

The Creation of the First State-Supported Colored School
in Marysville, California: A Community's Legacy

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This case study provides insights into a time within a fairly integrated community with bustling social and economic possibilities for the Black community, although still not providing for equal rights for all citizens. It examines records of community relations among racial groups in the town.

The first state-supported colored school in Marysville, California opened in 1858 in the basement of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, with funding from the Marysville City Council. This case study is an historical study of the creation of the school, focusing on the community's efforts to provide for the opening of the school. It is framed by discussions of historical context: California's statehood, the gold rush, Black migration to California, the development of Black economic and social population centers, restrictive laws against the rights of African Americans, and the legislation that denied, then allowed African Americans to be educated in California. The total length of time that California required separate colored schools was from 1856 to 1880, at which time California law required that African American children be admitted to the regular public schools equally with White children.

In 1850 California became a state, officially designating itself as a free, non-slave state. Add to this the economic opportunities offered by the gold rush beginning in 1849, and word of economic and social potential for African Americans led to migration from across the nation. Included were free Blacks who came to California from the Northeastern and Midwestern U.S., and slave owners, whose slaves earned enough

money in California to buy their freedom. “Now for the first time there was news from a western region holding material promise for Negroes. The reports of the social fluidity of the California frontier environment perhaps suggested racial equality to some blacks.”¹ And indeed, newspapers and newsletters from the northeast, including the anti-slavery *Liberator*, Frederick Douglass’ *North Star*, and the *New Bedford Mercury* printed reports from Blacks who had become successful in California, and to varying extents urged Blacks to “go West” to California. The *New Bedford Mercury*, for example, “openly advised its black readers to consider California as a place of refuge.”² Fredrick Douglass helped keep Blacks informed of the possibilities in California after 1849, publishing reports in his newspaper the *North Star* of numbers of Blacks finding success in California.³

Despite these economic and social freedoms, African Americans were still legally restricted, for example, not being allowed to testify in court. And Black children were not allowed to attend the public schools of the state. Thus, the Black communities had to organize for their own schools, first as self-supported schools and later as publicly funded, state-supported schools. A scant five years after California became a state, the first public schools for Black children began.

Educational Law

California educational law first hinted at segregation with the School Law of 1855, Section 18, which provided school funding based strictly on the number of White students attending a school. This threat of loss of funding based on race was extended in

¹ Rudolph Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 15.

² *Ibid*, 19.

³ *Ibid*, 16-17.

1860, when schools were prohibited from admitting “Negroes and Mongolians” under threat of losing all funding. By 1864, new school law went further and required that districts had to open separate schools for Negro children, providing there were 10 colored families in a town whose families would submit a written petition requesting it such a school. When a town had fewer than 10 colored children, by 1866 the Revised School Law of 1866, Section 57-59, provided that districts could choose how to educate those children, whether it be in separate schools or in the regular public schools (provided that no white parents make a written objection). After several “separate but equal” types of cases throughout the state, in 1880, Section 1662, legislation required that “schools must be open for the admission of all children.”⁴ After 1880, “blacks never again were mentioned in the school law.”⁵

Marysville, California

Marysville was well-positioned along the Yuba and Feather Rivers as a gateway to the gold rush territory and to Sacramento and San Francisco. While Marysville is not actually in mining territory, it was nevertheless a crucial factor in the gold rush in the 1850s. It was close enough to mining territory that some townspeople could own claims in mines. But perhaps more importantly, Marysville served as a middle ground between the mines, the major cities of Northern California, and the ocean. With a population of around 10,000 by 1860, Marysville had become the 3rd largest city in the state. As a note, with a population of 12,000 as of 2000, Marysville is one of the least populated of the thousands of cities in California. Its remarkable history as part of the gold rush era

⁴ Charles Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 25.

⁵ Ibid, 25.

helped enable the Black community to establish thriving businesses, farms, family lives, and was the 3rd city in the state to create public schooling for Black children.

