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# ◆Principal Lucky—1868-1873◆

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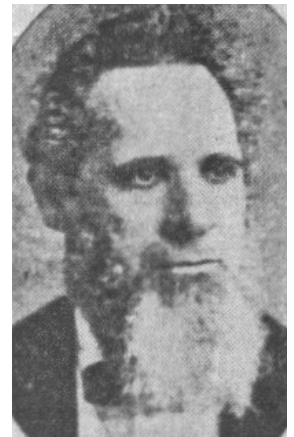
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## Who Was Principal Lucky?



From 1868 to 1873, William Thomas Lucky was principal of the California State Normal School — the predecessor to what eventually became San José State University. He served for the School's last three years in San Francisco and its first two years in San José. He was born on April 24, 1821 in Kentucky. Prior to coming to the Normal School, Mr. Lucky taught in Illinois and Missouri. In addition to an A.B. degree, Mr. Lucky earned an M.A. degree and was a minister of the Methodist Church.

The California State Normal School was created by the California legislature in 1862. It began as Minns' Evening Normal School—a school for training teachers. The school was located in San Francisco until 1871. In the late 1860's, efforts began to move the School out of San Francisco. As Principal Lucky noted in a December 1869 report, a new building was needed and "the best interests of the school and the pupils attending will be promoted by locating where there is more quiet and fewer temptations." Several cities attempted to get the School to relocate by offering a variety of enticements. Napa offered new tax revenues, as well as mineral springs that would benefit the students' scientific studies. San José provided the students (190 of them) free train passes to visit the city on December 21, 1869 to view possible locations for the School.



*Why San José?* State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Oscar P. Fitzgerald noted in his Third Biennial Report to California Governor Haight, covering the school years 1868 and 1869, that San José was the "proper location" for the School because of its climate, availability of sufficient space for school buildings and boarding of students, its accessibility from all parts of the state, and because "the people are intelligent, hospitable and moral." He also noted that "at San José the Normal School would be an object of local pride and attachment."



*The First California Normal School  
at Washington Square in San José  
(1872 – 1880)*

San José was selected by the California legislature on March 8, 1870. At the time, San José had a population of just over 9000, about 170 manufacturing firms, over 900 farms, 32 physicians, 41 lawyers, 3 banks, and five newspapers. The city was served by two railroads and in 1869 the Southern Pacific line had been extended to Gilroy. The Board of Trustees settled upon the site known as "Washington Square" and agreed to construct a main building at a cost not to exceed \$45,000 (about \$590,000 in current dollars). Washington Square comprised a 27-acre tract of land bordered by San Fernando, San Carlos, Fourth and Seventh Streets. A school named Washington Square was located on the northeast corner of this tract of land. [Source: Benjamin F. Gilbert and Charles Burdick, *Washington Square 1857 - 1979 - The History of San Jose State University*, pages 50 - 53.]

The cornerstone of the school at the Washington Square site, donated by the City of San José, was laid on October 20, 1870, and the building was completed in 1871. For more information on the events of October 20, 1870, visit [http://www.sjsu.edu/about\\_sjsu/history/](http://www.sjsu.edu/about_sjsu/history/).

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“The laying of this cornerstone symbolizes the work which we of this generation are doing. We are laying the foundations of a new State. We are laying the foundations of an educational system. We must be careful to lay them properly, for the whole superstructure will conform to the character of its foundation.”

*State Superintendent  
Fitzgerald  
October 20, 1870*

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**Excerpt:**

**Report of the State Normal School  
Prepared by Principal William T. Lucky  
for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Oscar P. Fitzgerald  
December 20, 1869**

REGULATIONS OF THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL

Adopted by the Board of Normal School Trustees, March 28th, 1868

1. All pupils on entering the school are required to sign the following declaration of intention:

"We, the subscribers, hereby declare that our purpose in entering the State Normal School is to fit ourselves for the profession of teaching, and that it is our intention to engage in teaching in the public schools of this State."

Male candidates for admission must be at least seventeen years of age, and female applicants at least sixteen years of age; and all must possess a good degree of physical health and vigor.

2. No person whose age exceeds thirty years shall be admitted to the school, except teachers who are fitted to enter the Senior Class.

3. Whenever the number of applicants from any county shall exceed the number to which that county is entitled by law, the applicants shall pass a competitive examination before the County Superintendent and the County Board of Examination, which examination shall be conducted in the same manner as county examinations for third grade teachers' certificates. The persons passing the highest examination shall be eligible to admission in the order of their standing in examination.

4. All applicants are required to present letters of recommendation and certificates of good moral character from the County Superintendent of the county in which they reside.

5. The Principal of the school shall keep a register of the attendance of pupils, and shall report monthly to the Secretary of the Board the whole number enrolled, the average number belonging, the average daily attendance, the percentage of daily attendance, and such other statistics as may be required by the Executive Committee of the Board.

6. No pupil shall be entitled to a diploma of graduation who has not been a member of the school at least one term of five months.

7. The Normal School shall be divided into two classes, Junior and Senior, each divided into two divisions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The time for completing the Normal School course is two years, each divided into two terms of five months. The school years begins on the twenty-third of May.

There will be written examinations and public exercises at the close of each term. The graduating exercises will be in March.

Pupils will be required to furnish their text-books. Books for reference will be furnished by the State. Good boarding can be procured at from twenty-five to thirty-five dollars per month.

**A Normal School Student Reflects on Principal Lucky**

"[A] feature of our student life was Dr. Lucky's morning lecture on teaching. These lectures occupied five months in their delivery. ... Under Dr. Lucky the discipline was strict, yet kindly—the hand of iron in the glove of velvet. He was a man of impressive dignity, robust head and shoulders, countenance frank and open as the day, bold crag-like brows, and a smile that lighted up the face in a wonderful manner."

*Charles Edwin Markham, 1889*