

# A Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Merced, Stanislaus, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa, California

Published by The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, IL, 1892

## Merced County

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### BOUNDARIES AND AREA

Merced County occupies a position in the heart of the San Joaquin valley and of California, stretching from northeast to southwest completely across the valley from the foothills of the Sierras to the summit of the coast range. It is bounded by Stanislaus, Mariposa, Fresno, San Benito and Santa Clara counties; its greatest length is sixty-three miles, and its greatest width forty-five miles, while the entire area is about 2000 square miles.

The boundary limits of the county and those adjoining have often been a source of dispute. Mark Howell, then county surveyor, was engaged in the spring of 1872 in running the lines between this county and Mariposa, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne, and in May of that year was ordered to retrace the line between Merced and Mariposa, and to make a map of the survey.

A. T. Herman, county surveyor of Santa Clara, and deputy surveyor, George H. Persin of Merced, met on July 7, 1873, for the purpose of establishing a boundary line between the two counties and came to an amicable agreement. The water divide of the Mount Diablo range marks the boundary line of the two counties, which connect for a distance of nineteen miles. Between Merced and Fresno counties the boundary lines had long been a subject for dispute, which was settled in May, 1873, by the board of supervisors of Fresno county accepting the Merced survey, each county bearing half the expense, amounting to \$881.22 apiece.

The boundaries between this county and Stanislaus were also for a long time in an unsettled condition.

The northern boundary corresponds very nearly with the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude, and the southern boundary with the thirty-seventh degree. Longitude 121 west from Greenwich runs very nearly through the center of the county.

### LAND GRANTS

There were four Mexican grants in Stanislaus county, viz: the Orestimba, of 10,166.80 acres, Sebastian Nunez, confirnee; Panoche de San Juan y los Carrisalitos, Ursa and Renee, confirnees, 22,170.34 acres; San Luis Gonzaga, J.F. Pacheco, confirnee, 24,321.43 acres; Sanjon de Santa Rita, F. Sobranes, confirnee, 48,000 acres; total area of private grants, 104,663.16 acres.

## THE SOIL

While the surface of the county, or at least that portion which is of prospective use in agriculture, embracing nearly its entire area, is mostly of a level or gently rolling character, there are several different kinds of soil, generally varying with the topography. The bottom land along the rivers and smaller streams is of an alluvial character, formed from the washings of freshets; from this to the foothills the soil is generally of adobe, or a loam more or less sandy in its nature; while the foothill land is as a rule of adobe or clay. There is but little of alkali land in the county, comparatively, and in sections where it does appear it is only in spots which disappear as cultivation advances.

## WATER-COURSES

The main water-course of Merced county is the great "Father of Waters" of the valley, the San Joaquin river, which enters the territory of the county from the southeast, and thenceforth follows the general trend of the valley to the northwest in its course toward the bay of San Francisco. The Merced river, which plays so important a part in the problem of irrigation for the county, reinforces the San Joaquin with the waters of Yo Semite, while Chowchilla river, Mariposa Creek, Bear Creek and others are the lesser streams on the eastern side of the county.

The streams on the west side are not perennial, and in places not so well defined as those of the east side, and depend upon the winter rains for their supply. They are the Los Banos, San Luis, Cottonwood and Sycamore creeks.

The Merced river has a very tortuous course, and the level of its bottom lands is much below that of the surrounding plains. About eight miles from the canyons of the river the distance from bluff to bluff is about three miles, while in the next eight miles of the river's course the width of the bottom lands narrows down to about one mile, and the contraction continues as the river approaches its outlet into the San Joaquin. These bottom lands are exceedingly rich, and many prosperous farmers pursue their calling thereon.

Much of the land directly contiguous to the San Joaquin river is low tule land, very rich but subject to overflow. These lands are not altogether waste, however, as they afford good pasturage for stock.

## ORIGIN OF THE NAME "MERCED"

The name Merced, as it applies to the river, and afterwards to the county, has a rather romantic origin. It is said to have been conferred by Lieutenant Moraga, of the Mexican army, and his soldiers about 1835. He was stationed at the presidio of San Francisco, and in the summer of the year was pursuing, with a company of men, some marauding Indians into the valley. They crossed the San Joaquin river near the mouth of the Tuolumne, and proceeded thence in a southeasterly direction to the Merced river, and were without water during the entire journey of forty miles. In their famished condition the stream with its cooling waters seemed to them a veritable river of mercy, the meaning in English of the name which they applied, "El Rio de la Merced."

On pursuing their journey to the southeast they encountered a stream along whose banks were miriads of butterflies, and they gave it accordingly the name, "El Arroyo de las Mariposas," - the creek of the butterflies - or, as it is now called, Mariposa creek.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNTY

The county of Merced was formed under an act of the Legislature of 1855, being set off from Mariposa, then represented by Assemblymen Thomas Flournoy and E. Burke, and Major A. McNeill, Senator. The bill, which was approved by Governor Bigler, April 19, 1855, provided for a Board of Commissioners, which was constituted as follows: A. Stevenson, William N. Neill, William J. Barfield, Charles V. Snelling, James McDermott, Samuel Lovejoy and Charles F. Bludworth.

These commissioners arranged for an election for the organization of the new county, appointing officers, designating voting precincts, etc. They met, organized and performed their first duties in this connection at Neill ranch, and made all arrangements for the first election, to be held on the second Monday of May, 1855.

This election also decided the question of the county seat, and the choice fell upon the ranch of Turner & Osborne, on Mariposa creek.

## FIRST COUNTY OFFICERS

The county officers chosen at this first election were as follows: John W. Fitzhugh, County Judge; S.H.P. Ross and J.A. Vance, Associate Justices; Charles F. Bludworth, Sheriff; E.G. Rector, Clerk; J.W. Smith, District Attorney; George W. Halstead, Treasurer; J.W. Robertson, Assessor; Erastus Kelley, Surveyor; Gordon H. Murry, W.J. Barfield and Samuel D. Kelly, Supervisors.

## FIRST OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

The county judge and associates held the first meeting of the court of sessions under some oak trees, alongside the creek banks on the ranch of Turner & Osborne, in June, 1855, the facilities for holding court being of the most primitive description, a table, two chairs, boxes, benches and kegs being the furniture, while the shade of trees constituted the protection from the sun's rays.

It is related that the grand jury met in the bed of the south branch of the creek, under the shade of a large oak on the bank. It returned twenty-five indictments, mostly for stock-stealing.

The trial jury met in the bed of the north branch of the creek, also shaded by a projecting tree. None of the parties indicted were convicted.

## THE ORIGINAL COUNTY SEAT

No definite name was ever given to the first county seat. It proved unsatisfactory owing to its inaccessibility, lack of mail facilities, etc., and a petition was circulated and received the necessary signatures, praying for a re-submission of the question of location.

## CHANGE OF COUNTY SEAT

The question was again submitted to the voters of the county at the election held in September, 1855, the contestants for the honor being the old location, the ranch of N.R. Stoneroad and the Snelling ranch.