Blacks were among those who arrived at Marysville during the 1850s and played a role in the development of the town as a leading economic (destination). Reports of the number of Blacks in the town as of 1860 range from 200⁶ to my own count of 154, including those living on the outskirts of town connected with farming.⁷ A report by the Yuba County delegate to the 3rd Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California indicated that by 1865, the worth of the colored community and its holdings was \$163,690.⁸ According to the 1860 census, the occupations with the most number of Blacks employed were barber (17), general laborer (13), cook (8), farmer (6 plus their families), servant (5), washman or washwoman (4), porter (4), and bootblack (4). Of particular importance to the development of the Black community in Marysville was the establishment of so many barber shops.

By 1858, nearly 20% of Blacks in Marysville either owned or worked in barbershops.⁹ And so many of the Black owned barbershops were located on D Street that this became known as “Barber Row.” The Gassaway Brothers owned a barber shop at 44 ½ D St., and later got in on the ground floor of a new development, “Glazier’s

⁶ *Amy’s Directory, 1858*, published by O. Amy and Mix Smith, was the directory of individuals involved in business in the Town of Marysville. It can be considered as equivalent to a business section of a current White pages of a telephone book. It included names, occupations, addresses of business, residential addresses, and places of birth. The directory also served as a description of the town, including number of fraternal organizations, religious institutions, list of city council members, etc. Individuals and businesses were also able to place advertisements in this directory.

⁷ 1860 Census of the City of Marysville, Yuba County, California.

⁸ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California, 1865. Reprinted in Adam S. Esterovich (Ed.), *Proceedings of the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California, 1855*, reprint 1969. San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, Inc. This is a book that has pulled together the proceedings of each of the three Annual Conventions of the Colored Citizens of the State of California, held in 1855, 1856, and 1865.

⁹ Amy’s Directory, 1858; 1860 Census

Block,” in which the development was described by the publishers of *Brown’s Directory, 1861* as having businesses on two floors and in a cellar, including Gassaway Bros. Barbers.¹⁰ Additionally in this directory, the Gassaway’s took out a 1/3 page advertisement describing their “Fashionable Hair Cutting and Shaving Saloon” as “one of the finest North of San Francisco, and the proprietors promise to spare no endeavors to give satisfaction to all who call upon them.” Jesse McGowan ran the barber shop in the Western House (Hotel) on D St. at the corner of 2nd St. His shop was on the street level of what was described as “the plushiest hotel between Sacramento and Portland,” and undoubtedly had wealthy whites patronizing the hotel. In the *Amy’s Directory of 1858*, John McGowan placed a 1/3 page advertisement about his barber shop in the Western House: “John M’Gowan, Pioneer Barber and Hair Dresser, Hair cut, champooed [sic], and curled, All the above executed in the best style, by experienced workmen.” Another enterprising young man, Edward Duplex, who later became the first elected Black mayor of a town in California (Wheatland), opened and operated the Metropolitan Shaving Saloon at 58 D St., which employed seven colored barbers. (See the attached page for a Map of Black Businesses from 1858-1861.)

Several things can be determined from the 1860 census of Marysville, including age, sex, color (listed as black or mulatto), occupation, worth in real estate holdings, personal worth, who had attended school during the prior year, and place of birth. From these we can gather official statistics about the citizenry of Marysville. But in looking at patterns that emerge, we can also learn about the relationship of Blacks to the town as a

¹⁰ *Brown’s Directory, 1861*. This is another version of the *Amy’s Directory, 1858* (see footnote 7), which served the same purposes of providing information about individuals involved in occupations in the city of Marysville as well as providing descriptions of the town and advertising.

whole. The census was taken by indicating which buildings were visited, in order from 1 and on to over 1,000. These were not addresses, but rather numbered for the sake of documenting which buildings and residences were visited by the census taker. It can be easily gathered, then, that the buildings were adjacent to each other as the census taker moved along. In this way, it became clear that the Chinese living in Marysville lived very close together, with dozens of buildings in a row having Chinese residents only. Similarly, there appeared to be several “immigrant houses,” where several buildings served as a place for groups of Central and South American immigrants specifically. And while there were some Mexicans living throughout the town, the largest numbers of Mexican-born residents lived in large buildings in the farming regions of the area, perhaps in bunkhouses. Large groups of individuals with Mexican birthplaces worked as packers in these areas.

