

EARLY SCHOOLS OF SANTA CLARA

by

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A research paper to fulfill requirements
for English 101

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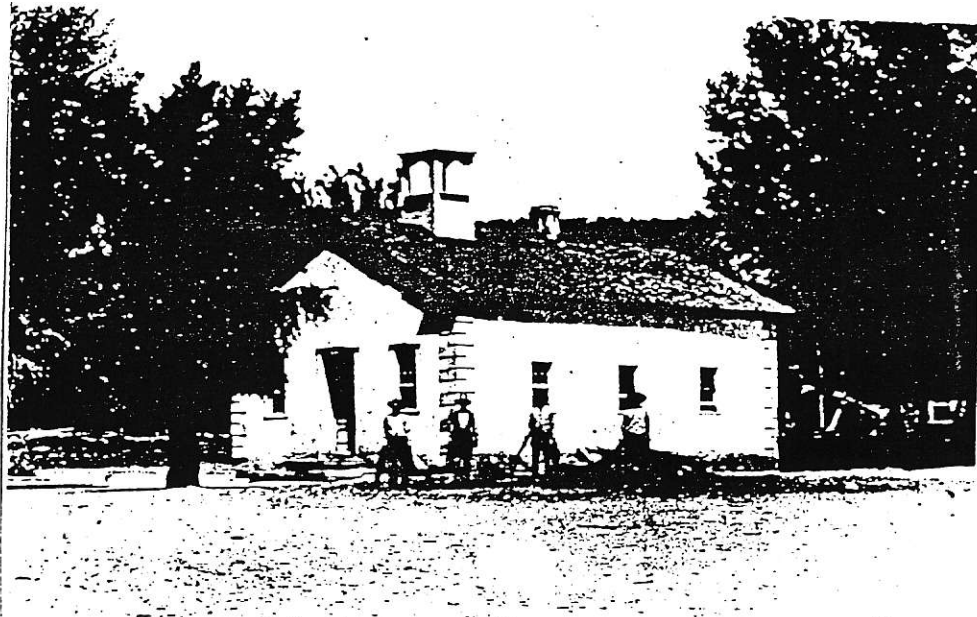
27 February 1981

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Indian Missionaries lived on the Santa Clara Creek for four years before any attempts were made to build a school building. One reason for this was the limited number of children in the settlement. In 1858 with the help of the returning San Bernardino Saints, a school building was built outside the walls of the Fort the Missionaries had built. The school was built of adobe and measured 24'x 16'. This building served as a church and a school for those early settlers. Rachel Hamblin, the wife of Jacob Hamblin, Indian Missionary, taught in this first school.

In November of 1861, 26 families of Swiss converts, newly arrived in Utah, were called to the Dixie Mission; they arrived at the Fort on the Santa Clara, and made temporary camp around the small adobe school building. Some families slept in the school building, and some families slept in the Fort. It began to rain about Christmas time and was still raining by February 2nd, when floods came and completely washed away the fort and the school. The Swiss settlers moved around the point of the hill onto higher ground, dug 'dugouts' to live in and began preparing the land for cultivation. Within a year the settlers had built a school house on the northwest corner of the public square of the new Santa Clara Townsite.

Why did these Swiss people think first to build a school house, before they had even harvested a crop off the desert land or before they had even built their first homes? Their thoughts were of the future generations. Those noble pioneers, who couldn't even speak the English language, wanted American schools for their children to begin right away to learn the American language.



First Santa Clara School
1863-1913

The first school house was commenced by the Swiss people in 1862 and completed in 1863. It was one room, 40'x 28' and faced the street on the west. This large room was used for church, civic, school, and recreation. It had a big curtain in the center that could be pulled for use as two rooms. Soon after its completion, another room was added so that it could be used as a stage, adding another cultural art to the community of Santa Clara. A Jail was built under the stage.

The school equipment for this school house, consisted first of two home-made desks about twelve feet long with a shelf underneath to be used to store slates, slate pencils and whatever needed storing. There were also four long benches, one on each side of the desks. The girls sat on one side of the room at one desk and the boys on the other side at the other desk. After several years these benches were discarded and "double bench desks" replaced them. This was quite an improvement as two people could sit together, instead of all being in one long line. It was easier

to 'get out' than it had been before.

