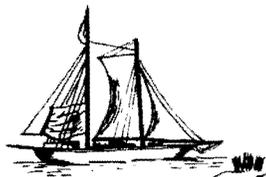


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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY COLLEGE WOODBIDGE, CALIFORNIA

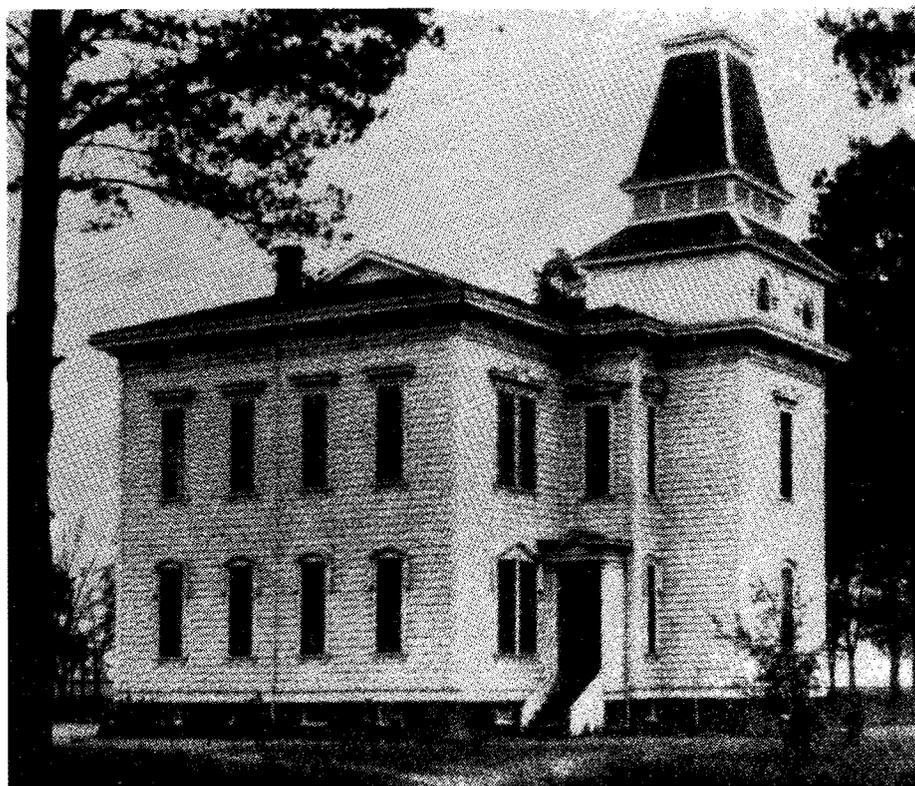
By Celia Adams Myers

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Celia Myers has been a member of the San Joaquin County Historical Society since 1958. She served eleven years as its Recording Secretary, two years as president, and she is currently serving as its Corresponding Secretary and Membership Chairman. She was also assistant to Medora Johnson, Director of the San Joaquin County Historical Museum, during the first six years of its operation. During these experiences she often heard or read brief bits of information about the old college at Woodbridge. This aroused her interest until she felt compelled to put together a complete story on this institution of higher learning which played an important

part in the early history of San Joaquin County.

Celia's interest in the history of this county is deep-rooted. Her grandfather, Henry Adams, settled in the Elliott Township of northern San Joaquin County in 1869. Her father, Christopher N. Adams, was born there and she was born on the home ranch which is still in the family and is registered with the One Hundred Year Club of the California State Fair. She graduated from the one-room school called Telegraph (now known as Oak View) and from Lodi Union High School. She earned her B.A. Degree and General Secondary teaching credential from the College of the Pacific in Stockton. Her teaching experience began at Galt High School but was short-lived when she



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY COLLEGE building as it looked in 1922 just before it was razed. Built as the "**Woodbridge Academy**" in 1878 by subscription among local residents, it was opened the following year by the United Brethren Church as the "**Woodbridge Seminary.**" In 1883 the name was changed to **San Joaquin Valley College** when the United Brethren Church (California Conference) added college-level courses and degrees to its high school program. Following its closing in 1897 the building evidently remained empty until it was opened in 1903 as the **Woods Grammar School.**

Taken from **Mountain Men to Astronauts**, with permission of the author, Naomi McCallum Carey.

