

Geological Development in the Post-Gold Rush Era and the Fate of the First California Geological Survey

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Geological development during the latter half of the 19th Century can be discussed from the perspectives of two men: Josiah D. Whitney and William P. Blake. These two influential geologists shared common social and educational backgrounds, and pursued similar professional career paths at a time when employment in geology was undependable. Their professional paths crossed numerous times over the course of five decades in what initially was an amicable personal and professional relationship that by 1860, evolved into competition for the position of State Geologist and Director of the first California Geological Survey, and California Commissioner for the London International Exhibition. Beyond simple competition, Whitney and Blake disagreed over important mainstream geological and ethnological issues germane to California during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The primary issues evolved around the potential economic value of oil and the Bodie Mining District, earthquakes and seismic risk, origin of the Yosemite Valley, the significance of the Calaveras Skull and the antiquity of man, the age of the gold-bearing rocks of California, and formation of the College of California. Both men were influential, however, Blake's contributions to the early geologic understanding of California were more optimistic and compatible with California's needs, while correctly forecasting the state's potential growth and providing insight into the geology and mineral and agricultural resources of the region. Despite Whitney's contributions while serving as director, his personal disposition and pessimistic views sealed the fate of the first geological survey of California.

Biography

Stephen M. Testa was appointed Executive Officer of the California State Mining and Geology Board in August 2005. From 1976 until August 2005, he served as an engineering geology and environmental consultant for a variety of international firms including Bechtel, and Dames and Moore, and as CEO for Applied Environmental Services and Testa Environmental Corporation. A member of the Geological Society of America (Fellow), American Association of Petroleum Geologists, American Institute of Professional Geologists, Association of Engineering and Environmental Geologists and Society of Economic Geologists (Fellow), among others, Testa is the author of over 125 publications and several books including *One Man's Planet: Earth in Today's Political Culture*, *Geological Aspects of Hazardous Waste Management*, *The Reuse and Recycling of Contaminated Soils*, and *Restoration of Contaminated Aquifers: Petroleum Hydrocarbons and Organic Compounds*, and *Petroleum in the Environment*. He has served as an instructor at USC and CSU Fullerton. Testa is the Past-President of the American Geological Institute (AGI), the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) and the Los Angeles Basin Geological Society. Testa is past Editor-in-Chief of American Association of Petroleum Geologists – Division of Environmental Geosciences' (AAPG-DEG's) peer review journal "*Environmental Geosciences*", and the recipient of the AIPG's Martin Van Couvering Award and Honorary Membership, AAPG-DEG's Research Award, and the Roy Shlemon Geology Mentor Honorarium for excellence in application of applied earth science. Testa is a Registered Geologist and Certified Engineering Geologist in California, among other states.