The Snelling ranch was the succesful competitor, and the town of Snelling sprang up. There was already a small nucleus for a settlement there.

For some time the court was held in the hotel building at Snelling, but one of the first steps taken by the Board of Supervisors after the relocation was the provision for a courthouse, for which the contract awarded to C.S. Peck and J.O. McCahey. The sum of \$11,700 was appropriated by the Board for the building, which cost \$12,000, the remaining \$300 being raised by subscription from public spirited citizens.

## COUNTY SEAT REMOVED TO MERCED

The construction of the railroad through the heart of the county sealed the doom of Snelling as the seat of justice, however, and in October, 1872, a petition was circulated praying for another submission of the question of location. Having received the necessary signatures, the petition was presented to the Board of Supervisors in November, and a special election was accordingly provided for, the date being set for December 12, 1872.

A bitter fight now commenced between the new railroad town of Merced and Snelling, the former ambitious and aspiring for the prestige and power which the county seat would give her, the latter battling for her preservation, it being feared, with reason, that she would lose nearly all importance if deprived of the county seat. The town of Livingston, also on the railroad, soon appeared a factor in the struggle, her candidacy being quite generally attributed to the efforts of the Snellingites to divide up the vote and prevent Merced from receiving a majority.

At the election 983 votes were cast, of which Merced received 566, Livingston 233, and Snelling 181, thus giving Merced a clear majority over both competitors.

The Board of Supervisors accordingly provided for the removal of books, records, furniture, etc., to Merced. An injunction was obtained restraining the removal, but was dismissed on review, and the transfer was accomplished on the 30th of December, 1872.

The first quarters of the county officers in Merced were on the second floor of the building of Oloise and Garibaldi, corner of L

and Front streets.

Washington Hall, a building erected by an association of citizens for public use, was completed in July, 1874, and this was used for county purposes until a special structure was erected by the county.

## COURTHOUSE

The Legislature of 1873-74 passed an act authorizing the county of Merced to issue bonds for the purpose of erecting a courthouse, in an amount not exceeding \$75,000.

Bonds were issued and sold, plans prepared for the building, bids for construction were advertised for, and on the 2d of April, 1874, the contract was let to A.W. Burrell & Co., at their figures, \$55,970. A.A. Bennett, the architect, was appointed superintendent of construction.

The corner-stone was laid July 7, 1874, under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of California, Free and Accepted Masons, the exercises being participated in by the various secret societies and citizens generally. Hon. P.D. Wiggington addressed the assemblage, and Hon. J.W. Robertson delivered an historical review of the county's progress. The festivities were crowned by a grand ball held in the evening at the Hotel El Capitan.

The building was dedicated on the 8th of May, 1875, with appropriate ceremonies.

Full value was obtained by the county for its expenditures on this building. In height it is two stories and basement, surmounted by a dome, and it presents a handsome and imposing appearance. Not only is the building exceedingly attractive in its style to the beholder, but the grounds, which are ten acres in extent, are tastefully laid out and form a fitting surrounding to the county's prided building.

## EARLY SETTLERS

Of the early settlers of Merced county many have passed away or gone to other localities, but there are still a number living within the limits of the county who have witnessed its transition from the primitive condition of the early days to its present state of development.

The following list of early settlers of this county who came to California prior to Admission day, September 9, 1850, and who were then residents of the county, was published by the Merced Express. There are some few necessary changes, and in some cases brief remarks, taken from short sketches of their lives: **William R. Aiken**, born in Mississippi; **J.C. Blackburn**, Ohio; **P.B. Bennett**, Ireland; **J.W. Bost**, afterward Surveyor-General of California, and the engineer of the East Side Canal, still a prominent resident of Merced; **Patrick Carroll**, Ireland; **Joseph Chapman**, Maryland; **A. Chamberlain**, New York; **A.W. Clough**, New Hampshire; **Thomas B. Cargile**, Kentucky; **R.T. Chandler**, Georgia; **Isom J. Cox**, Tennessee; **J.B. Cocanour**, Pennsylvania; **Harry Chapman**, New York; **T.C. Dean**, Mercer county, Kentucky; **Samuel Dickenson**, Missouri. **Gallant Duncan Dickenson**, born in Rutherford county, Pennsylvania, October 6, 1806, came to California from Missouri with his wife and family in 1846 (being but a few days in advance of the ill-fated Donner party), located in Monterey in 1847, built the first brick house in the town (which was also the first in California), went to the mines at Mokelumne Hill in 1848, his wife and daughters being the first white women in the mines; moved to the Tuolumne river in September, 1852; bought out the ferry and built a fine hotel and boat, which he kept for many years; afterwards lived on south side of Tuolumne river, Stanislaus county; came to Merced county in 1867, and died while on a visit to Snelling, October 25, 1869. **George W. Dickenson**, son of the above, came with his father to California in 1846, locating in Merced county in 1858; **W.B. Dowst**, Massachusetts; **Charles E. Evans**, Louisiana; **Peter Fee**, Norway. **Joshua Griffith**, born June 28, 1800, in Washington county, Pennsylvania, came to California in 1848, discovered Jackson Creek, Amador county, November 15, 1848; located in this county in September, 1850; sowed wheat here in 1851, built small flour-mill for his own use, operated by water-power from Merced river, in 1853; **F. Gardenhire**, Pennsylvania; **M. Goldman**, Prussia; **E.T. Givens**, born in Union county, Kentucky, settled on Bear creek, ten miles from the site of Merced city, in 1854, and in 1856 moved upon Mariposa creek; **Levi Herne**, Missouri; **A.W. Hulse**, New York; **W. H. Hartley** arrived in California in April, 1852, after a stay of fourteen weeks in Panama; came to Merced county and put in the first large crop of wheat raised in the county; **W. L. Howell**, Pennsylvania; **John E. Hicks**, Missouri; **George Hayes**, Maine; **C.H. Huffman**, Louisiana, the head of the great Crocker-Huffman canal, who is mentioned at some length, in connection with his vast work, elsewhere in this volume; **G.N. Halstead**, New York; **John Ivett**, England, whose murder caused such a sensation throughout this portion of the state; **Albert Ingalsbee**, New York; J.Y. Jones, Virginia; Thomas Johnson, Ireland; **James Kibby**, New York; **Erastus Kelsey**, New York; **John Keys**, Virginia; Adam Kohl, Pennsylvania; **Frank Larkin**, New York; **William L. Means**, Alabama, elected Supervisor in 1879; T.A. Leggett, New York; **J.M. Montgomery**, who came to California in 1847, locating at Santa Clara, afterwards mined; came to what is now Merced county in 1849, he and his partner, Samuel Scott, being among the first settlers on the Merced river; **J.B. Marsh**, Massachusetts; **Hugh McErlane**, Ireland; **W.A. McCreary**, Alabama; **N. McFarlan**, Tennessee; **John I. McFarlan**, Tennessee; **William Nelson**, who built the Merced Flouring-Mills at Merced Falls in 1854, was born in New Hampshire, December 2, 1812, and came to California in 1850; **B. Oppenheim**, Germany; **H.J. Ostrander**, who planted an orchard and vineyard near Snelling as early as 1854, and who has been for years an advocate of fruit planting for this county, is a native of New York; **John O'Donnell**, Ireland; **James B. Peck**, New York; **L. Peak**, Illinois; **George W. Powell**, Texas; **George Russell**, Connecticut; **G.W. Rogers**, New York; **Hon. J.W. Robertson**, Mississippi, who came to California in 1849, was at the California Ferry (afterward young's Ferry) for a time in 1850; was elected first Assessor of Merced County in 1855; was Under