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decided two years later on a career as a rancher's wife. She married Elwood L. Myers of Lockeford in 1933. They still live on the ranch on East Brandt Road (south of Clements) near where her husband's family settled in 1906.

Mrs. Myers would like to express her thanks and gratitude to the following people--all of whom gave her valuable assistance in the preparation of her manuscript for publication: Fred Ballew, Mrs. Ellsworth Beckman, Mrs. Naomi Carey, Shirley T. Field, Mrs. Medora Johnson, Alice and Emmett Perry, Mrs. Rudolph Rojahn, Robert Shellenberger, and Mrs. Erwin Woods.

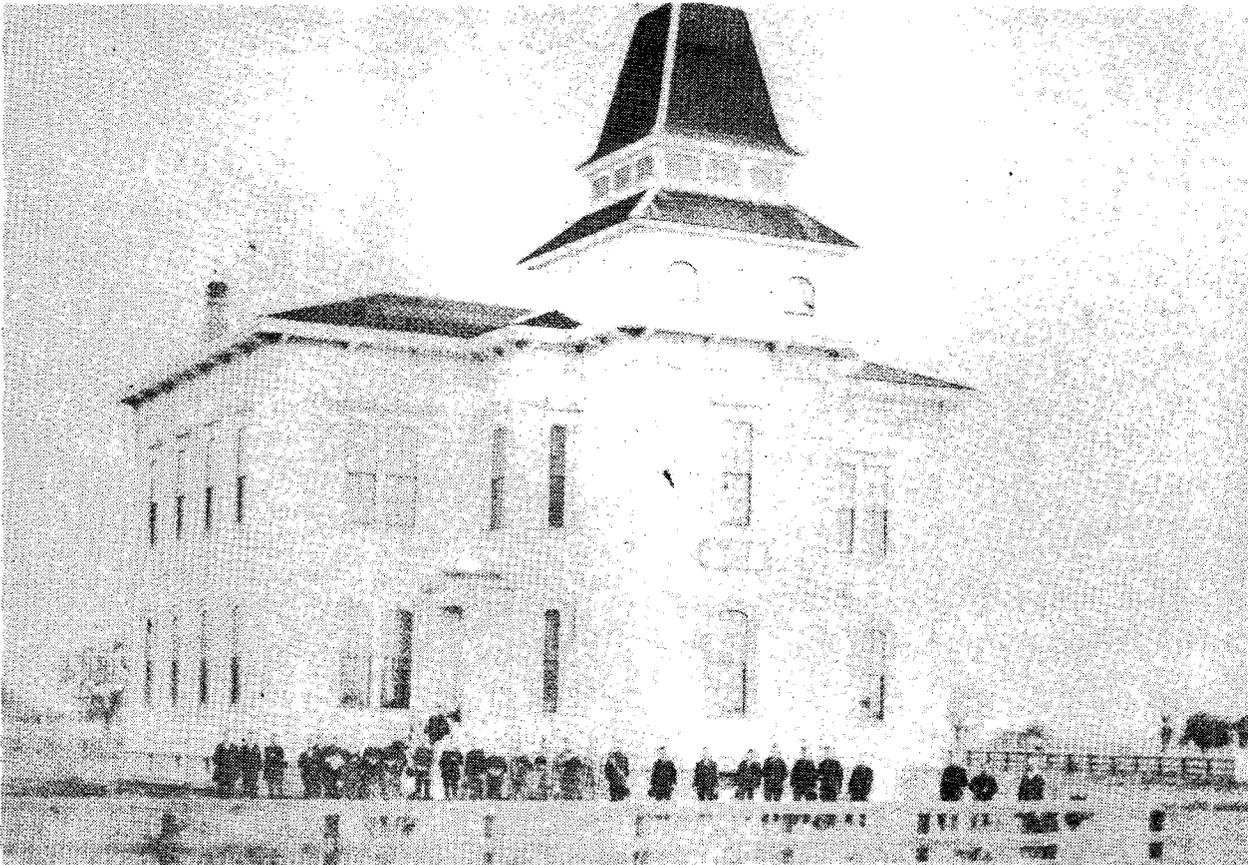
This is the story of a school that played a very significant role in the field of education in northern San Joaquin Valley, especially in San Joaquin County during the last two decades of the 1800's. To those who know Woodbridge only as a small community on the fringe of Lodi composed mainly of aging store buildings and older homes, it is difficult to visualize the town as worthy of supporting a college. However, the situation was far different a century ago when the idea of providing higher education for the youth of Woodbridge began to develop.