At first each class could only boast of one book, the Bible and the Book of Mormon were used, but later on each pupil had a book. When some of the pupils used up their slate pencils and could not afford to buy new ones they went up to the 'turn' west of town and got some hard blue clay and sharpened it. This served very well as slate pencils.

The students were graded according to the Reader they were reading from. They began with a Primer and went to the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Readers instead of Grades. The three "r's" were the principle subjects taught, but the devotional exercises were an important feature of the school. School teachers in Santa Clara were no different from those in other early communities. Some were quite cruel at times. This is clearly explained in the following sketch by Adolph Hafen.

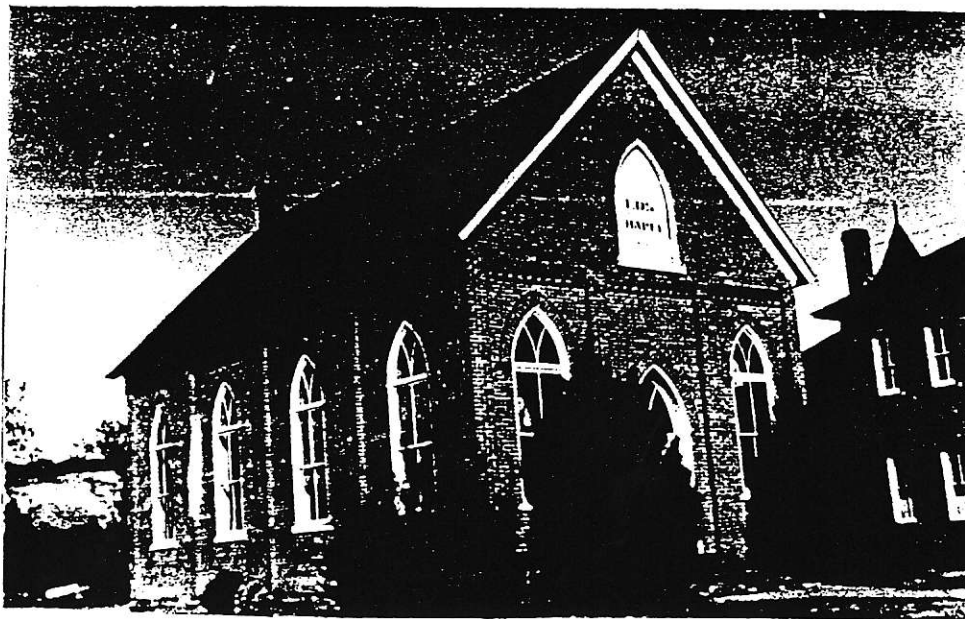
"My first school teacher was an old gentlemen Jones from Gunlock. He used to go to sleep in school. When we wanted to know what a certain word was that we were reading, we would go and touch him on the end of his nose to wake him up. My next teacher was old man Peck; he was similar to Jones. Then came Josephine Jarvis Miles, a very nice teacher. Next in line was Levi Harmon. All his students will always remember him for the apple willows he wore out on them. Any black and blue marks on our backs were tokens of his remembrance. He taught 3 years. If he caught us whispering, he would have us stand on one foot until school was out. If we let the other foot hang down a little, he would come by, give us a crack with a willow and tell us to hold it up. He tortured us in many other ways by making us dance a jig, and he would keep time with the willow over our backs.

"I was a very bashful sort of lad. On one occasion he had me on the stand with a girl on each side to hold my arm. I fainted, fell down on my head and was knocked out for sometime..."²

Punishment was very severe--especially from some of the 'hard-hearted' teachers. The offender had to hold out his hand, palm up, and receive blows from the teacher, which were administered with a ruler or a knotted apple willow. One of those early teachers was so anxious for the discipline of those big older swiss boys that he would have them all

line up before school started, and he would whomp them over the hands with his apple willow; then he would have them march into school, remembering that if ever they got out of line that day, they would be punished again in the very same way. Sometimes the hands got very sore indeed, and sometimes the students nearly fainted. Other means of punishment were, "Being kept in" during recess, standing on one foot before the other school kids. It seemed such a sad, embarrassing experience, the students looking on, dared not laugh nor take sides with the offender or they would receive the same punishment.