Sheriff under George Turner; admitted to practice law in the District Court in 1861; elected to the Legislature in 1862, representing Stanislaus and Merced counties in Session of 1863; elected County Judge in 1863, serving until January, 1880; **John Ruddle**, Missouri; **Reuben Reynolds**, Mississippi; **Nelson Rolfe**, Virginia; **N.B. Stoneroad** came from Arkansas to California in 1849; in the spring of 1853 he, in partnership with his father and three others, engaged in the stock business under the firm name of Stoneroads, Cathey, McCreary & Kelly, and he located on a tract of land on Mariposa creek, about five miles from where Plainsburg stands, and established headquarters there; in the spring of 1854 Cathey and McCreary drew out, and the business was continued by Mr. Stoneroad and Mr. Kelly, until 1860, when the firm was dissolved; Mr. Stoneroad carried on the cattle business until 1869, when the settling up of the land for agricultural purposes made extensive cattle-raising on the plains impractical; after that embarked in farming, and later in the sheep business on a large scale elsewhere; **S.K. Spears**, New York; **J.J. Stevenson**, born in Boone county, Missouri in 1828; located where he now resides, in Merced county, August 1, 1852; he was the projector and is president of the East Side Canal and Irrigation Company; **Colonel A.W. Stevinson**, father of the above, also located in this county, having come up from Mexico, where he had been in the mercantile business a number of years; **Edward H. Smith**, New York; **Samuel Scott**, born in Kentucky, came to California in 1847, and in 1849 to what is now Merced county, entering into the stock business near the Merced river; he and J.M. Montgomery and James Waters were the only settlers along that stream, according to Joshua Griffith, when he located there in September, 1850; he died March 15, 1881; **John C. Smith**, Ohio; **Robert J. Steele**, who started the *Merced Banner*, the first newspaper in Merced county, at Snelling, in July, 1862; **George Turner**, New York; **M.H. Thrumman**, Tennessee; **Eli Thurman**, Tennessee; **Nicholas Turner**, Tennessee; **E.H. Tyson**, North Carolina; **William C. Turner**, born in North Carolina, came to California and settled on the Merced river, in what is now Merced county, in September, 1852, where he engaged in stock-raising, also farming to some extent, and raised a good crop in 1853; **L.P. Wilson**, New York; **Job Wheat**, a native of New York, who was county Assessor from 1862 to 1864, was one of the early stockmen in this county, their nearest neighbor being fifteen miles distant on the Merced river, and the next at Montgomery's Grove; **George W. Ward**, Missouri; and **Adam Yates**, New York.

This list includes only those who were pioneers of California, as well as early settlers of Merced county, with one or two exceptions. There were of course a number who were not California pioneers, who came to this county as early as many of the above, and some of these are mentioned in the portion of the work devoted to biographies.

The experiences of these old settlers would occupy volumes in their relation, and all of them had their stories of the early times. Many of the interesting incidents are related in other connections, elsewhere in this volume.

William C. Turner came out in a party under the guidance of James Waters, via Los Angeles, Tejon Pass, Tulare lake, and Fort Miller, to Mariposa. After crossing the San Joaquin river, they encountered large bands of wild elk, magnificent animals, with wide-spreading antlers. One of the party, named Thomas Brul, in following one of these bands of elk got lost in a fog, and wandered about for eighteen days. When found he was on Merced river in a hollow log, his feet badly frostbitten, necessitating the amputation of some of his toes. He was taken to a New York company camped on the Merced river, and returned home to Alabama without trying his luck in the mines.

Nearly all of the old settlers of Merced county made a business of stock-growing. The whole southern portion of the county was used for grazing purposes, a large portion of the land being covered with a luxuriant growth of grasses, and the title being in the Government, the range was free and unlimited. About 1867, however, farming commenced on a scale never before attempted in the county, and when it was demonstrated that the land was very productive of cereals settlers came in rapidly, obtaining title to the land, and soon stock-growing on the old lines became unprofitable, and a complete change came over the aspect of the county.

On the 11th of October, at Whitlock creek, John W. Childs shot and wounded a grizzly bear; and he, with Eleazer T. Givens, a pioneer of Merced county, and two others, followed the bear and shot her again, but without killing her. Coming upon the bear in a chaparral thicket, a fight ensued, and Mr. Givens, who was close up to the bear, was badly wounded, and had his scalp half torn off. Childs, however, remained with him, and, firing three shots into the bear at close quarters, succeeded in killing her.

G. D. Dickenson, after whom Dickenson's Ferry was named, built the first hotel in Stockton, the Dickenson House, which cost \$60,000, the expense of the lumber one dollar a foot. It rented for \$2,500 per month.

## LIVE STOCK

Stock growing is an industry of considerable importance in nearly all sections of the county, notably along the streams and in the foothills and on the westside, where it may be said to have reached its perfection. Here a great deal of land is held in large tracts by wealthy owners, who can indulge themselves in whatever in the stock line might prove a source of pleasure and profit. Horses, both blooded stock and the graded or work animals do well in this region, showing that the conditions are eminently suited to their requirements, while the cattle fed in this vicinity manifest by their sleek hides and rounded forms the nutritious nature of the herbage.

Outside of its name, and the general knowledge that it is a vast section of great possibilities, the west side of Merced county is a *terra incognita* even to a great portion of the citizens of the county; and the fact that there are large numbers of imported cattle and of thoroughbred and standardbred horses of the best blood on a number of the fine ranches there is also a matter not so generally known as would be expected.

In the early days of the county stockraising was almost the only industry, but today it is an entirely different matter. Then the stock could roam at will over the plains, which were government land, and the "rodeo" was a feature of life here at the time. Now, with farming as the principal item of industry the conditions of stock-growing are very unlike those mentioned.

## AGRICULTURE

This has been for many years the great industry of Merced county, and in the extent and value of her agricultural products the county ranks among the first in the State.

Farming to a greater or less extent has been carried on ever since the early '50s. Some of those who had left the mines after a brief experience settled upon the plains, and each year the number increased until some portions of the county began to take on the appearance of a settled country. Nearly all these early settlers embarked in stock-raising, which had been the business of the Mexicans who had previously occupied a portion of the soil. Some of these began to farm a little by degrees, but there was no farming on an extensive scale until it began to be certain that a railroad would be built through the San Joaquin valley.