From the late 1850's until well into the 1870's Woodbridge was the largest and most important settlement between Stockton and Sacramento. When Jeremiah Woods established a river crossing (first a ferry, later a toll bridge) on his land along the Mokelumne River, a road was commissioned from Stockton to Woods' bridge.¹ This route to Sacramento was favored by the teamsters and stages as it was shorter than the route out of Stockton previously

used. The older road ran from Stockton in a northeasterly direction to Staples' Ferry and later to Locke's Ford (Locke, too, soon built a bridge). The route through Woodbridge was called the Lower Sacramento Road and was used most of the year. During excessively wet seasons or during the times of high water, the Lockeford or Upper Sacramento Road was used as it was on higher, more sandy ground and offered better traveling conditions in adverse weather. The Lower Sacramento Road was often under water during flood time and the adobe ground north of Stockton was nearly impassable when very wet.

The town of Woodbridge offered many services to the freighting teams and stage travelers such as a hotel, a livery and feed stable, and several blacksmith shops. The town was the trading center for the rural population for miles around. To serve these people there were several general merchandise stores, a butcher shop, a doctor, a Wells Fargo agent, even a ladies' hat shop. There were fraternal organizations, church congregations, and a grade school--in other words, it had become a well-rounded community with settled families by the 1870's.

In 1869 the site of present-day Lodi was designated as a train stop called Mokelumne Station on the new railroad that was extended southward from Sacramento. It took a few years for the railroad to cut deeply into the wagon freighting. It also took a few years for Lodi to develop out of a rough railroad town into a fledgling city. When it did begin to grow significantly, however, it far surpassed Woodbridge in population and importance--but that was not the situation when our story begins.²



EARLY PHOTOGRAPH OF THE WOODBRIDGE SEMINARY. Note lack of landscaping. Persons in foreground not identified, but could be members of the United Brethren State Conferen-

ce which met at the new school for several years following its opening in 1879.

Courtesy of the San Joaquin County Historical Museum.

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FOUNDING OF THE WOODBRIDGE ACADEMY

One thing that Woodbridge did not have caused the parents considerable concern. There was no school of higher learning nearby for their children to attend when they finished the ninth grade at the local elementary school. Little advanced education was available in San Joaquin County in the 1870's, and that only in Stockton. Previous to tuition-free, tax-supported high schools, higher education was provided by private schools (usually operated by church groups). These schools were funded by tuition fees charged to students and by such donations as the schools could inspire. A limited number of public high school classes were offered at the Washington School in Stockton beginning in 1870. The Stockton Business School was founded in 1875, but it offered only those courses pertaining to a business education. A number of other private schools had been started but few had met with success this early.³ This situation provided a favorable background for the decision by Woodbridge residents to erect a building suitable for higher education. There are varying dates and varying stories concerning the construction of the building. Two versions are worthy of our consideration.

Frank T. Gilbert in his *History of San Joaquin County* published by Thompson and West in 1879 wrote as follows:

It is with solicitude that parents send their children away to cities to complete their education; thus throwing them at an inexperienced age among influences, the pernicious effects of which often cast a shadow over their whole lives or lead them into paths that wither the bright promise of their youth. It was the realization of these facts, together with a favorable locality combined with a desire to shield their own offspring, that suggested and inaugurated the movement of the farmers and village people of Woodbridge to form an association, the object of which was to erect a building suitable for academic purposes near that place.

[On] December 15, 1878, articles of agreement were drawn up and about \$8500 subscribed by 150 persons; each \$25.00 subscribed representing a vote in the association. The building is 42 by 64 feet and presents an imposing and attractive appearance on the outside (it is not yet finished on the inside). They have secured the services, for three years, of one of the best educators in the state, Prof. S. L. Morehead, and we believe they intend accommodating the children of others as well as members of the association. The Academy is situated about two miles from a railroad station⁴ and it presents all the advantages of a rural retreat. The trustees are H. H. Bentley, J. C. Thompson, J. Brack, V. Jahant and J. Schomp.