Mary Ann Leavitt taught summer school at her home for a while and one of the methods of punishment she used was to sent the offender out in her garden to pull weeds.³



Santa Clara Meeting House
1897-1947

The red brick church house was built on the southwest corner of the town square, in 1897. This new structure was available for class rooms, but since a Relief Society House had been built on the southwest corner



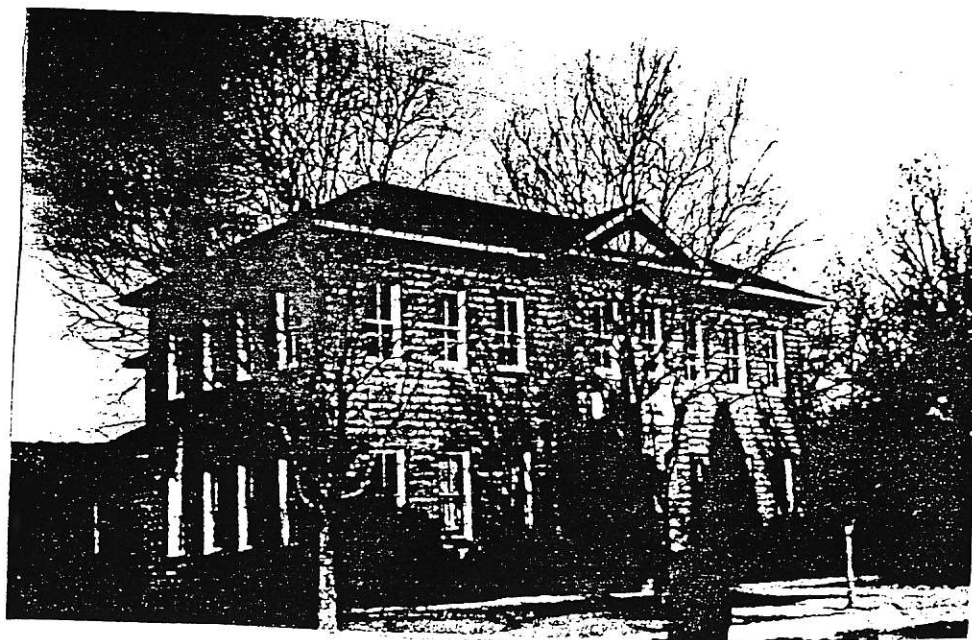
Santa Clara Relief Society House
1908- Still Standing

of the John Gubler property, Cecilia Ence taught the younger children in there. Also at an earlier date, school was held in the upstairs room of the Old Relief Society House about where the Santa Clara Mercantile now stands. Eva Knight Graf taught school there.⁴

Up until that time, these are the teachers that had taught in the old school building in Santa Clara:⁵

Mary Ann Leavitt
Lydia Knight McClellan
Mrs. John Hug
Kate Granger
Samuel Crosby
Eurene Burgon
Edwin Jones
Levi Harmon
Theodore Graf
John Stillman Woodbury
Josephine Jarvis (Miles)
John T. Woodbury
Addie Thornton (Duffin)
Arthur F. Miles
Edward H. Snow
Harrison G. Peck
Synthia Abbott

Joseph Wittwer
Menzis McFarlane
Louisa Cox (Woodbury)
Kate Forsha
Emma McFarlane
Ella Stucki Wittwer
Martin L. McAllister
Othella Foster
Leo A. Snow
John Gubler
Alyce Whilmina Gray (Gubler)
Anna Vilate Syphus Wittwer
Guy Hafen
Matilda Stucki (Gray)
Cecilia Ence (Tobler)
John Henry Graf



Santa Clara School House
1913-1975

By 1912 the people of Santa Clara felt that they had outgrown this way of holding school in separate buildings and so decided to build a new building--as good, or better than any other to be found in this Dixie country. Therefore, in 1912 a new School House in Santa Clara was under construction.

The Washington County News of April 29, 1912, carried this item in the Santa Clara Section:

The foundation of our new school house is in. The building will be as large, or larger, than the Washington school house and will have three school rooms, a library and an auditorium on the second story. Ira McMullin, from Leeds (Utah) is foreman of the mason work.

