OAHU COLLEGE: LIST OF TRUSTEES, PRESIDENTS, INSTRUCTORS, MATRONS, LIBRARIANS, SUPERINTENDENTS OF GROUNDS AND STUDENTS, 1841-1906

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LIST OF OFFICERS,
INSTRUCTORS, AND STUDENTS

HISTORICAL SKETCH

1841-1906

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1841-1906

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF OAHU COLLEGE

BY WILLIAM DE WITT ALEXANDER, LL.D., F.R.G.S.

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Historical Sketch of Oahu College.

By W. D. Alexander, LL.D., F.R.G.S.

After the conquest of Oahu by Kamehameha I. in 1795, he gave Moanalua, Kapunahou and other lands to Kameeiamoku, one of the four great chiefs of Kona, who had raised him to the throne and aided him in all his wars. Kameeiamoku died at Lahaina in 1802, and his lands descended to his son Hoapili, the most intimate friend of Kamehameha I., who afterwards became governor of Maui. Hoapili resided several years at Punahou near the spring, and during the Conqueror's second residence on Oahu, from 1804 to 1811, he also with his wives often visited this charming retreat.

Hoapili gave Punahou to his daughter Liliha, who married Governor Boki, and after their return from England in the "Blonde" in 1825, they frequently resided here. In December, 1829, just before starting on his fatal sandal-wood expedition, Boki gave Punahou to Rev. H. Bingham, with the approval of the Queen-Regent, Kaahumanu.

In 1831 Mr. Bingham built the "old house" of adobe, on the spot now marked by a memorial tablet, where it remained for over thirty years. To this cool and quiet retreat he often retired from the heat and dust of Kawaiahao.

The need of a school for their children had long been felt by the missionaries, and no hardship of their lot was so keenly felt as the heart-breaking separation from their children, sent away from home at a tender age, to a distant land for their education.

Early in the thirties the advantages of Punahou as a site for a boarding school were observed by the Mission, and long before Mr. Bingham's return to the United States in 1840, he had fully approved of its being set apart for that purpose. At that period no missionary could hold an individual title to land. The project of founding such a school was brought up in 1837, but postponed for financial reasons.

At length in the meeting of May, 1841, the school was definitely founded, the sum of two thousand dollars ($2,000.00) appropriated for the buildings, supplemented by private subscriptions, and Rev. Daniel Dole and his wife, who had just arrived, together with Miss Marcia Smith, were appointed teachers. During that year the site was prepared under the direction of Mr. Chamberlain and Dr. Judd, a cellar dug, and the old one-story adobe thatched buildings erected, enclosing two courts, open towards the sea. Four additional rooms were built in 1844. They lasted for forty years, but exist no longer except in the memories of the older alumni. The "Rice Hall" was built in 1846, and the "Dole Hall" in 1848.

The school was opened at Punahou, July 11, 1842, with 15 pupils in attendance. During the first year there were 34 pupils, of whom 15 were boarders. In the summer of 1844 the faculty was reinforced by Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Rice, who were transferred from Hana, Maui, to assist in the school. where they remained till 1854, Mr. Rice having special charge of financial matters and of the out-of-door work.

A charter was granted by the government June 6th, 1849, to the Trustees of the Punahou School, seven in number, empowering the Mission to fill all future vacancies in the corporation. The Rocky Hill pasture and the Manoa wood lot were purchased and enclosed during the same year. In 1855 the land of Punahou was conveyed by Royal Patent No. 1958, to the American Board, and by that body, 128.94 acres of it, together with the buildings and improvements thereon, were deeded to the Trustees of Oahu College March 12th, 1863.

The Old School House was built of stone quarried from Rocky Hill in 1852.

A new and enlarged charter was applied for and granted May 23rd, 1853, under the title of "Oahu College," with thirteen Trustees, including the President. The Rev. E. G. Beckwith, who had conducted the Royal School with remarkable success for three years, was formally installed as President under the new charter, September 25th, 1854.

In 1857 an effort was made to raise an endowment for the school, for which about fourteen thousand ($14,000.00) dollars was contributed in the United States, besides a special grant from the American Board of five thousand ($5,000.00) dollars, and three thousand ($3,000.00) more to build the first President's house, known as the "Octagon." The Hawaiian Government afterwards granted the land of Hamakuapoko on Maui and three small lands on Kauai, the sale of which realized seven thousand seven hundred and forty-five dollars and sixty-three cents ($7,745.63). In consideration of this grant to the endowment, the Government had the right of appointing two out of fifteen Trustees, until 1901.

In February, 1859, occurred the famous expedition of the faculty and twenty of the students on the schooner "Kinoole" to visit the great eruption of Mauna Loa of that year. On the 22nd of the following August, President Beckwith resigned on account of his wife's ill health. The Rev. Eli Corwin acted as President pro tem. until the arrival of Rev. C. T. Mills in November, 1860.

When failing health obliged President Mills to resign his position in the summer of 1864, he had brought up the school from a position of partial dependence on the American Board to a self-supporting basis. Among the improvements made during his administration were the laying of water pipes from the spring to the buildings in 1861, and the addition of verandas to the old school hall in 1863, the funds for which were raised by a concert given by the school.

He was succeeded by Professor W. D. Alexander, who served seven years, retiring in the spring of 1871 to accept the position of surveyor-general.

The 25th anniversary of the founding of the school was celebrated June 15th, 1866, with much enthusiasm. Professor Edward Payson Church was promoted to fill the place, which he occupied with much acceptance for four years. During this time two omnibuses were purchased by the Trustees, which were run between Nuuanu and Punahou until the inauguration of street tram cars in 1889. A small printing press was purchased by the students, and a small weekly newspaper, the "Punahou Journal," published by them for several years.

Mr. Amasa Pratt succeeded President Church, serving for three years. The Rev. William L. Jones then accepted the position, entering upon its duties in June, 1878. The fortieth anniversary of the founding of the school was celebrated June 16th, 1881, when a strong appeal was made to its friends for a building fund of fifty thousand ($50,000.00) dollars. In 1880 the "lower pasture," containing 31.3 acres, was divided into building lots, and streets laid out in it. The sale of these lots has added twenty-one thousand four hundred ($21,400.00) to the endowment.

In 1882 thirty thousand ($30,000.00) was contributed to the building fund, and during the next year Bingham Hall was built under President Jones' supervision. In January, 1883, the Armstrong lot at the head of Richards street was purchased from the Roman Catholic Mission, and the Punahou Preparatory School opened there.

In the summer of that year President Jones retired and was succeeded by the Rev. William Channing Merritt, who served for seven years.

In 1884 the Bishop Hall of Science was built and furnished with a laboratory by the liberality of Hon. C. R. Bishop. A house for the president was built by friends of the college in the fall of 1885. In 1888 a large swimming tank was added