

EDUCATION IN EARLY CALIFORNIA

The Blond Ranchero, Memories of Juan Francisco Dana

Pp 41-42 “When I reached school age my parents decided that I should attend primary school at Santa Inez Mission some leagues to the south of us. Some of my older brothers were at school there and one of them, Francisco, was among the first twenty students who had gone to the school there when it first opened. This primary school for boys was one of the very first to be started in California and parents paid \$150 for every boy entered per year.

About three miles from the old mission there was also another school for older boys—the ecclesiastical college which had been founded by the first Catholic Bishop of California, Fray Garcia Diego y Moreno, in 1844. This was the first seminary in the state and was supported by the governor and other interested persons. It was located on grant of land known as ‘La Canada de los Pinos’ or the College Ranch, as it was later known. Nowadays it is part of the Juan y Lolita Ranch and the college disappeared long, long ago.

Discipline at the primary school was very strict. I remember when we were asked what we wanted to be when we grew up, if we did not reply ‘A Bishop!’ we had to hold out our hand and receive a sharp slap. In our large family, we had many prospects for bishoprics as out of thirteen of the twenty-one children who grew to adulthood, only two were girls. My son, Eduardo, is the only one the Danas to receive the title of ‘Bishop’ and that as a nickname given by his friends! I guess the Danas were not very good prospects for the Clergy!

In summer, our teacher Padre Sanchez, allowed us to go swimming in the reservoir in front of the mission and we would also go to the seminary for grapes and to catch a glimpse of the ‘older boys.’ We often went hunting or fishing and wheat harvest time was always a great occasion.”

Note: Juan Francisco had two older brothers William Charles and Charles William. Francisco was one of his younger brothers. No other records of the school for younger boys has yet been found.