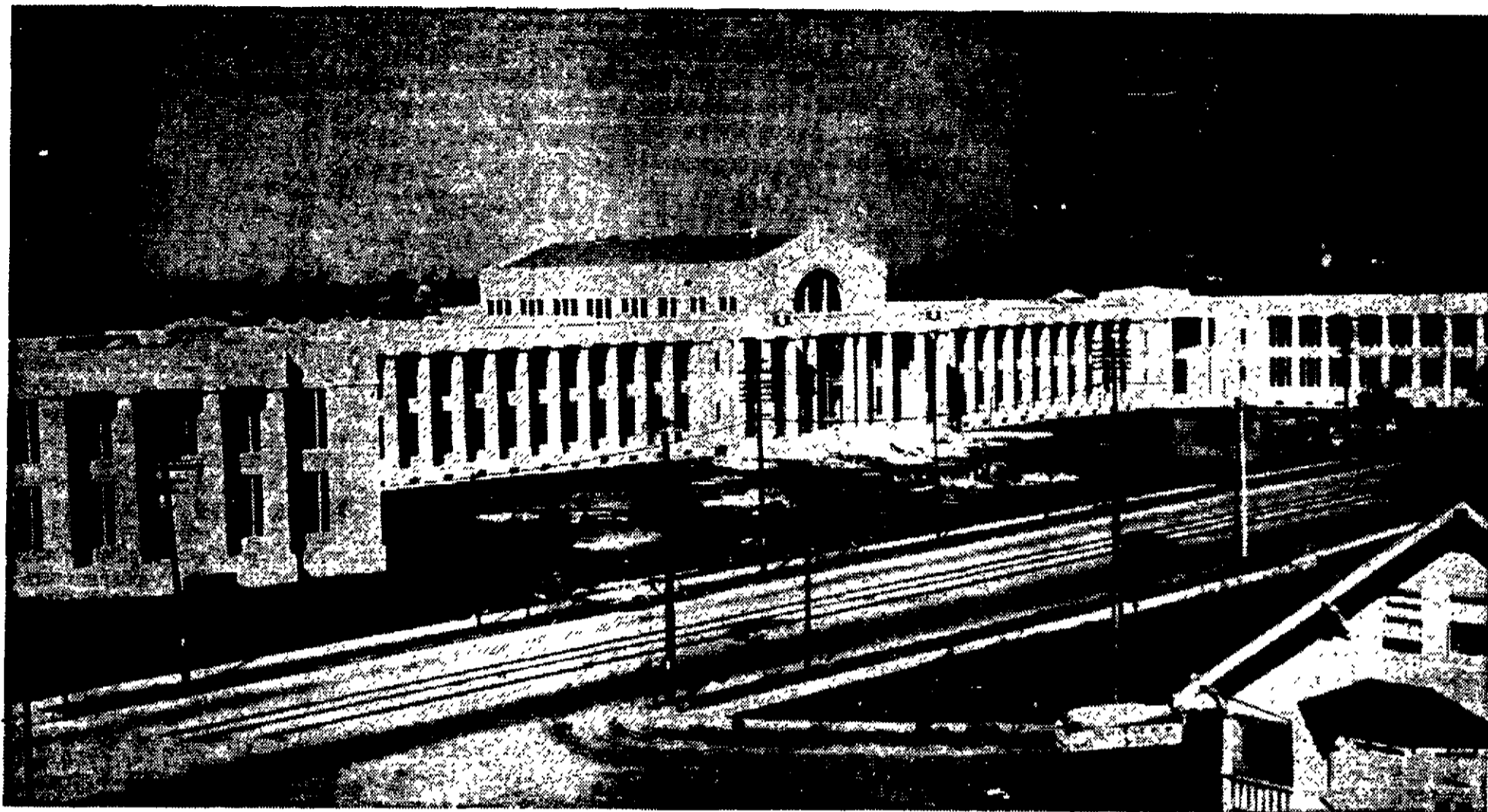


K N A V E



As Oakland's Technical High School neared completion in 1915 it must have looked like a palace to students struggling for learning

Oakland's Tech High Is a Rags to Riches Saga

THIS IS the Diamond Jubilee year for Oakland Technical High out on Broadway at 42nd Street, and if all goes well this year's Talisman — the school's annual year book — will wrap up a lot of reminiscing about the 75 years that have rolled by since Principal Philip M. Fisher first opened the doors of old Oakland Central High School, the ancestor of Tech High that once stood at 12th and Market Streets.

It's saga is one of rags to riches.

As far as can be determined from this distance, Central High School at 12th and Market was among first of the high schools in California to offer boys and girls a chance to use their hands in manual training and domestic science while at the same time they improved their minds with the usual academic studies.

When in 1901 a campaign was organized in Oakland to close the "expensive venture," the school was pressured into fighting for its very existence. Principal Fisher rallied his students in protest against any such decision. By the sheer determination of the principal and students, the school survived. Instead of closing down, the school was renamed "Polytechnic High School" that very same year and began a three-way expansion that involved students, teachers and study courses.

