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Elias Sleeper Stover - Biography

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ELIAS SLEEPER STOVER

1st University President

Served 1892 - 1897

Born Rockland, Maine

November 22, 1836

Elias Stover was elected the first President of the University beginning February 9, 1891. The University was created by the Territorial legislature in a bill passed February 28, 1889.



Education

He attended private and public schools and had an early career on the sea as both a sailor and an officer. He had a background in the study of navigation.

Career

Mr. Stover arrived in Albuquerque in 1876 from Kansas. He had been in the mercantile field throughout the West -- primarily in Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. He continued in the mercantile field in the territory and also became active in the community. He was a County Commissioner of Bernalillo County from 1881 to 1883, a member of the New Mexico Constitutional Convention of 1889 and elected a member of the New Mexico Senate in 1891.

University Activities

Mr. Stover presented the first graduating class of 1894 with their B. Pd. degrees. There were six names on the graduation roll.

A series of faculty meetings was held during the summer of 1894 and various measures were passed to regulate the school. The term was set at 36 weeks with one week of vacation at Christmas break and at Spring break. A system of cards and books for record keeping was adopted. The Faculty secretary was instructed to mail out letters concerning the different departments of the University to such citizens in the surrounding country as thought best.

In July, 1895, a circular letter was sent throughout the Territory indicating the positive facts and attractions of the University educational facilities.

The University was created before the public school system and was therefore only a preparatory school. The appropriations were small and there was little interest in the University. In the spring of 1896 the financial conditions were so strained that the faculty took a salary reduction.

The University was supported by a tax levy of differing amounts during the early years and funding was very unstable. Early funding in 1890 of \$9,500.00 hit a high of \$14,868.77 the next year only to drop to a low of \$8,113.55 in 1895. These amounts were mostly spend on buildings and maintenance and local banks were often called upon to help the institution meet the payroll. Overdrafts were frequent during 1894 and 1895 and the Bank of Commerce collected interest from these overdrafts.

Mr. Stover resigned as President in May, 1897 in the aftermath of a suit brought by Vice President Hadley who had resigned immediately following his favorable verdict rendered by the Board of Regents.

Excerpt from William E. Davis' Miracle on the Mesa.

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