However, when identifying Black or Mulatto residents, there was no clearly distinguished pattern of neighborhood groupings. The black residents lived in buildings scattered throughout the city, integrated with individuals and families from all over the nation and world. Some lived as individuals with other individuals in spaces, often sharing similar occupation such as laborers (mixed race often within these spaces). Some lived as families, and there were several farm families. One can only determine that the Black community of Marysville, CA, in 1860, was one of the more integrated groups within the city.

Issues Regarding Birthplace

Another pattern that can be determined by examining the 1860 census, though, in combination with *Amy's Directory, 1858* and *Brown's Directory, 1861*, was the

reluctance of many Blacks of the time to indicate their birthplaces. It has been proposed by Lapp,¹¹ and this was re-confirmed in an interview I conducted with Wes Brown who has ancestry in Marysville,¹² that the fear of anti-slavery actions would be strong, so they would often indicate a non-slave state early, but later when movement away from slavery nationally became more evident then they could put their real birthplace. Wes Brown added, though, that sometimes as a slave would either escape or be released, he would travel through so many states and stops along the way that he would likely put any of those states as his birthplace. I would also add my hypothesis, which is that while some put a slave-holding state on their census information, they may have chose non-slave-holding states in the business directories (*Amy's* and *Brown's*) because those would be public to the entire town. Following are some examples of different birth states in the different types of publication.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Census Birthplace</u>	<u>Directory Birthplace</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Samuel Webster	Virginia	Michigan	Porter
Joseph Dunlap	Virginia	Massachusetts	Barber
Aaron Jackson	Virginia	DC	Barber
William Bland	Virginia	Missouri	Washman
Cupid Blue	Virginia	Missouri	Cartman

Adding to this difficulty for anyone who is trying to do genealogical searches (such as Wes Brown) is the lack of identification as “col’d” in the business directories. When comparing the census to the list in *Amy's Directory of 1858*, it can be found that while 33 individuals were list in *Amy's* as col’d, there are at least eight more who are

¹¹ Lapp, 1977.

¹² Wes Brown is a member of a long-standing Marysville Black family. His interest in doing historical research is genealogical, attempting to determine his great grandfather’s connection to Black and White farm families and a possible Native American ancestry, as well as discovering more about his family’s status in 1850s-1860s Marysville. He is part of the family of my Research Assistant, Michele Lee. When I approached Michele to work with me, neither she nor I knew of her family ancestry in Marysville. Upon attending a family reunion in the town, she connected me with Wes.

listed as Black or Mulatto in the 1860 census but are not listed as col'd in *Amy's*, including the Gassaway brothers John and James, who were well-known and respected Colored barbers and businessmen in the city, yet they were not listed as Colored in *Amy's*. It is difficult to determine if these identifications were left off the business directories on purpose or by accident.

Founders of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church

A number of Blacks in Marysville were able to gain both property and personal worth. Some used part of their earnings to buy family members out of slavery and to purchase their moves to California. Others purchased real estate for the establishment of businesses. Others combined together to operate mining companies and barber shops. And some contributed their money to the building of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, which later included the first colored school in the city in its basement. Several documents document “romantic” histories of several of the men in the town, and mention is often made in documents about the relations of the Blacks to the Whites regarding business and efforts to create the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church.¹³ A few of the founding members of the church will be summarized here.