In 1867 W.H. Hartley came to this county from Stockton and rented 1000 acres of land on Bear creek, about three miles below the present site of Merced, and began farming, being the first of the large grain growers in the county. He had considerable difficulty, however, in harvesting his first crop. Cattle were very troublesome, and had to be herded night and day to keep them from getting into and destroying the grain. About harvest time it appeared that the cattle would certainly ruin the greater part of the crop. About this time C.H. Huffman, whom he had known in Stockton and in the mining region, came along and helped him to keep the cattle off for two days, when at last he had to leave, he sent word to Mr. Hartley, with the aid of whom he succeeded in saving most of the grain, and harvested between 4,000 and 5,000 sacks that year - the harvest of 1868. This incident but shows how unprepared the country was at that day for anything like systematic farming. Of course, there was considerable friction between the stockmen and farmers for a time as the farming interest began to grow rapidly, but after the railroad came in and the settlement of the country became very rapid, the interests of the two classes of residents began to intertwine; cattlemen began to farm to some extent, and farmers extended their stock interests so that there was no further trouble.

For the great ranches the introduction of the combined harvester proved a genuine boon, relieving them of most of the embarrassments of harvest time. Therefore if anything occurred to cause a scarcity of labor there was much inconvenience, and prices of labor were correspondingly high, while there were many other drawbacks under the old-fashioned methods; but the combined harvester has changed all this, and the great ranches of Merced county now find the operation of placing the grain from their big ranches in the sack as small a matter as it was formerly for the small farmer to bundle his crop.

Wheat has been the great staple agricultural product of the county, and this article maintains its pre-eminence, though the other principal cereals are raised to some extent, notably barley.

There are various statements as to who sowed the first wheat in Merced county, but it is generally credited to Joshua Griffith, who located in the county in September, 1850, and went to Santa Cruz in 1851, procuring seed wheat which he sowed on his return. As before stated, however, there were no considerable farming operations until a much later date, and in fact it seems proper to date its commencement in this county, as a separate industry, to the efforts of Mr. Hartley in 1867. On account of his intimate connection with agriculture from that time particular mention is made of Mr. Hartley in this connection.

## WILLIAM HENRY HARTLEY

The history of agricultural development in Merced county cannot be written without conspicuous reference to the gentleman whose name heads this article. Though including other branches of commercial activity along with it, it is in connection with the farming interest that his work shows most prominently. As this has been the principal factor in the money-earning capacity of the county up to this time, a brief sketch of Mr. Hartley's career, in outline form, becomes a valuable and indeed essential feature of this volume.

Though reared from childhood in the United States, Mr. Hartley is a native of England, and was born, probably in Lancashire, on the 26th day of March, 1835, his parents being Henry and Margaret (McIntosh) Hartley, the father a native of England and the mother of Scotland.

When our subject was a child his parents removed to America, locating at Lowell, Massachusetts, where his father became employed at work in connection with the mills of that city.

William H. Hartley was brought up at Lowell, and commenced work at an early age, his schooling being principally obtained at night after he had finished the labors of the day. He passed through the various gradations of employment in one of the Lowell woolen mills until he became a spinner, and was thus employed from that time until he left the East.

In the family circle the subject of going to California to try their fortunes in the gold districts became an important topic of discussion, and the ultimate result was that our subject, his father and his brother John, decided to make the venture. In November, 1851, they left Lowell, going to New York, when it was their intention to take the steamer Georgia as far as the

Isthmus. This vessel, however, was so crowded that they could not secure passage on her, which compelled a delay of two weeks, at the end of which time they secured accommodations on the Rising Star, and departed on her for Chagres.

From this point to Gorgona by river the charge for transportation was \$15 or upward, and the elder Mr. Hartley, who had travelled a great deal, and was thereby able to perceive and take advantage of circumstances in new situations which would not occur to the ordinary run of people, saw that there was an opportunity to clear some money by temporarily engaging in the business of transportation himself. Chartering three boats and taking out clearance papers he engaged native crews to operate the boats, and, putting the passage price to Gorgona down to \$10, he readily secured enough passengers to make his investment a profitable one. As they progressed up the river, however, the water became very shallow, and finally it was found they could go no further, which compelled the passengers to disembark about eight miles from their intended landing place, the boats going on in charge of two guards to the boat. From this point to Gorgona the way led over mountains, and a guide was engaged to pilot them across. Either through ignorance or a desire to extort more money out of the travelers, this guide took them out of the way, and when it was found that they were getting in difficulties another native presented himself who agreed to show them the way for \$2 a head. This offer was refused by about half, and they set out dividing into two bodies, one with the guide. The elder Hartley and another man led the party which our subject joined, and after a tiresome trip they brought up in Gorgona that night. The others, however, were two days on the way, getting there the next night. Pack mules were found to be scarce, and they hired those engaged in the business to transport their baggage and effects to Panama - at five to ten cents a pound - while the travelers themselves, each retaining his blankets, made the trip afoot, which required about a day and a half. At Panama they found that the regular mail steamer, which they would have taken had they left New York on the Georgia, had gone, and they were thus compelled to take their chances for a steamer to San Francisco with some 5,000 or 6,000 already there with the same destination in view; the crowded condition of the place being the result of the great emigration of 1852, already under full headway. Among those thousands there were a large number who had bought tickets only as far as Panama, thinking that they could get passage from there to San Francisco at a price which would make the total expense of the trip no greater than if they had bought through tickets. Partly as a result of this, there were a great many who were without means, and thus the railroad secured a great many recruits for its construction operations.

Though not "broke", as were these, our subject and his immediate party did not wish to remain idle, especially as it began to grow evident that their stay in Panam would probably be a long one. The senior Mr. Hartley chanced to meet a man whom he had known at Lowell, when he had kept the Pawtucket gardens, and who was now conducting a soda factory at Panama. He offered employment to the subject of this sketch, which was accepted, and he was thus employed while he remained on the Isthmus. Meantime his brother John and a friend, being familiar with plumbing work obtained a contract to lay water pipes in the streets of the city, which was carried out during their stay.

Finally, however, after a stay of fourteen weeks, they left Panam as passengers on the Steamer Golden Gate, and after a voyage which would have been a pleasant one but for yellow fever, which carried away some twenty or thirty passengers, they landed in San Francisco about the 7th of April.

Rates to Sacramento were then very low on account of a war of competition among the steamers, and after a delay of only one day they departed for the capital city, which was reached the next day.

From Sacramento they proceeded to Greenwood valley, about four miles from the American river, and began their first mining experience at Oregon bar. The March rains soon set in with a steady downpour, and the river became so high that communications with the outside world were completely shut off. As a result the supply of provisions ran short and finally it became apparent that something must be done ere they became victims to famine. They set out to cross the mountain back of them to get to Yankee Jim's, and after a fatiguing trip, which was rendered exceedingly difficult by the snow on the mountains, often slushy, slipping back with them, they finally reached Yankee Jim's. Obtaining supplies, they went back to Oregon bar.

The father became sick and finally decided to go back East, which he did soon after.