Also, there was this paragraph:

Our district schools have closed after a successful year's work; under his excellent management of our teachers, Guy Hafen, principal, Anna Wittwer, Lottie Worthen and Matilda Stucki.⁶

A new era was coming to Santa Clara; everyone was excited and proud of the new school building. The new School building would cost \$12,000.

Half of the money for this building was raised by the people of Santa Clara, for now it was big enough to be a school district by itself. Just after the building was completed all the smaller districts were consolidated into one--called the Washington County School District--so Washington County School District paid the remaining \$6,000 indebtedness. This building had a rock foundation and walls of gray cement blocks. George Riding had the block and mason work in charge and Charles Cottam was in charge of the carpenter work.

On March 23, 1913, The Washington County News carried this paragraph in the Santa Clara Section:

The mason work is completed on our new school house and the work is a credit to Santa Clara. The contractors, Messrs. George Syphus, George Riding and Chris Hammon are to be congratulated for their untiring efforts in putting up a building that will meet the approval of all that gaze at it. Charles Cottam also comes in for his share of praise for the beautiful plan he drew for the magnificent structure.

On June 23, 1913, the same paper printed this:

The carpenter work on our new school building is progressing. Messrs. Charles Cottam, Bert McQuarrie and Ephriam Webb are doing the work.⁷

The floor of the amusement hall was hardwood, a very rare thing at that time. The building consisted of three large rooms and a library on the first floor and an amusement hall with a stage and dressing room on the upper floor. This hall was equipped with some gymnastic apparatus that was the first in the southern part of the state. After the St. George Academy was established, many times those students would come to Santa Clara to use the gymnasium for gym purposes and also for parties and dances.

To quote again from The Washington County News, December 1, 1913:

Our school building is almost finished. The building cost \$9,000 and is a credit to this small community. The night of Thanksgiving the opening dance was held in the amusement hall. The St. George dance orchestra furnished the music. Probably the largest crowd ever in attendance at a dance at Santa Clara enjoyed the dance that night. Townspeople and friends from several adjoining towns came, making the room crowded with a happy throng. Come again, we are always glad to mingle with friends.⁸

Groups from St. George continued to come to Santa Clara to have dances up until the early 1930's.⁹

Santa Clara had a town recreation committee, and always the School house with its wonderful dance floor and stage was the center of activity. School programs such as plays, Halloween promenades, Thanksgiving programs, Christmas programs--both school and church--were held up in the hall. What a busy place that old hall was at Christmas time; always the Christmas Eve program was put on by the Primary Association. Santa would come and give a present to all Primary age boys and girls. Every one in town would come out that night, and the excitement was high, for sometime Santa came on the snow, and sometimes he came on dry ground, but come he did, and it was just as much fun for the 'oldsters' as it was for the 'youngsters'. The Primary children would pantomime the beautiful Nativity scene taken from Luke 2:1-16 in the Bible. And every child would be dressed beautifully for the occasion. A tradition that was part of Santa Clara for many years.

Christmas day would always mean a basketball game up in the Hall, and Christmas night was the big dance. During the holidays between Christmas and New Years, the town would sponsor a Three-act play; everyone supported these great renditions. New Years Eve brought one more 'happy time', to dance the new year in and the old year out. How important this School House was to Santa Clara.

From the time the school door opened in the fall until it closed in the late spring, something special was always going on in the School House.

School was held from 9:00 in the morning until 4:00 in the afternoon, with a recess in the morning and afternoon, and one hour off for dinner at noon. Santa Clara teachers were the best, and the students from Santa Clara School were known for their scholastic ability. Not only did the people of Santa Clara support their district school, but they also supported the High School and Dixie College at St. George and the other Institutions of higher learning wherever Santa Clara students went to school. Many of the students from Santa Clara have gone into the field of Education. Many have achieved their goals in the Doctorate Degrees. For the school year of 1932-33, Santa Clara furnished 18 of the teachers of Washington County while their population was but 3% of the total population of the County. At one time there were 30 students attending Higher Educational schools, not counting the number of students in the Santa Clara School, and at that time the town had only 295 inhabitants.¹⁰

