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Author

Kantor, J.R.K.

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CORA, JANE, & PHOEBE: FIN-DE-SIÈCLE PHILANTHROPY

J. R. K. Kantor

Cora Jane Flood

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, on September 13, 1898, Miss Cora Jane Flood addressed the Regents of the University of California:

Gentlemen: I hereby tender you the following property: the Flood residence and tract of about five hundred and forty acres near Menlo Park, California; one-half interest in about twenty-four hundred acres of marsh land adjacent to the resident tract, and four-fifths of the capital stock of the Bear Creek Water Company, which supplies water to Menlo Park and vicinity.

The only conditions I desire to accompany this gift are that the residence and reasonable area about it, including the present ornamental grounds, shall be kept in good order for the period of fifty years and the net income from the property and its proceeds shall be devoted to some branch of commercial education.¹

In the fall of 1898 the university's campus at Berkeley enrolled 1,717 students, while the combined total for the campuses in San Francisco—that is, medical, dental, pharmacy, and the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art on Nob Hill—was 581 students. The regents were also responsible for Lick Observatory near San Jose, a gift received in 1888. Miss Flood's beneficence surely added to the university's real estate holdings and to its endowment. Acting with speed, the regents—although addressed as "Gentlemen," including twenty-two men, among them Mayor James D. Phelan of San Francisco, Isaias W. Hellman of the Nevada Bank, Andrew W. Hallidie, inventor of the cable car, Adolph B. Spreckels, president of the State Agricultural Society, and one woman, Phoebe Apperson Hearst—voted to establish at Berkeley a College of Commerce, which has now grown into the Haas School of Business, the second oldest such school in the country.

One might speculate about Miss Flood's motives in making this gift to the young University of California. She was the only daughter of the Comstock Lode millionaire, James Clair Flood, whose Nob Hill townhouse, "a New York brownstone," is now the Pacific-Union Club. Even though the mineral wealth which had poured into San Francisco created instant millionaires, the millionaires were not created equal—money that accumulated during the initial Gold Rush was "old money" when compared to the riches of the Comstock Lode. Thus, in 1879, when retired U.S. President U. S. Grant and his family were touring California and a dinner was to be held in their honor at Belmont, the peninsula home of Senator William Sharon, the Floods were not on the guest list. In turn, the Floods invited the Grants to luncheon at Linden Towers,



Cora Jane Flood, ca. 1900.
University Archives.

their Menlo Park estate, on the very same day as the dinner at Belmont; the well-nourished Grants were unable to do justice to the banquet that evening. Too, Menlo Park was adjacent to Palo Alto, where another millionaire of the 1860s, Leland Stanford, had created in 1891 a university in memory of his only son. One might say that the rivalry between Cal and Stanford operated on several levels.

Linden Towers was a gigantic white wedding cake of a wooden house, with outbuildings and gatehouses to match. The regents discussed what to do with the property; unable to rent it locally, they decided to advertise it nationally, and in March, 1899, they asked the San Francisco photographer, O. V. Lange, who a few years earlier had photographed the Berkeley campus, to take pictures of the interior rooms as well as the exterior, the resulting photographs to be circulated to agents in the eastern United States. No bids were received for the property, and the problem was solved only by Miss Flood herself who, in 1903, bought back the residence for \$150,000. The house continued to be occupied by the Flood family until the building was razed during the 1940s.

The 2,400 acres of marsh land at Menlo Park remained in the hands of the regents, or to use a more precise image, on their books. At the beginning of this century, the Berkeley campus was becoming crowded with buildings—there were more than eleven!—and the College of Agriculture needed additional facilities and space to deal with large animals. In October 1902, President Benjamin Ide Wheeler suggested that “The Flood Estate be devoted to the use of the school of dairying as the accommodations at Berkeley are inadequate.”² This recommendation was adopted by the regents who took no immediate action. Why? Because in 1901 a gentleman named Peter J. Shields had drafted a bill in the state legislature to create a state-supported farm school. Although the bill had not passed, the regents were well aware of the support which Shields had won for his idea. In 1903 he sponsored a second



Linden Towers, the Flood mansion in Menlo Park, 1898. *University Archives.*

bill, and although this one passed, Governor George Pardee, an alumnus of 1879, vetoed it. Creamery and livestock interests in the state rallied, and when Shields introduced yet another bill in 1905, he was supported by Professor E. W. Major at Berkeley, and the bill was passed into law. Davis was selected as the site for the University Farm, and the Menlo Park property was held by the regents for another twenty-five years, the last parcel being sold off in the 1920s.