During that fall a company of three, consisting, besides our subject, Mr. Hartley, of James Stott, now superintendent of the large Talbot woolen mill at Balricky, Massachusetts, on the Concord river, and Thomas Cook, now deceased, left Oregon bar and went south as far as Sonora overland, where the severe winter of 1852-'53 overtook them. They could get no place to stay in Sonora, and were obliged to move as far up Woods' creek as Hamburg Flat, where they found a lot of pine trees clustered together, some of which they chopped down and with the logs constructed a cabin. This they covered with a fly tent, and finished the job with a mud chimney. The whole process of building was carried on while a heavy rain was pouring down upon them. They built the cabin there on account of its proximity to wood more than because of its closeness to the scene of their mining operations. The winter was very severe on them, not only because they could not work, but also on account of provisions becoming scarce, due to the inability of freight handlers to get into the camp with supplies.

Everything eatable became very scarce and at last they were reduced to an allowance of one potato a day. At length, however, the winter broke up. The diggings became workable, and the roads reached a condition which would allow of light travel, so that finally provisions began to come in. The first eatables were brought in on pack mules by Chinamen, and it is safe to say the Mongolians have never been more welcomed than on this occasion. Soon the price of provisions got down to normal figures, and flour, which had reached \$1 a pound and then ran out, got down to a bit per pound. Potatoes had reached seventy-five cents and \$1 a pound. There had been an abundance of game in the region, but the miners were so handicapped by lack of guns and ammunition, as well as lack of skill in their use, so that not much relief was obtained from this source.

When things got in condition to allow of beginning work at mining, our subject and his partners started in, but after an experience of two months found there was nothing in it, and they started out prospecting. At Springfield they took up claims,

and after working them for some time eventually struck it rich, the three of them taking out an average three to five ounces of gold per day. In all, they remained there about a year and a half. In the meantime, however, Mr. Cook had sold out his interest to Messrs. Hartley and Stott, and about that time Colonel Faulkner, the proprietor of the Columbus *Gazette*, who had left Bob Steele in charge of the paper while he had gone East for cattle, came up there with a drove of about 500 Texan cattle. Just after his arrival with the drove, Messrs. Hartley and Stott, who had been down on the San Joaquin river and bought land at Graysonville, returned, and found Colonel Faulkner there with his cattle. After negotiations, they bought the drove, which Mr. Hartley took down to the ranch, while his partners remained at the mines. Soon afterward they sold out their mining interests; and Mr. Stott, desiring to go back to his Eastern home, disposed of his interest in the land and cattle to William Webster, a Mississippian. Mr. Hartley and his partner were both unacquainted with cattle-raising, and as a result, inside of two years they had lost all their cattle, while, to add to the wreck, it was found that the encroachment of a Spanish grant took away their land, thus leaving for the time with practically nothing but their blankets, after all the success in mining previously mentioned. However, they gathered together small remnants of their band of cattle found in the bogs, disposed of them, and went to Mokelumne Hill.

Then Mr. Hartley went to Lancha Plana, back from the Mokelumne river, when there had been sufficient mining success to cause quite an excitement. It was known as Big Discovery diggings. Mr. Hartley located on Poverty bar, on the opposite side from there, and started a feed yard and milk ranch. That was in the Spring of 1854. He was very successful while mining continued good, and made considerable money.

Leaving Poverty bar, he went to Stockton, of which place he soon became one of the active and substantial citizens.

He embarked in the transportation business, freighting to Mokelumne Hill and West Point.

Next he took a one-eighth interest in a company of eight men organized as the Chinese Freight Company, for the purpose of doing the Chinese freighting, and this proved a highly remunerative concern.

Besides, on his individual account he bought out the team of fourteen mules and three large freighting wagons of Peter Medbury, and in all was largely engaged in that line of business until the railroad entered the San Joaquin valley.

In 1867 he came to Merced county, rented 1,000 acres of land from a man named McSwain, located on Bear creek, three miles below the Merced town site, and embarked in farming. While some farming had already been commenced, he was the first one to engage in agriculture on an extensive scale here.

Cattle were very troublesome, and had to be herded night and day to prevent their encroaching on fields and destroying the growing grain. While thus engaged in herding, he received a call from Mr. Huffman, with whom he had long previously formed an acquaintance and friendship, and on account of this friendship, Mr. Huffman for two days helped him in the work of herding, when, finally, he had to leave, he hired men and sent them to Mr. Hartley and with this help the latter succeeded in saving a great portion of the crop. He cut between 4,000 and 5,000 sacks of grain in 1868, the season being a good one. This grain had to be hauled to Dover, on the San Joaquin river, at an expense of \$4 a ton, besides feeding the teams so engaged on the ranch, while from Dover it was conveyed to Stockton by steamer, at a cost of something like \$3 a ton.

The next year was a very dry one, and scarcely any grain was raised.

During that year, while retaining the 1,000 acres mentioned, he moved up adjoining Merced, on Bear creek, to what was known as the Poyzer ranch, which he rented as well as land from James Taylor, making in all 2,500 acres. The same year the town was sold by the railroad company, and E. N. Towne bought the Poyzer place, on which Mr. Hartley was then living. The Taylor land, 1,200 acres, was sold to Mr. Hubbard, the locating agent of the railroad, and this gave Mr. Hartley 800 acres more.

In 1875 he bought section 36 from J. Morrison, a brother-in-law of Stonewall Jackson, and farmed this, in addition to the other tracts already mentioned. He also rented 1,500 acres more of W. E. Brown in 1865, and the following year bought 920 acres from Mr. Williams, of the Sacramento Mills. The next year he purchased from Mrs. Man her place of 960 acres.

Besides all the pieces and tracts of land mentioned, he had been farming the 800 or 900 acres of the town site, and so continues, as far as the latter is concerned, to this day.

At one time he raised wheat from 8,000 to 10,000 acres of land a year, and was the largest grower in this whole region, the magnitude of such operations being readily appreciated by those familiar with this branch.

He now farms the town site and all the tracts mentioned above as his own property, with the addition of another section bought of Robert Weaver, of Livingston, in 1889.

While carrying on farming on such a scale, however, he has also interested himself in other branches of industry.

He was a stockholder in the Merced Canal and Irrigation Company during all the time of its construction from commencement



and until the company was reorganized under its present title of the Crocker-Huffman Land and Water Company, selling out his interest in 1888. He is, in addition, a director since the original organization, of what is now the Commercial and Savings Bank, of Merced, a history of which strong institution appears in this volume. He also has other banking interests.

Besides he occupies the position of president of that well-known concern, the Grangers' Warehouse Company.

Politically, Mr. Hartley has always affiliated with the Republican party, with whose fortunes he has ever cast his lot on national issues, and locally he has served the county of Merced in the capacity of supervisor, a position for which he was highly qualified on account of his intimate acquaintance with the county and its needs, as well as by his high business qualities.

He was married in Lowell, Massachusetts, in November, 1869, to Miss Frances L. Otis, who comes from an old family of New England, and daughter of Silas Otis, who was general outside superintendent of the Lowell bleachery. He ancestors helped fight the battles of the American Revolution, and the family is a large and prominent one in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

There is one child of the union, Mamie Emma Hartley.