Another widely-copied version of the inception of the academy building came from an interview with T. R. Burkett, one of the founders and later a trustee of the San Joaquin Valley College. This was published in the *Stockton Record* on February 14, 1912, and read as follows:

In the late 1860's Mr. Burkett was in the meat market business in Woodbridge and C. L. Newton, now [1912] a county supervisor, was employed by the firm. Meeting one morning, Mr. Burkett jokingly inquired what they could do to make the town livelier. 'Well we might build a high school' answered Mr. Newton. It was a chance remark but it set the pair of them to thinking and talking.

'One day Judge Thomas came into the butcher shop,' relates Mr. Burkett, 'and we requested him to draw up a form of subscription list. He wrote it down on a piece of

paper such as we used to wrap meat in and Newton and I circulated the list. Well, we got \$5,000.00 subscribed, but the people made much fun of our project. One day the late J. P. Folger met us and inquired how we were getting along with our high school. We showed him our names and asked him how much he would cash the list for. He replied that he would cash it for 95 cents on the dollar, but he said that we would need \$10,000 instead of \$5,000 and said that if we would let him have the list he would get the money. He was the father of Mrs. C. B. Hart of Stockton, Mrs. Southworth and Mrs. Barnbee of Los Angeles, you know [school-age daughters at that time]. Well, it was only two weeks until he had the money and we bought the land, seven acres, and built the school. But we had no plans for conducting it. Finally we made a bargain with S. L. Morehead [principal of Woods Grammar School] by which he was to conduct the school for five years to our satisfaction and at the end of that time the property was to become his [this was in lieu of any salary]. Complications arose and we had to cancel the contract before he had taught the term. The school was then idle for several years.'

'J. A. Sollinger started for the United Brethren California Conference, in 1879 I think it was, and I told him to see if he could get the United Brethren to take our school off our hands. The Conference⁵ sent a committee to look at the college and they soon closed the deal for it.'

ACADEMY SITE SELECTED

The site selected to erect a suitable school building was on property owned by Albert Stokes Thomas which lay adjacent to the south side of the town of Woodbridge. Thomas platted at least a portion of his land as the Thomas Addition to Woodbridge. He set aside approximately seven



ALBERT STOKES THOMAS, owner of the "Thomas Addition" on the south edge of the Woodbridge townsite. Seven acres within the addition were set aside as the **Academy Block** in 1878 and donated to the community as a school site.

From the Fred Ballew Collection.

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acres which were designated as the Academy Block. In a deed dated June 27, 1878, A. S. Thomas and his wife transferred to the Trustees of the Woodbridge Academy a portion of the Academy Block 320 feet square on the southeast corner of the intersection of Live Oak (now called Lilac) and Academy streets for the sum of three hundred dollars. The trustees named were H. Bently, J. C. Thompson, Jacob Brack, Victor Jahant, and Justic Schomp.

In a second deed, also dated June 27, 1878, Thomas and his wife transferred the balance of the Academy Block to two of the trustees, H. Bently and J. C. Thompson, also for three hundred dollars. (Note that this took place before an agreement was reached with anyone to operate the school.)

Then on December 29, 1879, (after the agreement with the United Brethren Church) Bently and Thompson deeded the balance of the Academy Block which was now in their names to the trustees of Woodbridge Academy (that would be the trustees of the building belonging theoretically to the citizens of Woodbridge, not the trustees from the United Brethren Church operating the school in the Woodbridge building). This transaction, too, was for three hundred dollars. Perhaps no actual exchange of money took place. An amount may have been recorded to establish a value on the land. Descendants of the Thomas family state that it has always been said in their family that Albert S. Thomas had donated the land for the school.