In 1924 Miss Flood also gave the regents her San Francisco residence on Broadway whose estimated value was “\$250,000, more or less. The Regents have the privilege of selling this property, the proceeds of income to be used for the benefit of the College of Commerce of the University.”³

Jane Krom Sather

Soon after he arrived at Berkeley from Cornell University in late 1899, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, eighth president of the University of California, was asked to call upon Mrs. Jane Krom Sather at her Oakland home on Twelfth Street. The widow of Peder Sather, a founding trustee of the College of California in 1855 (which later gave its Oakland lands and buildings as well as its undeveloped Berkeley property to the newly-chartered University of California), Jane Sather sought a dependable trustee for her considerable fortune, and luckily for the university she found such a person in the new chief executive at Berkeley. In his 1900 *Report*, Wheeler noted her gift:

Mrs. Jane Krom Sather of Oakland, \$75,000 in cash, stocks and real property for the endowment of the Jane K. Sather Chair in some department of classical literature; real property of the proceeds of the sale of which the first \$10,000 is to be set aside as the Jane K. Sather Law and Library Fund. . . . Mrs. Sather has executed a deed conveying to President Wheeler in trust valuable property in Oakland, which upon her death is to be sold and the proceeds applied according to instructions contained in a sealed letter deposited in escrow in an Oakland bank.⁴

Although the two endowed professorships, one in history and one in classical literature, were not activated until after Mrs. Sather's death in 1911, during her lifetime she made a lasting architectural contribution to the campus in the shape of the Sather Gate, marking the southern entrance to the university.⁵ Construction was begun in 1909, under a design by John Galen Howard, and the gate was completed in the following year. On each of the four granite pillars were to be placed marble panels, one facing south and one facing north, each to represent the arts and the sciences. On each panel were sculpted nude figures, four



Jane Krom Sather, ca. 1905. *University Archives.*

female and four male. Once these panels were in place, unknown persons decided to have some fun and adorned the figures with oak leaves—fig leaves being unavailable. Word of such desecration reached Mrs. Sather. Out came her pen and off went a stern letter to Secretary of the Regents Victor Henderson. The marble panels were duly removed, and for seventy years the gate stood without them, until they were restored. But, since it has been thought that it was prudery on the part of Mrs. Sather that demanded this removal, it is important to refer to the letter which she wrote on February 1, 1910:

There is a difference in *nude* and *naked*. The latter, *I should say*, has not even the *fig leaf* and is rather trying to uncultivated people. The University Students are and will always be largely of this class. Now I ask, is it wise to force *culture* and thus subject the beautiful though it may be to danger of defacement and probably mutilation? . . . The whole matter has passed out of my hands and it is now *up* to the University. If they cannot protect it it is a great pity to have built it. The next manifestation of disapproval may be a *coat of green paint*. Nothing will surprise me, though I did not expect the attack to come so soon.⁶



Sather Gate in 1910, looking south toward Telegraph Avenue. *University Archives.*

The Jane K. Sather History Chair was established in 1912, and its first incumbent was the popular historian Henry Morse Stephens, who had followed his friend and colleague Wheeler from Cornell in 1900. A like chair in classics would be held on a yearly basis by a distinguished visiting professor who would give a series of public lectures; since 1921 these lectures have been published by the University of California Press, and the Sather Classical Chair is considered one of the world's preeminent in its field.

