

SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY

17701 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido, CA 92025-9720

**PURCHASED by San Diego County
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Southeastern California Conference

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Alumni Day April 15, 2000

1999-2000

San Diego County Buys San Pasqual Academy

by Kit Watts

San Diego County paid \$14.6 million to the Southeastern California Conference on May 30, concluding the sale of San Pasqual Academy (SPA). Eighteen months earlier it had made a nonrefundable deposit of \$500,000 toward the \$15.5 million purchase price.

The county plans to develop the 230-acre site as a school for foster teenagers, dependents of the juvenile courts. Educators have observed that children who are not adopted may move frequently from one foster home to another and do poorly in school. The county believes a live-in school will provide the stable environment foster teens need while completing high school. A nonprofit organization is being sought to run the school.

The SPA property has been on the market for more than two years. The sale process was "full of surprises and challenges," according to Charles McKinstry, SECC superintendent of education. In 1998 a sale fell through when the winning bidder was indicted in federal court for wire fraud and money laundering.

"We are sorry that San Pasqual had to close down in 1997. Although much money and energy were invested in trying to save it, we could not reverse the declining enrollment and mounting debt," McKinstry said.

The conference's one boarding academy opened in 1949. Its enrollment hit a high of 300 in the mid-1980s, but had dropped to 100 students by 1997, a trend also seen in other Adventist boarding academies. During its final three years, SPA was losing more than \$500,000 a year. Of the 100 remaining students, 55 were from Southeastern, and only ten did not live within commuting distance of other conference schools.

"Closing a school is traumatic. On the other hand, the proceeds from the SPA sale will benefit schools throughout the conference in perpetuity," McKinstry stated.

The first order of business is to pay off the academy's remaining debts. By action of the SECC executive committee, about \$1 million has been earmarked for improvements at Pine Springs Ranch. The lion's share of the money, however, will be invested in the Education Endowment Fund. Local school and church boards will participate in designating interest income from the fund to student scholarships and school operations.

Historic Connections

San Pasqual's connection with Seventh-day Adventist education dates back to 1896 when an elementary school first opened in a local member's home. From then on, school was held in the area until 1997, making it the oldest Adventist school west of the Mississippi River, that had operated without interruption.

The first building at San Pasqual was erected in 1898. About 1943 the wooden building was superceded by one of cement block. Eventually, Mr & Mrs Ervin Georgeson purchased the original building and moved it to their property to preserve it. In 1962 they donated it to the San Pasqual Church as a museum. Recently, La Sierra University offered a site on its campus as a permanent location for the old school.

The San Pasqual Church was included in the sale to San Diego County. McKinstry said it is likely that religious services will be held there for the foster teens attending the new school.

The Golden Rule Bindery business was sold on June 1. The new owners are Jerry R Kiley, recent manager of the bindery, and Frederick Antor, the accountant. They will lease the land and the building from San Diego County.

Source: Southeastern California Conference News, *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 2000, p.30

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