Mr. Hartley is a man of quiet, unassuming demeanor, yet is generally known throughout this valley and elsewhere on account of the conspicuous position he has held for so many years in connection with the principal industry of the San Joaquin, that of agriculture. His success in that line has been marked, the more so as he learned the rudiments of the business here. Being universally ranked as one of the substantial men of the valley, and esteemed as one of the foremost citizens of Merced county, he has just cause to feel pleased with his advancement from the time when a mere youth in years, he landed in California, poor in means, but rich in enterprise and industry.

In conclusion it may be said that Mr. Hartley feels a natural interest in the welfare of the scene of his later labors, and has taken his part in all movements calculated for its advancement.

## FRUIT GROWING

There is no other subject in which the progressive people of Merced county take so much interest as in fruit-culture, for they look upon it as, to say the least, one of the future principal industries of the county.

For many years there have been individual and isolated cases where men have demonstrated thoroughly the fact that all or nearly all the fruits that can be successfully raised in California can be made to yield unusually good returns in Merced county.

Orange trees in full bearing and producing heavily of the finest varieties, are to be found in a number of places in the county and on many of the colony and other tracts about Merced, and elsewhere large numbers of orange and lemon trees have been planted with excellent results.

The olive seems to find a home in Merced, and oil made from the seed of fruit produced on the property of Miller & Lux, west of the San Joaquin, is of the very finest quality. Olives are planted quite extensively by the orchardists of this county.

Peaches, apricots, pears, prunes, plums and almonds have all been demonstrated to be profitable articles of culture for orchardists in Merced, and are heavy items in the lists of trees which have been extensively planted.

In the vicinity of Snelling there have been for many years bearing orchards, producing apples, pears, peaches, plums, figs, almonds, pomegranates, walnuts, gooseberries, strawberries, blackberries, etc.

On the Scott place, about two miles below Snelling, on the Merced river, Samuel Scott, even before his death in 1881, had over thirty acres of these fruits in bearing, and a beautiful orchard in appearance. He had commenced planting the trees early in the '50s, and had planted and re-planted from time to time, always keeping the place in fine condition.

On behalf of H. J. Ostrander, the claim is made that he was the first orchardist in Merced county, for as far back as 1854 he planted an orchard and vineyard near Snelling, producing good results. Mr. Ostrander has ever since taken a considerable interest in fruit-growing, as is evidenced by his efforts elsewhere, notably on the Ostrander colony, in the Merced district.

J. M. Montgomery was another man who planted fruit in the vicinity of Snelling; and in fact nearly all the old settlers about there planted fruits and vines to a greater or less extent.

But the organized efforts to make this section a prominent one in the fruit growing industry have been mostly put forth within a radius of a few miles from the city of Merced, which will, in the near future, as the large acreage already planted comes to maturity, be the center of a very considerable fruit district.

The system of colony subdivision now so much in vogue, especially since the construction of the Crocker-Huffman canal, has

been a large factor in accomplishing this result. In the special edition of the Merced *Sun*, published January 1, 1892, and containing much valuable information in regard to the county, the following concise account of colony work is given:

"The colonies in Merced county comprise some 33,000 acres of land, and of this number some 6,000 acres have been sold and over half that number planted.

"The size of the colonies and the amounts planted in each might be summarized as follows: Archer colony, 320 acres, eighty acres planted; Ashe colony, 900 acres, just laid out; British colony, 5,480 acres, 100 acres planted; Buhach colony, 1,280 acres, 510 acres planted; El Capitan colony, 1,920 acres, 185 acres planted; Deane colony, 6,020 acres, 320 acres planted; Hornitos colony, 210 acres, twenty-five acres planted; Livingston colony, 320 acres, 110 acres planted; Rialto colony, 320 acres, unimproved; Rotterdam colony, 3,190 acres, 1,500 acres planted; Towne colony, 960 acres, seventy acres planted; Yosemite colony, 640 acres, 260 acres planted; Los Banos colony, about 10,000 acres, 800 acres planted; Dos Palos colony, 6,000 acres, just planted.

"Aside from the above planted, a large number of lots have been sold, which will be planted during the present winter and spring. More than this, the planting by individuals outside of colonies is considerable. J. W. Mitchell has planted about 500 acres of raisin grapes; the Buhach plantation, about 500 acres of grapes and fruit trees; C.H. Huffman, 160 acres of raisin grapes; J. B. Galland, sixty acres to grapes and fruit trees; A. C. Cacoccia, fifty acres to fruit trees and vines; W. L. Silman, forty acres of fruit trees; W. L. Means, fifty acres in orchard and vineyard; J. M. Robinson, fifty acres in orchard and vineyard, and others in various localities amount to over 500 acres, in addition to the above."

## RAISIN-GRAPES

Another industry which is expected to take prominent rank in this county is that of raisin-producing. There are all the favorable conditions of soil and climate, and there is no doubt that they can be successfully raised here in every respect. Already there is quite a large area - upwards of 3,500 acres planted in raisin-grapes, principally Muscatels and Malagas, and raisins which have already been raised and packed here bear favorable comparison with the best produced in the sections where they are the principal product.

## BUHACH PLANTATION

One of the most interesting ranches in the State of California is that of the Buhach Producing and Manufacturing Company, in Merced county. This company, with headquarters at Stockton, and of which that old pioneer of California, J. D. Peters, is president, manufactures an insect powder known to the world as "buhach", from the plant *Pyrethrum cinerariaefolium*, of the order of Composites, and, desiring to locate a ranch for its production where they could have the benefits of irrigation, selected this tract of 786 acres, under the canal of what was then the Farmers' Canal Company (now the Crocker-Huffman canal) in 1879. The soil of this tract was very sandy, and at the time of the purchase had about as cheerless and uninviting appearance as could well be imagined. But now it is one of the most beautiful cultivated tracts in the state, and the transformation accomplished has been wonderful indeed. Besides the plant for buhach manufacture, the company set out a variety of trees and vines, and nearly everything planted has shown splendid results. In some fruits, however, the result was not as favorable as could be desired, while with others expectations were far more than realized. There are 333 acres devoted to the culture of the Pyrethrum plant, 130 acres in grapes, thirty acres in peaches, twenty acres in pears, thirty acres in apricots, plums, prunes and other fruits, seventy acres in almonds, and the remainder is in grain. About 700 acres of the land is irrigated by the waters of the Crocker-Huffman canal. On account of injury to the young growing trees and plants, by the wind drifting the sandy soil, Lombardy poplar trees were planted along the ditches, and the growth of these trees has been so rapid that, although many have been removed, enough still remain to supply the plantation with fuel for all time.

By cultivation the character of the sandy soil has been changed and improved, the coarser particles of sand becoming pulverized or dissolved, so that the soil becomes more compact and better fitted for furnishing the properties necessary for plant growth.

## RAILROADS

The county is becoming well supplied with railroads, having now three lines, two of which run entirely through its territory, from north to south. The main line of the Southern Pacific passes through the center of the county, from northwest to southeast. West of the San Joaquin river, the west side line of the same company, commencing at Tracy, was finished through to Armona, in 1890 and 1891, making another through line through the county. The branch of the Southern Pacific system having for its terminal points Stockton and Merced, and passing through Oakdale, opens up a large and important section to railroad communication. There are other roads in prospect, and the county will ultimately be well cut up with them.