In a letter of December 13, 1910 to Secretary of the Regents Henderson, Mrs. Sather wrote:

I am planning to build "The Sather Campanile and Chimes" at Berkeley. Many years ago while still a resident of New York and indeed before it became "The Greater New York" I used to stand on Broadway at the head of Wall Street and listen to the Chimes of Old Trinity as tunes were rung out of them. It was very fascinating. Think of the melody and music of the bells as it floats through the vales and arches of Berkeley. I am sure they will give pleasure to greater numbers and in greater degree than the Gate, tho, both are *to be beautiful*. The Campanile as planned will be expensive, but then the best is always expensive.⁷

Construction began in 1913, the tower was completed the following year, the bells were delivered from England in 1917. We accept the Campanile now as a matter of course, but just think what it must have been in 1913, on the still-sylvan campus, to see rising there, just in front of the old Bacon Art and Library Building, this steel and granite bell tower, giving to Berkeley its best-known landmark.

Phoebe Apperson Hearst

1891 was an *annus mirabilis* for higher education in the San Francisco Bay Area, for not only had Stanford been opened but Phoebe Apperson Hearst, recently widowed by the death of Senator George Hearst, made a proposal to the regents. On September 28 she wrote:

It is my intention to contribute annually to the funds of the University of California the sum of fifteen hundred (\$1,500) dollars, to be used for five \$300 scholarships for worthy young women. . . . I bind myself to pay this sum during my lifetime, and I have provided for a perpetual fund after my death. . . .⁸

And throughout the next twenty-eight years, underlying the enormous generosity which literally created the Hearst International Architectural Competition for the development of the Berkeley campus and established both the Museum and Department of Anthropology, underlying this generosity was always the interest in students, and especially the women students.

In 1891 the student body included some 164 women who had few facilities of their own aside from a cramped room in North Hall. Soon after she was appointed the first woman regent of the university in 1897, Mrs. Hearst provided funds for the furnishing of a women's lounge in the newly-completed classroom building, East Hall. Here the young ladies could



Phoebe Apperson Hearst, ca. 1905.
University Archives.



Students seated at tea table in women's lounge, East Hall, ca. 1900; cabinet of crockery in background. *University Archives.*

meet with friends, prepare lessons, and were served tea each afternoon, again at Mrs. Hearst's expense. She also formed the Hearst Domestic Industries, whereby instruction in every form of needlework was given, and women students who needed outside work to help pay their college expenses could learn and at the same time receive compensation for the hours in which they were gaining instruction. Encouragement and funds were provided for the establishment of two residence buildings near the campus—the Enewah and Pie del Monte lodges—in which women might experience the economies as well as the comforts of communal living; this actually marked the beginning of the women's club movement at Berkeley.

Early in 1900, Regent Hearst moved from her Pleasanton home, the Hacienda del Pozo de Verona (where throughout the years she entertained the Senior Class), into a large rented home on the southwest corner of Piedmont Avenue and Channing Way, next to which she had erected a large redwood entertainment pavilion. Designed by Bernard Maybeck, Hearst Hall was outwardly and inwardly an architectural joy, and soon became the center for student social activities—Saturday afternoon receptions, musicals on Sundays, “At Home” Wednesdays, dinners three evenings a week. Realizing that the women's physical education program was almost non-existent since the facilities of Harmon Gymnasium were available to them only during those few hours a week when the men were engaged in drill on the west field, Mrs. Hearst decided to have Hearst Hall moved closer to the campus. The site, provided by her expenditure, was on College Avenue (now occupied by the south wing of Wurster Hall), and Hearst Hall served as the women's gymnasium until it was destroyed by fire in 1922. (See *Chronicle*, Spring 1998, 125.) Before this time, however, the building was almost doubled in size, outdoor athletic courts were created, and a swimming pool was built.