Thomas Randolph, the minister of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church as it gained its own building and school, was born in VA as a slave. He escaped through the Underground Railroad in 1848, went to New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1849, and went

¹³ Original documents in the Yuba County Library, California Room – articles, documents, photos, handwritten notes – in folders on “*Negroes*,” “*churches*,” and “*biographies*.” Also L. C. Pogue, *The African American Heritage of Yuba County: 1849-1870* (Marysville, CA: Author, 1995); Carol Withington, *The Black Pioneeress of Yuba County* (Yuba City, CA: Author, 1987); Delilah L. Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers of California*. (Los Angeles: Author, 1919); and Sue Bailey Thurman, *Pioneers of Negro Origin in California* (San Francisco: Acme Publishing Company, 1971). These books are all based collections of historical documents and oral history gathered by the various authors.

around Cape Horn in 1851 to reach California. After trips back and forth, he became minister of the church. Records indicate that he lived in San Francisco until 1856, serving as a financial advisor to Mammy Pleasance, probably the first colored female multi-millionaire in California and known as the “mother of civil rights” in the state. Pleasance remembered Randolph in her interviews later in her life. After moving to Marysville to become minister, to finance his living and calling in Marysville, Randolph also worked as a barber and operated his own fruit stand at the busy location of 102 D St. He saved his money well and according to Marysville local historian Lester Pogue, who can trace his history to early black settlers of Marysville, Randolph in 1865 “built a property in which a white business was established...[and later] in 1878, he purchased a store in which he located his carpet-weaving business.”¹⁴ But a major part of Randolph’s fundraising efforts also went to the building of the Mt. Olivet Church, his own congregation. Through town-supported fundraisers, he was able to spearhead an effort to raise \$5,000 for the building of the church. Two of his children were able to attend the first colored school in town, in the basement of the church.¹⁵

Sandy Clark, also born a slave in Virginia, made his life in Marysville instead of businesses, rather through mining and farming, and at least at some point, as a cook. Clark worked as a slave for 23 years in Kentucky and Missouri before he was brought to Stockton, CA in 1850 by his owner. He was able to save up enough money to send back \$1,500 to buy his wife’s freedom and then to become a land speculator. He bought, sold,

¹⁴ Pogue, 29.

¹⁵ 1860 Census

lost money, and made money, finally selling his last ranch for \$9,400, on which money he lived for the rest of his life.¹⁶ Clark became the Clerk for the Mt. Olivet Church.

Gabriel Simms, born in Virginia, was also involved in a number of enterprises, including serving as an original trustee of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church. While the 1860 census indicates that he was working as a bootblack, he was more well-known for being the owner and proprietor of the Franklin Hotel on 1st Street, the only colored-owned hotel in the region. His ability to purchase the hotel came from being one of six Black owners of “The Sweet Vengeance Mine,” and a trustee of “The Rare, Ripe Gold and Silver Mining Company,” an incorporated company with publicly sold shares of company stock, both mines being located in the Brown’s Valley, Yuba County, CA.

While the original founders of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church are usually listed as men, another publication, by Delilah Beasley, an African American woman and scholar in the early 1900s, indicated that several women were the founders of the church.¹⁷ These included *Dorothea McGowan*, who served as Treasurer for the Church for 30 years. Dorothea was born in Virginia, and her husband was the renowned barber Jess McGowan, who was born in Ohio, had real estate worth \$12,000 according to the 1860 census, and was one of the six owners of “The Sweet Vengeance Mine.” McGowan’s property included one of the first brick structures built in Marysville, in which he, in an unusual circumstance for the time, rented out space to a White jewelry store owner. Two of their children were able to attend the public school in the basement in the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, which Sarah helped to found.

¹⁶ Pogue, 28-29.

¹⁷ Beasley, 160.

Another couple that helped to found the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church was Julia *and* William Bland. They are both listed by either Pogue or Beasley as founders of the church. According to the 1860 census, they both worked as washerman/woman.

Finally, *Susan Blue* is listed as a founder of the Church by Beasley. She was born in Missouri and worked as a washwoman according to the 1860 census. More famous in the town was her husband *Cupid Blue*, who had a “romantic” past before arriving in Marysville. Documents in the historical library (Yuba County, Reading Room) and in Pogue, indicate that he was born into slavery in Virginia, was captured by Indians at the age of 7 when he accompanied his owner on a trading trip to the Northwest, and lived as a warrior and young Chieftan with the Sioux until the age of 23. When he returned to his owner in VA at the age of 23, he was released from slavery and moved to Marysville. He worked as a cartman, business owner, and landowner with an estate of 2 ½ blocks in the city.

