

succeeded in building up a flourishing school for several months, until the prosperity of the city was almost destroyed by the great fires of 1851.

This school was supported by tuition fees, voluntary contributions and appropriations from the Common Council; and although it was commenced as a private enterprise, yet it was free to all who were too poor to pay for the education of their children.

In the Spring of 1851, a school was established by a few benevolent gentlemen in Spring Valley, in a small building which was then used as a church, a school house, and for the general meeting of the citizens in that vicinity. It was located on the site of the present Spring Valley Primary School, and was first taught by Mr. Freeman. Like the other schools mentioned, it was both private and public in its character, being supported by tuition fees and public contributions, and was free to all who wished to attend.

I have thus briefly noticed these schools, as they were the real pioneer institutions in sowing the seeds which have since ripened into our noble system of Public Schools.

Other small schools were taught during 1850 and 1851, before the organization of the present system of free schools.

Mr. W. K. Osborn had a small select school in the Congregational Church.

Quite a large and popular private school was taught by the Rev. F. E. Preveaux, in a part of the building now occupied by the Powell Street Primary School.

The Rev. Dr. VerMehrer was also a teacher of a small select school.

Several quite large parochial schools were also taught in the Catholic churches of the city.

But as all of these schools were organized as private or sectarian institutions, and had no immediate connection with our public schools, I do not consider it important to dwell upon their history in this place. As pioneer institutions in the great cause of education, they are entitled to our regard, and to the grateful remembrance of every friend of public instruction.

After the great fires of May and June, 1851, and during the social revolutions of society which followed the terrible events of that memorable year of crime and disaster, but little attention for some time was given to the instruction of the youth, who were left to roam the streets and educate themselves in all the crimes and vice of the gambling saloons which then infested every part of the city.

In the early part of the autumn of that year, as the city began to arise from her ashes, and give evidence of permanent prosperity and future greatness, a few benevolent and public spirited citizens united in a noble effort to provide for the education of the large number of children constantly flocking to our city from every part of the world. The subject of thus early establishing a permanent system of free schools was agitated in the press and the city government until the 25th of September, 1851, when the Common Council, in accordance with the provisions of an Act of the Legislature, approved April 14th, 1851, conferring power upon the city to organize Common Schools and to levy taxes for their support, passed a "Free School Ordinance," providing for the organization, support and regulation of the Common Schools of San Francisco. The adoption of this excellent ordinance, which carefully provided for the details of a well organized system of Public Schools, was mainly secured by T. J. Nevins, Esq., a gentleman whose name should ever be held in grateful remembrance for his interest and enthusiasm in the cause of education and philanthropy.

On the twenty-first of October following, the first Board of Education in California was elected by the Common Council of the city, consisting of C. J.

Brenham, the Mayor, C. L. Ross, Alderman, Joseph Atwell, Assistant Alderman, and General John Wilson, and Henry E. Lincoln, Esq. The Board completed its organization by electing T. J. Nevins, Esq., Superintendent of Public Schools. Although other attempts had been made in 1849 and 1850 to establish free schools, yet this is the first successful effort that has come down intact to us.

On the seventeenth of November, 1851, our present system of Free Schools was inaugurated, which has since proved such a glorious success. It may be true, that previous to this date, other schools had been taught for a short time in San Francisco, which were free to all who desired to attend; but they were not regularly organized under any Board of Education, and were soon abandoned by their teachers to enter more lucrative occupations. During the first year, ending November 1st, 1852, the Board of Education organized seven schools in different sections of the city, which, according to the fourth quarterly report of the Superintendent, numbered seven hundred and ninety-one pupils in attendance. A census was taken in October, 1852, by the teachers, which showed that the whole number of children in the city between four and eighteen years of age was two thousand and fifty. All these schools (except No. 2 at North Beach) have continued their organization intact, and now constitute the principal Grammar Schools of the city.

The first Public School under the present organization was opened on the seventeenth of November, 1851, in a small dilapidated one-story building near the corner of Second and Minna streets. It was then named the "Happy Valley School," District No. 1, which included all that portion of the city south of Pine Street. The first teachers were James Denman, Principal, and Mrs. A. Hyde, Assistant.

On the same date the "North Beach School," District No. 5, located on the northeast corner of Powell and Filbert streets, was instituted under the instruction of Mr. Joel Tracy, Principal, and Mrs. Milbury, Assistant. This school was transferred in 1854 to the large brick school-house which was erected on the southwest corner of Francisco and Stockton streets, where it remained until 1857, when the building was used by the city as a hospital, and the school was merged into the Union School and the Powell Street Grammar School.

On the twenty-second of December, 1851, Central School, District No. 2, (now the Washington School) was organized in a one-story building on Dupont Street near Jackson, under the instruction of F. E. Jones, Esq., Principal, and Mrs. E. W. Baldwin, Assistant.

On the eighth of January, 1852, the "Happy Valley School," District No. 1, was divided, and the present Rincon School was organized in the southern portion of the city, in a small room near the corner of First and Folsom streets.

On the ninth of February, 1852, the present Spring Valley Grammar School was opened in the old church and school-house on the site of the Spring Valley Primary School, on Union Street between Franklin and Gough.

On the tenth of May, 1852, the Mission Dolores School was organized in a small building near the old Mission Church.

On the seventeenth of June, 1852, the Clarke's Point School (now the Union Grammar School) was opened in an old wooden building on the northwest corner of Montgomery and Broadway streets.

On the twenty-second of May, 1854, the Colored School was organized, under the instruction of the Rev. J. J. Moore, in the basement of the Colored Church, on the corner of Virginia Place and Jackson Street. This school was subsequently transferred to the Colored School building on Broadway, near Powell Street, and is now permanently located on the corner of Taylor and Vallejo streets.