

The Origins of Mt. San Antonio College

The history of the 445 acres where Mt. San Antonio College is presently located goes back to January 14, 1842, before California became a state. Governor Juan Avarado issued a land grant to John Rowland and William Workman for property belonging to the San Gabriel Mission. They paid \$1,000 for the 48,790-acre ranch, dividing the land between them. In 1845, Governor Manuel Micheltoarena confirmed the grant to Workman and Rowland. Rowland's half included the land that became Mt. San Antonio College.

Pacific Colony, a state hospital for the mentally infirm, was approved in 1917 and built for \$250,000 on a site which was to become Mt. San Antonio College. In 1921, the first patients were admitted with an anticipated capacity of 50. It soon became evident that the site was not appropriate due to lack of water and limited access. The facility closed its doors in 1923. Subsequently, the site was turned into a home for wayward boys, a state narcotics hospital in the 1930s, a US Army hospital, and a US Navy hospital during World War II.

In 1945, school districts in Pomona, Covina, La Puente, and Bonita petitioned the California Board of Education for a junior college to serve their combined areas. The campus was formed off Grand Avenue in 1946 on the site of the former hospitals. Founders Hall, which is still in use today, as well as several other buildings, was part of the hospital buildings. After the property became a junior college, the existing buildings transferred to become part of the newly formed campus. Dr. George Bell, the college's first president, made his residence in Founders Hall, previously lived in by the director of the narcotics hospital.

Student registration for the fall semester at Mt. San Antonio College began on August 15, 1946 with 635 students and a staff of 32. The college did not have a name selected at its opening; it was only known as the East Los Angeles County Junior College of Pomona. The board of trustees held a contest, and the name "Mt. San Antonio" was chosen in honor of the snowcapped mountains visible behind the college.

The first commencement was held on June 14, 1947. An outdoor site was chosen for the 73 graduates who formed the first graduating class. Parents, friends, students, and 32 faculty and administrators attended the ceremony.

Development of the college stadium began in 1947, and sketches for a new stadium were approved. A year later, on October 8, 1948, Congressman Richard Nixon dedicated the Mt. San Antonio College stadium. The stadium underwent a \$425,000 remodeling in the late 1950s. The transformation was completed in 1959, just in time for the world-renowned Mt. San Antonio College Relays. The Relays were designed as a major track and field event to match the well-established Penn and Drake Relays.

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