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church

While there are some documents preserved in the Yuba County Historical Library regarding the formation of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, and some announcements in the local newspapers, the actual records of the church have been lost. The church moved; records were put in a shed by the new church in its new location outside of town; and a neighbor started using the shed and just threw the records away.¹⁸

A number of men, women, and couples came together to create the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in the 1850s, which was the only Black Baptist Church between San Francisco and Portland. The first step was to find the land on which to build the church.

¹⁸ From an oral interview with “Bessie,” a member of the Mt. Olivet Church, Oct. 2004.

In 1853 a lot was bought on 6th St., between D and E, for \$400, for the long-term purpose of building the church. Money needed to be raised for the actual construction of the church, so for the next four years the Black community, along with the support of two of the town's newspapers and some of the White community, raised \$5,000 to build a church, a feat which was accomplished by January, 1858.¹⁹

Several efforts to raise money for the construction of the church are found in the annals of the *Marysville Herald* and the *Marysville Appeal*. In an indication of the seemingly positive relations between the Black and White communities in Marysville, the two newspapers announced several events over several years related to the church. On October 7, 1857, a story ran in the paper that announced that the church was about to be built and announced that "Every effort is being made by the members to erect their edifice before the rainy season commences, and we trust our public spirited citizens will lend them a helping hand in their good work."²⁰ In the same story the paper announced that "Last Sunday, several persons belonging to the society were baptized by the pastor in Feather River, in presence of a concourse of spectators" (including many Whites who attended and observed). In the same newspaper two days later came the announcement that the church was beginning to be built. In this announcement comes the revelation that the founders of the church had long intended for a school to be set up in the church's basement: "The colored people have raised several hundred dollars for the erection of a church edifice on the corner of 6th and High Streets. It is to be built of brick, 30 feet by 50, with a room in the basement which is intended to be used as a school room for colored children. The ground is now being made ready for laying the foundation of the

¹⁹ Documents in the Yuba County Library, California Room.

²⁰ *Marysville Herald*, Oct. 7, 1857.

building.”²¹ And finally, the newspapers continued their support of the fledgling church by placing advertisements and stories announcing fundraising efforts. The November 14, 1860 issue of the *Marysville Appeal* included an advertisement about a “Ladies’ Festival for the Benefit of Mount Olive [sic] Church”, inviting the public to attend. The \$1 admission included supper and guests were invited to purchase handmade bakery items and knitted items to help raise money for church events. And finally, the July 17, 1861 issue of the *Marysville Appeal* announces that a supper and festival will be held to raise money for the church.

The Colored School

Since the church’s records have been lost, the written records of the development and continuation of the school come strictly from the church members’ interactions with the Marysville City Council through the Meeting Minutes.²² The Marysville City Council Meeting Minutes document when petitions were proposed for city funding of the school, the deliberations about such funding, and additional funding questions throughout the year. Several of these meeting minutes were also reported in the newspapers of the city.

The first petition of the members of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church for city funding of their first colored school was presented on November 9, 1857. The petition read “Petition of Colored Citizens for an appropriation of two hundred dollars toward furnishing the basement of their church for a school room was read and referred to the Committee on Public Schools.”²³ There is no clear indication of when the initial funding

²¹ *Marysville Herald*, Nov. 9, 1857.

²² The Marysville City Council Meeting Minutes are in a collection at the Yuba County Library, California Room.

²³ Handwritten document, Yuba County Library, California Room.

occurred, but there was a report in the *Amy's Directory, 1858* indicating that the school was open, and that 20 students were in attendance.

Apparently additional action was needed, because in the November 14, 1859 Marysville City Council Meeting Minutes there was a report regarding a request for funding for the school. The opinions seems to have been that the city did not want to make an outright donation, but rather would have preferred to either buy or lease the basement for the purposes of setting up the school. On November 14, 1859, the Examining Committee of the city council expressed the following:

In the opinion of your committee the [request] of the practitioners for, a donation of five hundred dollars to the Mount Olivet Association should not be granted. Your committee however would recommend that if the basement of said church can be secured for school purposes for colored children residents of this city, for the issue of five hundred dollars then said basement should be purchased or leased for and held by the city for that purpose.²⁴

This is an indication that the city wanted to take an active role in the education of the colored children, desiring to fund the space for the school.

