let die.

From 1861 to 1866 there had been a steady development & growth. In 1863 the first student was graduated. This too was the first academic degree conferred in the state. The number of students was still small but the general growth was rising. They were under the necessity of moving on of enlarging our corps of teachers and increasing our endowment.

During the fall and winter of 1862 Prof. D. B. Taft had temporarily instructed in Geology Physiology [illegible text] and in 1863 and 64 Prof. E. A. Tanner was by regular appointment Prof. of ancient languages. Both of these gentlemen after a comparatively short connection with the Institution returned East. It was desirable to have permanent men.

Our funds had been carefully nursed by judicious investments increased by our Financier Hon H. W. Corbett. Yet we needed much larger endowments. The writer therefore in 1866 again visited the East and after a year of hard work secured another fund of \$20000. He also discussed the desire of Prof. G. H. Collins as Prof. of the Natural Sciences and Prof. J.W. Marsh as Prof. of Ancient Languages. The former entered upon his duties in Oct. 1866. The latter in April 1867. In the spring of 1867 a Ladies Course of study and also a scientific course was adopted and their department provided for and new vigor was given to old plans for instructions and disciplines in all departments of the Institution. Up to this time the Academy had moved on as an independent Institution always under able teachers. Capt. J. M. Kuler, Hon. E. D. Shattuck, Rev. Cushing Eells, Prof. E. A. Tanner had in succession from its [illegible text] and have been [illegible text] competent assistants, but it had always been independent of the college for the proper efficiency of the Institution as a whole. In the fall of 1867 Prof. J. W. Marsh took charge of this department with the purpose of conducting it as a member of the faculty and under the general administration of the Institution. In the fall of 1868 Prof. L. F. Pounds held the post for [illegible text] year and was succeeded by Prof. A. J. Anderson. The present Principal who was also in 1871 appointed Prof. of the Theory and art of Teaching—a normal course having been definitely drawn up and published in 1869. This was the first position for Normal Instruction made in The State.

I secured the appointment of Prof. Collins and Marsh and increased their salary, it was necessary for the president to relinquish any claim upon the increase of the fund already secured and fall back upon a new promise of the college and society for a support. In the fall of 1869 after great embarrassment from the failure of expectations in this quarter, he again visited the East and with the full approval of the friends of the college and society & Dr Baldwin commenced and completed a subscription proposed and started by A. S. Hatch, Esq., for the endowment of the presidency with \$20000— Three fourths of the whole am't was subscribed in terms of \$1000 and upward.

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Although not by any means endowed, Pacific University is now able to sustain fairly its rank as a college and is doing so.

The location is a fine one and The completion of the Oregon Central Rail to Forest Grove by making it more accessible enhances all its natural advantages.

The buildings are ~~quite~~ out of keeping with its character and are quite insufficient.

The library numbers more then 5000 vols. Several valuable pieces of apparatus have been bought and gained and considerable collection have been made in the department of Natural History.

A large number of students considering the population of the county are in attendance usually from 100 to 150 in the college preparatory depart.

Twelve (12) have graduated from the regular courses Two (2) from the scientific and four (4) from the Ladies Course while hundreds who have passed Through no courses of study does receive instruction and are [illegible text] all our Pacific University. I wish That space allows of me to set forth something of our plan of education as now but have you infer it from this sketch. Yrs a S. H. Marsh

Sidney Harper Marsh Papers

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Transcriber: Ashley McDonald and Chris Potter

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