THE UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH OPENS THE WOODBRIDGE SEMINARY

Let us turn our attention to a brief background on the religious body known as the "United Brethren in Christ"⁶ to see how they became involved with a school in Woodbridge. They had become a strong religious group in a number of the eastern states by the end of the Civil War. They emphasized the need for an educated ministry and they believed that higher education was one of the paramount needs of an expanding America. They had already established several colleges in the East and Midwest when they followed the westward movement and entered the church field in California in the 1860's.⁷

A college had been established in 1867 by the United Brethren in Philomath, Oregon, with the hope that it would be their main church college on the Pacific Coast. The California Church was invited to join in supporting this school. However, California exhibited an independent spirit and at the 1868 state conference the delegates instructed their Presiding Elders to look for a promising site for establishing an academy under the control of the United Brethren Church in their own state. But other needs of the Conference commanded the attention of the Elders and little was done toward locating a suitable college site.

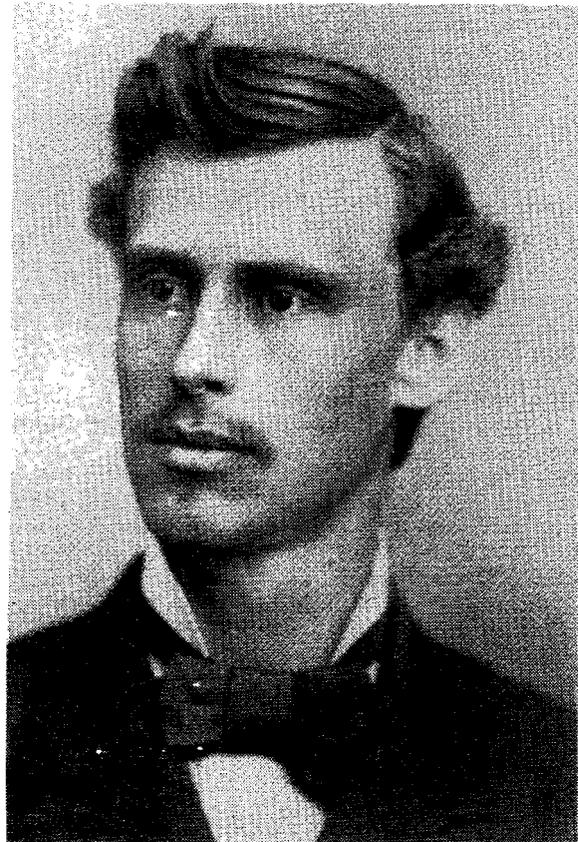
In 1877 the California Conference once again considered the question of higher education and appointed a committee of five "whose duty it shall be to prospect with the view of locating a site for the founding of an institution of learning within the bounds of this Conference."

Woodbridge had an active congregation of United Brethren which had been meeting in various schoolhouses from about 1864. By 1878 they had grown and prospered to the point where they were able to build their own church. It was constructed of brick and was located on the southwest corner of the intersection of the present Indiana and Olive streets.⁸ The congregation invited the California Conference to hold its 1878 annual meeting in Woodbridge. Bishop Nicholas Castle, D.D., dedicated the new church

during this annual Conference meeting.

The United Brethren historian, J. Russell Davis, summarized in his history of the Church what occurred following the 1878 Conference:

Between the Conferences of 1878 and 1879 the Conference was offered the opportunity to acquire Woodbridge Seminary located in the town of Woodbridge, in San Joaquin County, which had been founded several years before by private subscription by the citizens of the town. The venture was proving too much for the local citizens and when it became known that the United Brethren Church was interested in starting a college in California, overtures were made which culminated in the church taking possession of the property. . . . It was at the Conference of 1879 that this decision was made on the recommendation of the committee composed of D. Shuck, J. A. Sollinger and H. J. Becker. A board of trustees of nine was elected and the ministers were urged to enlist support, both monetary and students, for the school.⁹



DARIUS ARRELIAN MOBLEY, professor of "Mental and Moral Science" and president of the College, 1879-1891. Following his resignation from the College he served as principal of the original Stockton High School when it was housed in the Washington Grammar School building on the corner of San Joaquin and Lindsay streets.

Courtesy of Mrs. Ellsworth (Janet) Beckman.