Later that month, on November 29, 1859, the City Council heard a report from the Examining Committee that they felt the matter should be turned over to the Board of School Commissioners.²⁵ It is unclear when the funding was actually approved or what amount ended up being spent for the purposes of the school. However, it is clear that such funding did occur, and Marysville is considered to be the third city in the state of

²⁴ Marysville City Council Meeting Minutes, Nov. 14, 1859, p. 267 of microfilmed minutes.

²⁵ Ibid, Nov. 29, 1859, p. 278 of microfilmed minutes.

California to have established a publicly-funded colored school for its Black residents. The city continued to support the school throughout the 1870s, as the City Council meeting minutes indicate approval of the petitioners request to cancel the taxes on the church due to the fact that the basement was being used for public educational purposes.²⁶ Additionally, the School Committee of the City Council received authorization to make repairs in the Colored School, most likely to fix the roof.²⁷

The first teacher of the colored school was Miss Sherman.²⁸ Another early teacher was Miss Washington, who was the first colored woman in Marysville. According to her obituary she was “the first colored woman to make her home in Marysville after the discovery of gold in California” (obituary). But according to Beasley, Miss Washington was the first colored child born in Marysville.²⁹

In the *Amy's Directory, 1858*, the publishers report that there were 20 students attending the colored school in the basement of Mt. Olivet Church. The 1860 census reported which children had attended school in the previous year. From this, we can determine the names of 10 students who had attended the colored school in the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church during the 1859 school year. Several of these children were children of the founders of the church (the McGowan family, the Randolph family, the Segui family) while others were other children in the Black community. The ages of the students ranged from age 6 to age 18. According to the census, two of the older students also had jobs (a painter, a barber). And the students' places of birth, according to the 1860 census, were Ohio, New York, Missouri, Florida, Michigan, Massachusetts, and California. The

²⁶ Marysville City Council Meeting Minutes, Oct. 2, 1871, p. 435 of microfilmed minutes; Oct. 7, 1873, p. 102 of microfilmed minutes.

²⁷ Ibid, Aug. 19, 1870, p. 375 of microfilmed minutes; Nov. 7, 1870, p. 388 of microfilmed minutes.

²⁸ *Amy's Directory*, 1858.

²⁹ Beasley, 176.

names of the students were Thomas Randolph, Jr., 6 (son of the Reverend of the church); Emeretta Jackson, 7; Charles Williams, 9; Clarke McGowan, 9 and Sarah McGowan, 11 (children of church founders); Escua Segui, 14 (daughter of a church founder); Laura Jackson, 15; Nancy Stroud, 16; John Maddox, 16; and Charles Bates, 18.³⁰

State Conventions of the Colored Citizens of the State of California

While separate schools for colored children were being established through the hard work, fundraising, and convincing of city councils by the Black residents of San Francisco, Sacramento, and Marysville, as the first three, later others joined, there was an effort to end the legal restrictions on Black citizens of California. While not a slave state, California still made it illegal for Blacks to be able to testify on their own behalf, to attend school with White children, and to attain dignity within the state. To begin a mobilization to fight for these rights, leaders of the Black communities especially throughout Northern California organized and held the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of California, on Nov. 20, 21, and 22, 1855, at the Sacramento colored Methodist Church.³¹ While all colored residents were invited to attend the convention, each of 10 counties sent specific delegates to represent the needs of the counties. For Yuba County, the two representatives were E. P. Duplex, of the Metropolitan Shaving Saloon, “The Sweet Vengeance Mine,” and later the elected mayor of Wheatland, and Isaac Triplett. Both representatives had important roles at the convention, as Triplett was appointed to the Business Committee, and Duplex was appointed to both the Committee on Credentials and the Committee on Statistics. For the Second Convention, also held in Sacramento, on Dec. 9, 10, 11, and 12, 1856, Yuba

³⁰ 1860 Census.