The transformation of the Berkeley campus from its dusty, farm-like appearance into a university park was one of Regent Hearst's major achievements. In February 1896 she contributed more than \$2,700 for the lighting of Bacon Library and Art Building and the campus walks, and eight months later she proposed to finance, along with her son William Randolph Hearst, a competition to produce a plan for future university buildings. The International Architectural Competition was announced, and entries were received by the judges, who met in Antwerp on October 4, 1898 to select the prize-winning plan, that of the Frenchman Emile Bénard. When it was realized that the cost of implementing Bénard's grandiose scheme would come to some \$50,000,000, John Galen Howard was chosen to "modify" the plan. The first structure to be built was the President's House, now University House, and soon afterwards Mrs. Hearst directed that construction begin on Hearst Memorial Mining Building, which, with its equipment, was to cost \$700,000. At its completion in 1907 it was the world's largest building devoted to mining education.

In 1899, two years after Governor Budd had appointed her a regent, Mrs. Hearst conceived the idea of building a University Museum, serving not only the academic community but the people of California as well. She provided for expeditions to Peru, Egypt, and Italy to collect antiquities and artifacts of classic and aboriginal cultures. By 1901 a mass of objects had arrived at Berkeley; the university found itself with the substance of a museum but without a building in which to house the collections. On September 10 of that year Mrs. Hearst offered to create a Department of Anthropology free of all expense to the university that would oversee the collections and would offer courses of instruction and researches in the university. To house the collections she ordered constructed on campus (on a site now occupied by Hertz Hall) the Anthropology Building. As this soon became overcrowded, the collections, with the exception of the Greek casts, were removed to an unused building at the Medical Center in San Francisco. This museum was opened to the public, which came to gaze at the Indian artifacts (and later at Ishi), the Tebtunis Papyri, the Attic vases, the French and English miniatures. Space did not allow for the display of the laces, silks, jewelry, or manuscripts.

By 1914 Mrs. Hearst's gifts to the university were so numerous that Victor Henderson, Secretary of the Regents and Land Agent, wrote in the *University of California Chronicle*:

Including what Mrs. Hearst has given for building and for the museum, this one good citizen has from her private purse expended more than the vast, populous, and wealthy state of California has given to the University for buildings, permanent or temporary, in the fifty years since California chartered its State University.⁹

Three ladies—each Blue and Gold.

ENDNOTES

- 1 *Annual Report of the Secretary to the Board of Regents of the University of California for the Year ending June 30, 1899* (Sacramento, 1899), 71.
- 2 *Daily Californian*, October 13, 1902, 1.
- 3 *Annual Report of the President of the University 1923/24* (Berkeley, 1924), 265.
- 4 *Biennial Report of the President of the University on Behalf of the Regents to his Excellency the Governor of the State 1898-1900* (Berkeley, 1900), 104.
- 5 “\$10,000 for the erection of the Sather Memorial Gateway and Bridge at the Telegraph-avenue entrance to the campus.” *Biennial Report of the President of the University on behalf of the Regents to his Excellency the Governor of the State 1900-1902* (Berkeley, 1902), 137.
- 6 Jane K. Sather to Victor Henderson, February 1, 1910, Regents’ records, CU-1, 53:18. University Archives, University of California, Berkeley.
- 7 Jane K. Sather to Victor Henderson, December 13, 1910, *ibid.*
- 8 *Annual Report of the Secretary to the Board of Regents of the University of California for the Year ending June 30, 1892* (Sacramento, 1892), 32.
- 9 *University of California Chronicle*, 16 (July 1914), 314.

May Treat Morrison (1858-1939)

A graduate of the class of 1878, May Treat Morrison was commencement speaker at her graduation ceremonies and one of Berkeley’s first alumnae. She maintained a lifelong interest in her alma mater and was active in many women’s organizations, such as the American Association of University Women, which she presided over from 1911 to 1914. After her husband’s death in 1921 she gave his personal library of 15,000 volumes to the university, along with elegant furnishings, to create the Alexander F Morrison Reading Room in Doe Library. Through her will, Morrison established professorships in history and municipal law at Berkeley as a memorial to her husband, and provided funds that were later used to construct the Morrison Memorial Music Building, which was dedicated in her honor in 1958.