## IRRIGATION

With the hundreds of thousands of acres of good soil needing only the assurance of water at all desired times to render them among the most productive in the world, the problem of irrigation presented itself to the thinking men of Merced county as the

one thing necessary to make their broad plains a garden spot.

Thus it was that even in an early day, before much evidence had been given of the county's agricultural future, not to speak of the possibilities in horticulture not then dreamed of, there were isolated cases of men with the foresight and enterprise necessary to pioneer the way in irrigation.

To-day Merced county stands in the world's front rank as far as irrigation is concerned, with the finest canal system probably ever constructed for this purpose by private enterprise. The first place must be given to the Crocker-Huffman canal, not only on account of the magnitude of the undertaking, but because its work is all in this county. But it has worthy companions in the San Joaquin and Kings River Canal, and that of the East Side Canal and Irrigation Company.

All of these, and the important work and results of irrigation in this county generally are treated further on in this article in connection with the separate mention of the several enterprises.

As the initial efforts in irrigation were also the first strokes of enterprise resulting in the Crocker-Huffman canal of To-day, the company operating that property is treated first. Its history, with a brief sketch of that enterprising citizen, C. H. Huffman, president of the company, follows:

## **CROCKER-HUFFMAN LAND AND WATER COMPANY**

This is the corporate title of the owner of what is now so generally known as the Crocker-Huffman canal, which is destined to play such an important part in the future development and progress of Merced county, and like many similar important enterprises had a very humble beginning.

Some thirty-five years previous to this narrative a surveyor and civil engineer, by the name of W. G. Collier, lived on a small ranch on the Merced river, at a point about twenty-five miles from Merced city. With commendable foresight he perceived the advantages that would accrue from the irrigation of this country, and at that early day undertook the construction of a canal, by means of which he hoped to carry the waters out upon the plains from the river, his idea being to dispose of the same to settlers and land owners. He seems to have miscalculated upon the magnitude of the undertaking, and never progressed far enough to run water into a ditch. However, he did actually dig a small canal, but subsequently sold out his interests in the scheme to a company of farmers composed of John W. Mitchell, Cressey Bros., John Upton, J. D. Peters, M. Goldman, and others who organized what was known as the Farmers' Canal Company.

This company diverted the water of the Merced river at a point about four miles above Snelling, near Merced Falls, and distributed the same through a small canal upon the plains on the south side of the river. It was their original design, not only to furnish water to the general public but particularly to bring it on, so as to utilize it, upon their own lands. This latter ambition was never realized by this first company, but on the contrary after having expended some \$180,000 on their undertaking, in a ten years' attempt to accomplish the same, they sold out to the present owners for \$81,000, and from that time forward the enterprise has gone on without interruption of consequence, on a course of construction, extension, and improvement until it has reached the natural outcome of such effort, that splendid system of water supply known as the Crocker-Huffman Land and Water Company of Merced. So far the efforts made might be termed merely preparatory or at best auxiliary to the great work which has been carried on since the present owners assumed charge, and here also properly commenced the actual history of the Crocker-Huffman canal. The new company was at first incorporated under the name of the Merced Canal and Irrigation Company, consisting practically of C. H. Huffman of Merced and Charles Crocker of San Francisco. For many years Mr. Huffman had anticipated an opportunity to take hold of this enterprise, and had fully appreciated not only the immense value of the proposed system of irrigation, but he also understood the difficulties and magnitude of the work yet to be accomplished. With this knowledge he took prompt advantage of the occasion when it arrived; and, having sought and obtained the co-operation of Mr. Crocker, work was prosecuted with great energy, and under the immediate personal superintendence of Mr. Huffman until successfully completed. It was a long and expensive undertaking, and many almost insurmountable difficulties were met and overcome during the course of construction.

Problems of engineering, difficulties in securing proper material and men, the adverse influences of the elements and endless other sources of delay and annoyance had to be encountered, and cannot be fully appreciated at this day when what we see before us is the accomplished fact.

The Merced Canal and Irrigation Company was incorporated with a capital stock of \$2,000,000, with C. H. Huffman as president, and operations were conducted under this name until April, 1888, when it was re-incorporated under the title of the Crocker-Huffman Land and Water Company, with the same officers, but with the capital stock increased to \$3,000,000. The vast plant of this system has attracted wide attention and is regarded as the finest and most complete on the Pacific coast. As before indicated when Mr. Huffman took active charge of the construction his plans were already well matured; and this, together with the fact that Mr. Crocker stood by him firmly in every stage of the operations, had a great deal to do with the successful results. The design was to run the canal from the point of inlet, near Merced Falls, across the country to the vicinity of Plainsburg, some ten miles southeast of Merced city, on the Southern Pacific railroad; and it was so surveyed as to maintain as high an elevation along the edge of the foothills as possible, thereby securing a supply to as large an area of land as was compatible with the necessary fall required to maintain the current. The entire length of the canal as planned from the point of diversion to the Chowchilla river now is fifty miles. This, however, does not properly represent the work done, as there are some 150 miles of lateral or subsidiary canals now built, as part of the system, and these are constantly being added to, as demand arises. The main canal was made sixty to seventy feet wide on the bottom, 100 feet wide on top, and ten feet deep,

the carrying capacity being thus about 4,000 cubic feet per second. In the engineering of the work amongst the vast difficulties encountered during its progress, not the least was the cutting through of two tunnels, one of which with its approaches was 5,000 feet in length, the other 3,500 feet. These are twenty-two feet wide and twelve feet high, with a drop of fourteen feet to the mile. One was blasted through solid rock mostly, while the other presented equal difficulties by reason of its soft formation, and necessitated the use of some 1,250,000 feet of heavy supporting timbers. Blasting had also to be largely resorted to in the cutting of a large portion of the way through cement gravel, which is as difficult of removal as rock, and which was met with to a great extent on the line of the canal. Lake Yo Semite, into which the water from the canal empties, is an artificial reservoir, from which water is taken to supply the city of Merced as well as for irrigation, the water being conveyed to the city in iron pipes. To carry out this stupendous project was a heavy contract to undertake, and many predictions of ultimate failure were periodically made, but nevertheless it was pushed boldly to completion. A dam 4,000 feet in length was constructed of cement gravel and earth, and of sufficient thickness to give perfect security against breakage, being 275 feet wide at the base, twenty feet wide on top, and sixty feet high, and along the crest runs a smooth road from which a splendid view of the lake and its immediate surroundings is obtained, as well as the city of Merced, Mount Diablo, the Coast Range and the Sierra Nevada mountains, making it all quite an interesting panorama. The name was given to the Lake Yo Semite, as its waters, coming through the canal, originally emanated from the Yo Semite valley, by way of the Merced river. The superficial area of the lake is upwards of a square mile, and the average depth 30 feet. This reservoir was constructed at a cost of \$200,000, and as much more was expended in continuing the work for the water supply system of and to Merced city, including some 3,000 tons of cast-iron pipe, hydrants, laying pipe, etc.