The Teachers who taught in the Big Cement Block School in Santa Clara were:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| John Henry Graf | Louie Harris (Miller) (Smith) |
| Edna Cragun (Dennett) | Ruth Windsor |
| Nellie Atkin (Hafen) | Vera Harmon (Hirschi) |
| Charles Hafen | Lois Hafen (McArthur) |
| Josephine Wittwer (Hughes) | J. Claud Frei |
| Effie Frei (Cottam) | George Miles |
| Mildred Tuggle | Linda Larson |
| Alice Harmon (Ballard) | Ruth Allen Miles |
| Linna Snow (Paxman) | Clara Graf (Sorenson) |
| Keith Seegmiller | Lela Lund (Whitney) |
| Jessie Hafen (Frei) | Arvilla Pace (Hansen) |
| Ella Hafen (Perkins) | Margarett Welker |
| Rhoda Reber (Oviatt) (Prince) | Winnie Tobler (Seegmiller) |
| Henry Miles | Ione Olsen |
| Emily Harmon (Foremaster) | Iva Tanner (Harmon) |
| Arthur K. Hafen | Neola Zahner |
| Edward R. Frei Sr. | Barbara Ray (Barton) |
| Melvin Harmon | Madge Morrill Cannon |
| Golda Bell Hafen (Snow) | Lillian Atkin (Smith) |
| Florence Miles (Jones) | Iva B. Adams |
| Helen Moody (Reichmann) | Lewis Christian |
| Ruth Westover (Wittwer) | Maggie Brooks |
| Alvina Wittwer | Nellie Jensen |
| Ruth Atkin (Burkhalter) | Rilla Larson |
| Leland Hafen | John Arlo Hafen |
| Valentine Hafen | Evelyn Johnson ¹¹ |

Santa Clara School had a flag of Green and White and a School Song, written by a native son -- Karl E. Fordham. He later wrote the beautiful song about Utah's State Flower, "Sego Lily."

"To Our Flag of Green and White"

Nestled in the Valley of our Dixie Land
Where the Golden sunset close each happy day,
Stands our Schoolhouse, sheltered by the mountains high,
Hear our song of colors gay.

Lovely colors white and green
None more lovely have we seen,
Faith and courage to us bring
As we listen to this Chorus ring.

Through the years that are to come
And the tasks we're to perform
Working with a will to do,
Bringing honor, dear flag, to you.¹²

Through the years, the school bell rang out through the little town of Santa Clara, beckoning the children to "Come to School." Memories of those good old School Days will ever be choice in the hearts and minds of every student who passed through the doors. Yes, those Teachers were the BEST and endeared themselves into the lives of every student. If it isn't memories of 'Crusades' with Mr. Christian, it's memories of world geography with Mr. Hafen, or spelling bee's with Mr. Frei, or learning to read with Mrs. Cannon, or singing and playing the flute with Mrs. Larsen, or arithmetic with Mrs. Johnson. Whoever the Teacher, the students learned. Little wonder then, the sadness that was felt by the community of Santa Clara, when another era was ended, and in 1975 the beloved big cement block School building came down; the children were bussed to St. George; the playground was silent! Progress has come, and we think back with fondest dreams to those Early Schools of Santa Clara.

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Washington County News, April 29, 1912, Washington County Library.

Washington County News, June 23, 1913, Washington County Library.

Washington County News, December 1, 1913 Washington County Library.

FOOTNOTES

1. Robert Hafen Moss, "An Historic Study of the Factors influencing the organization of Education in Washington County: 1852-1915" (Department of Educational Administration; Provo Utah: Brigham Young University, August 1961), p. 38.

2. Life Sketch of Adolph Hafen, Santa Clara, Utah, 1938, in Robert Hafen Moss, "An Historic Study of the Factors influencing the organization of Education in Washington County: 1852-1915" (Department of Educational Administration, Provo, Utah: B.Y.U., August 1961), p.40.

3. Interview: Nellie M. Gubler, February 14, 1981, at Gubler home, Santa Clara, Utah.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Washington County News, April 29, 1912, Washington County Library.

7. Washington County News, June 23, 1913, Washington County Library.

8. Washington County News, December 1, 1913, Washington County Library.

9. Interview: Nellie M. Gubler, February 28, 1981 at Gubler home, Santa Clara, Utah.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.