



Leland and Jane Stanford

Amasa Leland Stanford was born in 1824 in Colonie, New York. Leland was one of eight children of Josiah and Elizabeth Phillips Stanford. **Jane Elizabeth Lathrop**, born in 1828 in Albany, New York, was the daughter of shopkeeper Dyer Lathrop and Jane Anne (Shields) Lathrop. Leland and Jane were married on September 30, 1850, and lived in Port Washington, Wisconsin where he had practiced law since 1848.

In 1852, having lost his law library and other property to a fire, Stanford followed his five brothers to California during the California Gold Rush. His wife, Jane, returned temporarily to Albany, New York to be with her family. He went into business with his brothers and became the keeper of a general store for miners at Michigan City, California, which later became Michigan Bluff in Placer County; and later he had a wholesale house. Leland returned to Albany to join his wife but found the pace of Eastern life too slow after the excitement of developing California.

In 1856, he and Jane moved to Sacramento, Ca, where he engaged in mercantile pursuits on a large scale. Stanford was one of the four merchants, known popularly as "The Big Four", who were the key investors in Chief Engineer Theodore Dehone Judah's plan for the Central Pacific Railroad, which the five of them incorporated on June 28, 1861. The other three associates were Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and Collis P. Huntington.

Leland Stanford was elected President of the Southern Pacific, a post which he held until 1890. As head of the railroad company that built the western portion of the "First Transcontinental Railroad" from Sacramento eastward over the Sierra Nevada mountains in California to Nevada and Utah, Stanford presided at the ceremonial driving of the "Last Spike" in Promontory, Utah on May 10, 1869.

In 1887, Stanford and Company endeavored to found a town as a rival to Stockton along the San Joaquin River. Leland settled in at Wilson's Station and the company laid out the town subdividing the tract west of the Railroad Hotel into 16 oblong blocks and built up the city to a population of 10,000. The company named the city "Lathrop" in honor of Jane Stanford's family.

The couple did not have children for many years, until their only child, Leland DeWitt Stanford (Leland Stanford, Jr.), was born in 1868 when his father was forty-four. In 1884, while on a family grand tour of Europe, Leland Stanford Jr. contracted typhoid and eventually passed away after weeks of alternately improving and worsening conditions.

To honor their only child, the couple decided "The children of California shall be our children" and founded Leland Stanford Junior University, commonly known today as Stanford University.