Within a few years (1905 in fact) Oakland residents were earnestly considering the possibility of a new school with adequate and improved equipment. But the big push didn't come until 1907, as a result of the

great earthquake. An estimated 60,000 San Francisco people moved across the bay for safety and ended up staying here. Thousands of youngsters "bussed" daily by ferry boats to attend Oakland schools. Polytechnic High was one of the popular goals. But in 1909 when Polytechnic students organized a Boosters Club a complaint came from a private school in Oakland known as the Polytechnic Business College. They had the name first, it was claimed, and now usurpation of the term Polytechnic by the public school was causing them no end of embarrassment.

Again Poly changed its name. It became Oakland Manual Training and Commercial High School, much to the disgust of Principal Fisher.

PRINCIPAL Fisher, who opened the doors to old Central High School back in 1896 and would remain to break ground and open the present Oakland Technical High School out on Broadway in 1915, was never able to stomach the name of Oakland Manual Training and Commercial High School. Nevertheless, he managed to put up with the name, due chiefly to the fact that Oakland was still experiencing growing pains in 1909 and the school at 12th and Market Streets was being surrounded by shacks and shanties for use as classrooms.

Two years went by before students and alumni managed to urge registered voters to the polls in a bond election for a new institution. The bonds passed on May 16, 1911. Then it took Oakland two more years to se-

lect a site, the Broadway location winning out over one on 19th Avenue east of Lake Merritt. At one point it was even suggested to put the school on Adams Point on the shores of Lake Merritt. But it was at the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street that Principal Phil M. Fisher turned the first spadeful of soil in breaking ground for Tech High, as the school became known.

All this time City Architect John J. Donovan was readying plans for the new school. Donovan had designed the new Oakland city hall, and was also busy with the Oakland Municipal Auditorium. He had been called here from New York City to create the city hall and now had his hands full with a growing list of buildings.

By the time Tech High was ready for opening it was classified throughout the nation as an architectural classic.

It would soon be equally renowned throughout the world for its educational record. There came a time when the Kansai High School in Japan communicated with Tech officials and the two schools entered into an exchange of goals, objectives and student attitudes.

Educational leaders from all over the United States visited this new marvel of beauty and learning, and many went back home to institute most of Tech High's modern vocational and academic programs within their own schools.

Architect J. J. Donovan compiled and authored a book on school architecture in 1921 that is now out of print. It has Oakland Technical High School as a central theme.

Continued on Page 18



Tech High's ancestor at 12th and Market Streets, 1896-1915

The Knave . .

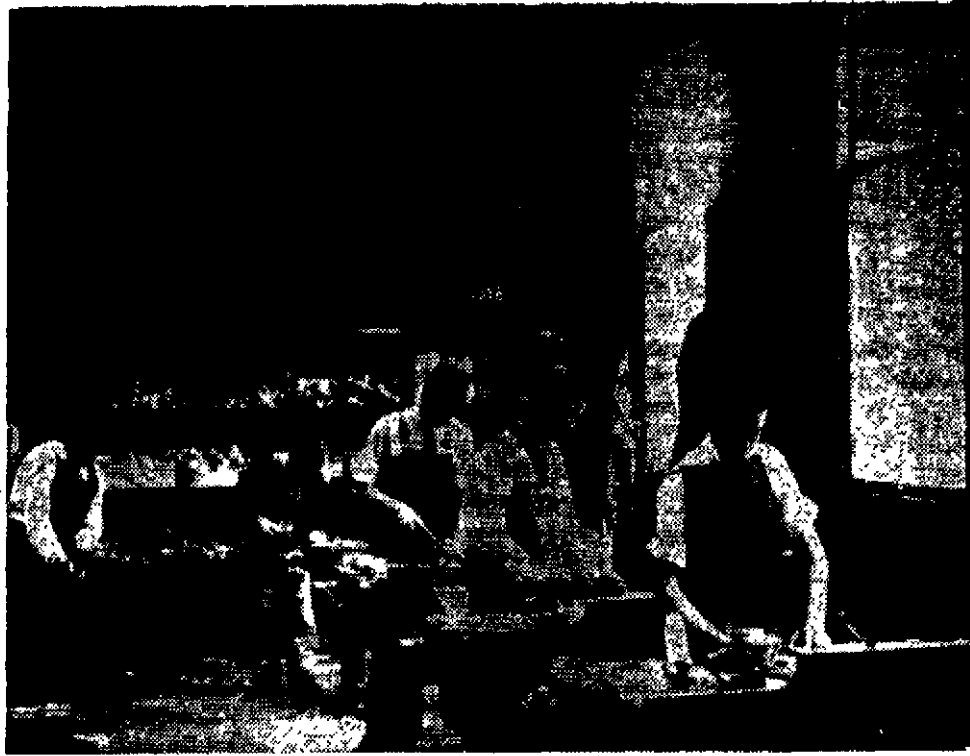
Continued from Page 15

THINGS were not all happiness when dedication day arrived for Tech High. Oaklanders who thought the school should have been built east of the lake were still riled. Unfavorable editorials were written attacking the location. The Tribune felt the high school campus was entirely too close to Berkeley, and too far removed from East Oakland.

