

A Link to our Past—Commodore Sloat in the 1970s

I have been researching the history of our school, including reading over Parent Club meeting minutes and looking through scrapbooks to compile a history of CSS.

From the Mothers' Club meeting minutes, 1970, "The world discovered ecology and our children...are enthusiastically collecting and sorting cans, bottles, and aluminium." A teachers strike occurred that year.

Federal court-ordered busing to racially desegregate public schools began in San Francisco in 1971. The goal of integration was "to reflect the ethnic racial make-up of the San Francisco population." Students were bused to CSS from areas in the City other than the surrounding neighborhoods. CSS was a K-3 school. Elementary schools became separated into K-3rd grade and 4th-6th grade so students would only be bused for 3 years of their elementary school lives.

Al Moorbrink took over for retiring Principal Rose Marracini in 1972. Becoming more inclusive, the Mothers' Club became the Parents' Club. Then in 1974, Maureen Petiti became principal.

Wilson Riles, the California Superintendent of Public Instruction, said that San Francisco's entire public school system was "embarrassing", and needed "total reform and overhaul." There was another teachers' strike. CSS qualified for Title I Federal funds, as more than 50% of students were reading below grade level.

The school was closed in June 1975 for reconstruction to comply with the Field Act, requiring the state to bring pre-1933 buildings up to earthquake standards. Students were moved to the Sunset Staging Site, on Ulloa St., during reconstruction.

In 1976, Educational Redesign, a "major overhauling of the school district in order to upgrade the level of education, improve integration, and reduce the district's operational costs", was a huge topic at Sloat. The school community wanted to expand from K-3 to K-5 or K-6, with "balanced integration" by fall.

In 1977, the school was given an anchor, weighing 5,000 lbs, by the U.S. Navy. The newly reconstructed school building, "designed to meet Field Act earthquake requirements and provide a more modern-day educational facility" was dedicated with special ceremonies on May 11, 1977. The new school building had a nautical theme in keeping with its namesake, naval officer Commodore John Drake Sloat. The original, 1921 Spanish style front of the building was retained and renovated, that portion is the staff lounge, the auditorium, and the courtyard in between. The rest of the school building dates from 1977.

In 1978 Educational Redesign was approved, and the district moved to organize schools in the current K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grades.

In 1979, Proposition 13 was passed, resulting in greatly reduced property tax income to the school district, and San Francisco public schools faced a budget crisis.

On June 2, 1979, the anchor arrived at school by crane from Treasure Island, and was installed as a permanent sculpture by an Engineering Battalion of the California Army National Guard in a special ceremony. It still sits on the lawn near the kindergarten playground today.