³¹ *Proceedings*.

County had three delegates: T. J. Vosburg, who was elected as one of the Secretaries for the Convention; M. J. Brown, and Jacob Francis, who was appointed to three different committees – the Nominating Committee, the Business Committee, and the Committee on Free Press, which was to attempt to develop a Black press in California.

While the main effort in the 1st and 2nd conventions were the efforts to gain legal right, some work was done as well on drafting a statement on education for colored children in California. And in the speeches, addresses, and statements at the conventions, we can see a variety of concerns mixed in, including discussions of slavery, education, dignity, rights, how to address the White community and whether that is different than addressing the Black community. During the 1st convention, a committee of two delegates, both from San Francisco, was formed to draft an address regarding education (J. J. Moore and T. M. D. Ward). Some of their address is included here:

‘Knowledge is power,’ said Bacon, one of England’s wisest sons.

The truth of this apothegm, history and common experience abundantly prove. No people have become truly illustrious, great and powerful, who did not make learning the subject of especial attention.

As of nations, so of communities and individuals. Knowledge gives to its possessors a power and a superiority over the uncultivated, real and substantial. The ignorant must give place and yield to the intelligent and educated; it is a law growing out of the nature of things.

As a class, the colored people have to a great extent been deprived of the advantages of education, the means and opportunities of intellectual culture, and it ill becomes those who have deprived them of those

blessings where they had the power, and in other circumstances have thrown obstacles in the way of their improvement, to taunt them with being ignorant.

But the condition of things are changing; public sentiment, laws, slowly but surely...

Dear friends, we are living in an age when, and in a country where the light of knowledge is spreading, is abounding more and more, stimulating activity in the arts, in science, philosophy and general literature. As a people, we are in the midst of these activities, having a common interest in their results.

We are engaged in a great work; it is this, we aim to render ourselves equal with the most favored, not simply nominally equal, but truly and practically, in knowledge, energy, practical skill and enterprise. The past has been to us full of wrong and suffering; we are not content with our present condition; it remains for us to say whether we will continue in this position.

Under God, our dependence is in our children. As parents and guardians, we are under the most solemn obligations to have our children educated; upon any other conditions, our hopes and expectations of the future are vain. It cannot be denied, ignorance has been the cause, chiefly, of our sufferings. We must seize upon every opportunity to acquire knowledge, to educate the head, the hands, the heart, for the duties, necessities and responsibilities of life. It is true the State should provide schools and

instruction for our children, but she excludes colored children from her public schools. In one locality only in the State – San Francisco – a school is established for colored children, which is sustained by the liberality of that city’s government.

The number of our children is rapidly increasing. In these circumstances, left to provide for ourselves, we must be all the more determined to do our duty – sacrifice something too of personal ease and comfort for the sake of giving your children schooling, wherever it is practicable. When our characters, as a people, shall fully combine the elements of learning, sound morality, and wealth, we shall be free and respected by all.”³²

Conclusion

The *Marysville Appeal* reported in the June 27, 1872 issue that the colored residents of the city had petitioned the Board of Education for “free admission of their children to the public schools.” This was an early effort to end segregated schools, and in fact San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, and Vallejo had all abolished separate schools for colored children. And in 1880, Section 1662 required that schools must be open for the admission of all children.³³ Thus ended, (legally at least), the 30 years of legalized segregated schools for African American children in California. Each community had the mandate to create some sort of publicly funded education for the colored children in their communities, a mandate which began with creating separate schools and ended with integrating Black and White children in publicly funded schools. Marysville’s approach was to establish a colored school in the basement of their recently erected Mt. Olivet

³² *Proceedings*, 1st Annual Convention, 1st convention day, 24-25.

³³ Wollenberg.

Baptist Church. The black community had at least some support from the local newspapers, and the Marysville City Council supported the school with public funding. Through mines, businesses, labor, farming, raising families, and operating barber shops, the Black community in Marysville, CA in the 1850s-1860s were able to create a public school for their children.

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