An entry in the trustees' first report mentions that they met for the first time on September 10, 1879, with J. A. Sollinger presiding. Other trustees present were R. W. Williams, Rev. D. Shuck, G. W. Burtner; absent were H. D. Northrup, Rev. J. Black, Rev. C. W. Gillett, L. L. Huntley, and A. H. Cowell. Thus the desire of the citizens of the vicinity of Woodbridge for better school advantages and the

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need of the California Church Conference of the United Brethren in Christ for an institution of higher learning were met. The school was dedicated by Bishop Castle on September 10, 1879, and on the following day instruction was begun.

The school was named the Woodbridge Seminary. A call was sent to the United Brethren in Christ colleges in the East for instructors to take over the organization of the school. Darius Arrelian Mobley was selected as president and teaching professor. He had been reared in a strict religious atmosphere. His father, Lewis Mobley, was an instructor in the Hartsville College in Indiana and Darius received his A. B. from this school in 1875. In 1877 he entered the Union Biblical Seminary (later chartered as the Bonebrake Seminary) in Dayton, Ohio. He had completed his studies and graduated from this school when he received his call to take charge of the Woodbridge Seminary. His wife was Harriet Ann Hessey who was a ward of Rev. Daniel Shuck. Rev. Shuck had been Bishop during the formative years of the California Conference and was a trustee of the new school. He undoubtedly recommended Mobley for the president's position.



PROFESSOR ELI H. RIDENOUR was one of the three original members of the staff recruited by the United Brethren Church when the Woodbridge Seminary opened in 1879.

Courtesy of Barbara Ridenour Maley.

Also chosen to complete the full time staff at the new school were William H. Klinefelter and Eli Ridenour. The principal's salary was set at \$900.00 per year and his assistants were to receive \$700.00 per year. Teachers of accessory subjects such as music, art, voice culture and elocution were to be "self-sustaining," that is, they were to receive such compensation as they could collect from their students. Miss Carrie Ellis became associated with the school on this basis, "trustees to furnish her a room, she to provide her own instrument and to take what she could for

wages."¹⁰

A janitor, H. B. Brown, was hired for \$50.00 per year. He was furnished a room at the seminary, also wood and oil. He was expected to keep the buildings neat and clean, to clean the college hall after all public exercises, cut all wood, build all fires when needed and to ring the bell at such times as the faculty might direct.

A large building which had been used to house patients of the Pacific Insane Asylum was refurbished and converted to a boarding hall for the young women students. The young men were able to find housing with families in the town of Woodbridge. There were also limited job opportunities about town for students to earn some money. Some parents moved to Woodbridge for the duration of their children's education. Many students either walked or provided their own transportation by horse and buggy or cart. In 1882 the San Joaquin and Sierra Nevada Railroad was constructed from Brack's Landing through Woodbridge and Lodi to Lockeford and Clements and as far east as Valley Springs. In 1886 the Southern Pacific Railroad assumed control and continued its operation.¹¹ Some students undoubtedly traveled to school by this means. During the 1880's and 1890's there was a daily stage connecting Lodi and Woodbridge, providing yet another means of commuting to classes.

The seminary was established as a preparatory school (similar to the public high school) offering subjects providing preparation for college entrance. The aim of the faculty was to "furnish instruction in the languages, science, mathematics and fine arts to all who are desirous of such training and to give special attention to all branches of study necessary to prepare applicants for teachers in the public schools of the state."¹²

SEMINARY RULES

Students entering the seminary were given a long list of rules to abide by regarding discipline and additional ones regarding study and each applicant made the following declaration: "Earnestly desiring to more fully and thoroughly prepare myself for usefulness in life, I solemnly promise that I will faithfully attend upon all instructions of the Seminary and that I will carefully observe its rules and obey all lawful requisitions of the teachers and the Board of Trustees while I remain a member of it." Early catalogs issued by the college left no doubt in the minds of prospective students what these rules would be:

- Young ladies and gentlemen of good moral character will be admitted to the recitations after settling for the tuition and obligating themselves to keep the following:
- 1 - To be present at chapel exercises each school day morning.
 - 2 - To attend divine services each Sabbath.
 - 3 - Not to attend balls or engage in promiscuous dancing.
 - 4 - Not to visit saloons or use intoxicating liquors as a beverage.
 - 5 - Not to use profane language.
 - 6 - Not to play cards or gamble.
 - 7 - Not to be out of their rooms after 10 P.M. unless with special permission from some member of the Faculty.
 - 8 - Not to use tobacco about the building or grounds.
 - 9 - To deport himself (or herself) as a gentleman (or lady) under all circumstances.
 - 10 - To obey all reasonable injunctions of the Faculty.