Besides, it was argued, the school is now isolated from downtown Oakland — out on the farming end of Broadway surrounded by chicken ranches, dairy farms and pig stys, an undesirable neighborhood. Then, too, there was even a suggestion that the school fostered a form of education much too "frivolous." Why the classics in education, asked the editorial pundits. "They are training our students for the shirt cuffs on the trousers of the future," was their answer to their own question.

On dedication day the school's instructor in music, Herman Trutner, marched the student body from the old school at 12th and Market right up to the doorsteps of the new institution.

Officially, Oakland Technical High School came into existence on Jan. 4, 1915 — a little more than a month



Umbrellas shelter students at old Poly High in early 1900s

ahead of dedication day. It was on that January day that Principal Fisher moved into the newly completed building with a faculty of 76 teachers and 1,450 students.

The dedication program in February featured a talk by David Starr Jordan of Stanford University. Greetings were extended by Edward R. Hyatt, State Superintendent of Instruction and Herman Trutner played a clarinet solo. But those

were only a part of the long dedicatory program.

TOM Crawford is supervising this year's Diamond Jubilee *Talisman* from Oakland Technical High School and he tells us there is still time for Tech alumni to turn in old school pictures along with recollections of yesteryear's schooldays.

The *Talisman* is going to press this year with a \$500 deficit inherited

from a year ago and Crawford would appreciate cash contributions as well as orders for *The Talisman* from the school's alumni and friends. The book will sell for \$7.50 including mailing charge and tax. Send your orders for the book and any memorabilia to Thomas Crawford in care of Oakland Technical High School 4351 Broadway.

Cash contributions, however, should be mailed to the school's Treasury Office, same address.

Former principals of Tech in addition to Phil M. Fisher (1896-1924) include Howard O. Welty (1924-1947), Will W. Green (1947-1952), Dr. George C. Bliss (1952-1961), John F. Borum (1961-1965), Donald W. Lucas (1965-1968), James Crase (1968-1969) and William Miller who took over the principalship in 1969.

How many diplomas have been handed out in all those years is difficult to say, but a good guess would be something more than 20,000.

ILLUSTRIOUS alumni from Tech High includes not only champion athletes but men and women in the arts, civics and education, business, and politics.

Professional football and baseball have captured many of the school's star athletes including such baseball greats as the Hafey brothers, Red Dedeaux, Cookie Lavegetto, Curt Flood, Joe Gaines and the father-son team of Len Gabrielson Senior and Junior. The senior Gabrielson played for the New York Yankees, and his son of more recent years was with both the San Francisco Giants and Los Angeles Dodgers.

Brick Muller was one of the school's earliest football greats. Others have been Proverb Jacobs, John Brodie and Arleigh Williams.

Ray Norton won honors in track.

In music and theater it has been Rod McKuen, Nathan Rubin, Tony Martin, Clint Eastwood, Robert Weber, Ruth Beckford, Goro Suzuki and Red Christie.

In politics the nods go to Wayne Thompson of city manager renown, Oakland city councilman Fred Maggiora, Congressman Ronald Dellums and James Price.

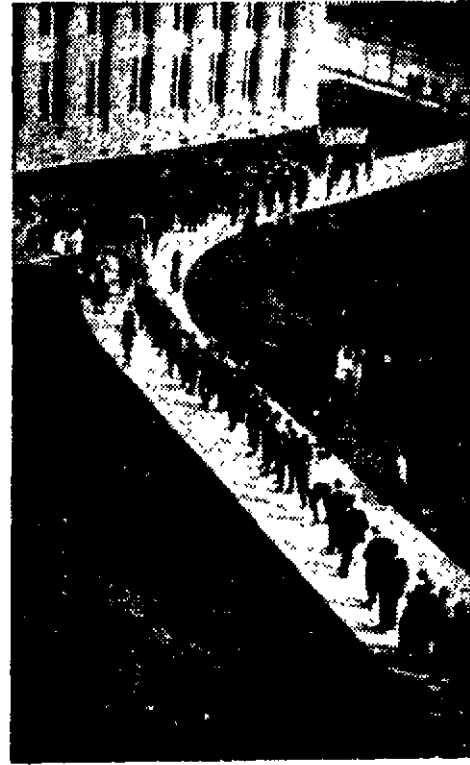
Steve Bechtel graduated to become a business leader.

In the field of civics and education the names of Ross Regan, Leo Croce, John Moiso, Judge Bob Byers and Judge Delmar Brobst come to mind.

—THE KNAVE



Some of Tech High's earliest domestic science prospects



1915 queue for manual training



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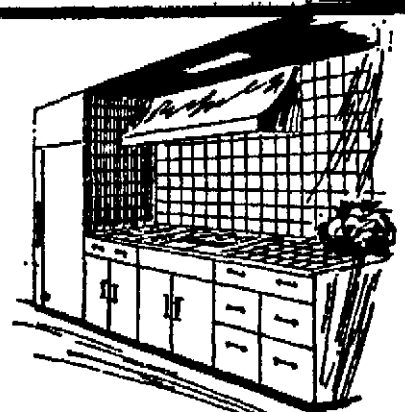
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