Parents were urged to deposit all money for tuition, boarding, books and incidentals with the college Treasurer

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as expressed in a college catalog:

Under a conviction that the unrestrained use of money on the part of the students is the source of manifold evils, the Faculty would earnestly recommend to parents and guardians to deposit with the Treasurer of the College all the funds designed for their sons or wards, whether for regular charges of tuition and board, or for any other purpose.

It is the duty of that officer to keep safely the funds placed in his hands, and, with the approval of the president, to pay the above named regular charges, and all bills for purchases made by the authority of parents or guardians, to whom a monthly statement of receipts and expenditures will be forwarded.

Unless the course here recommended is adopted, the Faculty cannot exert a control over the expenses of the students, and cannot be held responsible for them.

The school opened with the fall term on September 11, 1879. It met with immediate approval from the community and the church. The delegates to the church conference held in Woodbridge in 1880 expressed their enthusiasm for the Woodbridge Seminary by raising \$10,600 in cash and pledges for the school.

The *Lodi Sentinel* of September 3, 1881, reported quite favorably the opening of the third year of the Woodbridge Seminary:

This institution opened last Monday under the most encouraging prospects. This term an attendance of 75 students is expected. Under the direction of three competent professors the Seminary offers better advantages than last year. Instructions will be given in Grammar, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Latin Reader, Caesar, Cicero, Virgil, Logic, Natural History, History of England and United States and Analysis, together with a thorough course in Double and Single Entry Bookkeeping, Instrumental Music and Penmanship. This school is under the control of Christian teachers and the morals of the students are carefully guarded. It is just such a school as every parent in San Joaquin County should patronize. Students may enter at any time.

A few weeks later, on October 15, 1881, the *Lodi Sentinel* expressed the feeling of the residents of Woodbridge concerning the value of the school to their community:

Under the auspices of this denomination [United Brethren in Christ Church] the Woodbridge Seminary has prospered and is surely coming to the front as one of the best and most successful educational institutions in the San Joaquin Valley. While the money that has been invested will never return directly to the parties that erected it, yet none of them regret their investment in this institution of learning. It is a noble monument to the intelligence, the local enterprise and the business sagacity of the people of Woodbridge. Ten times more than any one thing does it insure the permanency and the prosperity of that town. It has encouraged many to remain and many more to come and it has been the cause of improvements in the town that in the aggregate amount to five times the cost of the building itself.

However, the operation of the school was not to be without its problems. A very serious confrontation developed between the Seminary and the trustees of the school building as the school was preparing to open for its fourth year. Again we turn to the *Lodi Sentinel* (September 9, 1882) for a very good summation of the problem:

The whole trouble is over possession of the school building. This structure was built some years ago by a company of enterprising citizens in and about Wood-

bridge. The original plan of carrying on the school was abandoned and the property was turned over to the Conference of the United Brethren with the stipulation that that body should maintain and build up a seminary of learning therein and that it should endow the institution with \$15,000. Under this agreement the Conference had devoted its energies toward making the school a success and not without the very best results. But a disagreement arose between some of the trustees of the building and the trustees of the Seminary as to the worth of certain notes paid in on the endowment fund. It is claimed that only one note (and this for \$500) was objected to. For this note several substantial men in the community offered to give ample security. Another matter of dispute was as to the rate of interest on the notes. The agreement specifies no certain rate. The school was to have opened after the summer vacation last Monday in the disputed building. But under the personal direction of Mr. J. Brack, one of the trustees of the building, the house [school building] was closed to the faculty and pupils. The school was properly organized, however, in the brick church and is in operation, although at some inconvenience, in rooms at the boarding hall. The supporters of the school are resolved to build another schoolhouse if it is necessary. The institution is too firmly established to be abandoned.

(To Be Continued in Next Issue)

Footnotes will be found at the end of the third issue (XIII - No. 3)

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