The main pipe, leading the water from the reservoir to the city, is sixteen inches in diameter, while the distributing pipes vary from six to eight inches. The reservoir has an elevation of ninety feet above the level of the railroad track at Merced, and as double hydrants are used in the city a fire can be quenched in any building in the city by direct pressure, without the use of steam engines. The assertion is made by well informed persons and concurred in by the fire insurance people, that Merced is the best protected city and has the most adequate water works system on the coast.

The opening of the canal formally was made the occasion during 1888 for a great demonstration, and at the ceremony of turning in the water to the lake was participated in by some 5,000 or 6,000 people, including many from abroad. The Governor of the State and many officials representatives of the railroad company were amongst those who graced the event by their presence. The people generally were full of rejoicing at the exercises. The two men whose enterprise and capital had made success possible were present to witness the happy result of their labors, and Charles Crocker turned on the water for the first time into the reservoir.

The entire cost of the canal and water works plant was \$2,000,000, and that much more was expended in the purchase of lands contiguous to the line of system. The company owned all of the equipment made necessary for construction of the plant, and had about 500 mules at work. The force of men employed at one time reached 700, while the number was always large. Owing to the personal attention given to the details of the work by the president, good work was the rule and result at every point. Besides supplying an abundance of water for city purposes, the canal furnishes sufficient to irrigate over 600,000 acres of land. A large part of the land, though almost worthless without water becomes very valuable with it. The principal object of the company now is the development of its own lands and those owned by others which come under its system, and to induce settlers to locate upon it, thus bringing it up to the highest state of profitable cultivation. This canal portends a great future for Merced county. Already the effects are visible in a degree, in the splendid results of such progress as has been made; but this beginning of an era of prosperity, which is certain to follow, is only in its infancy. The enterprise which made this canal a success has been rewarded and will be more fully compensated hereafter, but the benefit derived by the promoters is insignificant, compared to the good which will ultimately result to the county by reason of it.

The present officers of the Crocker-Huffman Land & Water Company are as follows: Directors: C. H. Huffman, President; Colonel C. F. Crocker, Vice-President; M. S. Huffman, W. H. Crocker, W. R. Huffman.

C. H. Huffman is a resident of Merced, and one of the largest property holders of the county. Like many of our pioneers he is a self-made man, and is widely known, not only in his present location but all through the San Joaquin valley, as a citizen of personal enterprise and public spirit. His extensive experience has made him a man of strong individuality, and his business and personal intercourse is always marked by characteristic traits. He has a habit of gauging his decisions with deliberation, and his convictions when once formed are strong. He has shown rare executive and administrative ability, and has the reputation of being a very determined worker when once he has mapped out a course of action. Personally he is rather under the average stature and weight, with a head and face upon which time and the vicissitudes of life have left less than the usual traces of one of his age. He is in manner to-day as fully alive to all the subjects of interest and business concerns as many men who are quite a number of years his junior, keeping regular office hours, and maintaining a direct personal control of not only his own personal estate, but also the active management of the various extensive enterprises with which he is so intimately identified.

He was born on the 14th of July, 1829, at a point near the mouth of the Mississippi river and is now consequently a few months over sixty-two years of age. In early boyhood he developed a desire to make his own way, and at the tender age of ten years we find him earning his own living and acquiring a knowledge of the business on board a pilot boat at the entrance to the river. Following his experience on the river, up to his nineteenth year, his time was devoted to a seafaring life on vessels plying between America and European ports. With considerable humor, he at times recounts, in the circle of his friend's society, the varied experiences he encountered during these years of travel, and undoubtedly these lessons of the world had much to do with moulding his after life. So well had he applied himself to his profession that he was entrusted with the position of second officer of a full rigged ship, at that age.

In 1846, during the war between the United States and Mexico, he was engaged to sail in the ship Susan Drew, which vessel

carried to California a portion of the now famous Colonel Stevenson's regiment. However, he concluded that the ship was unseaworthy and declined to proceed in her. Later on he saw the *Drew* on the mud flats at San Francisco, being converted into use as a storeship, having been condemned after the voyage. She was afterward broken up.

When the tide of emmigration started West, later, as a result of the discovery of gold, in 1849, Mr. Huffman concluded to go to California. He made his way round by the Cape Horn route, in company with other California pioneers who have become prominent businessmen in different sections of the State, reaching the Golden Gate before the expiration of the year. He remained in the city for a brief time, and then proceeded to Sierra county and other mining centers, and spent considerable of his time and labor with the varying success of the times. Considerations of health finally compelled him to abandon mining pursuits, and he finally located in Stockton. Commencing in the business of teaming freight into the southern mines, at which business he was highly successful, he gradually built upon his modest beginning until the business assumed very large proportions, and in that and other locations he was for some twenty years prominently identified with the city as one of its business men.

In the year 1868, Mr. Huffman visited Merced county, and, being favorably impressed with the inherent value of the soil, climate, and other advantages of the locality, he commenced to purchase the broad acres that afterward formed the nucleus of his present vast possessions of its highly fertile soil, as well as the great enterprise of which he was the originator, The Crocker-Huffman Land and Water Company.

Having taken up his residence near the town of Merced, he commenced operating in his new field of labor by becoming the agent of the late Isaac Friedlander for the purchase of grain in the San Joaquin valley, and he virtually controlled all the wheat that was grown in the valley until Mr. Friedlander's demise. After that time he abandoned the wheat buying business and devoted his efforts to the raising of wheat on a large scale, and meanwhile continues to add to his landed possessions by the purchase from time to time of more choice lands, as opportunity presented itself. In all of these business ventures he was highly successful, and accumulated a large property.

Early in his experience with Merced lands he conceived the grand ideas of enhancing its value by means of irrigation commensurate with the requirements of the territory to be covered. Having matured his plans to his own satisfaction, he called into his councils the late Charles Crocker, and together they have been highly successful in attaining the desired end, the details of which undertaking can be fully appreciated by a perusal of the Canal and Water Company article preceding. He formed the First National bank of Merced, and was its president from organization, until it was reorganized as the Commercial and Savings Bank of Merced, in last June, when he was retained in the chair of the new directorate.

His most favored enterprise and that which seems to attract his especial pride and interest is the canal system, of which he was the ardent promoter, and to his personal exertions is due the remarkable consummation of that vast undertaking; and it is a tribute to his skill and judgement in its construction that his partner, the late Charles Crocker, was wont to regard this canal as the most satisfactory enterprise with which he had been connected during his lifetime.

There is always the possibility of genius rising to fit every emergency, but, notwithstanding this axiom, the fact remains patent to all that by and through the farsightedness of Mr. Huffman and his friends, and immense outlay of capital, the county of Merced has this means at hand for an unlimited amount of advancement and prosperity, and to this extent the name of the subject of this article will always remain a milestone, marking an important turn on the road of this county's prosperity.

Mr. Huffman resides in a substantial mansion in the suburbs of the town of Merced, surrounded by his family circle consisting of his wife and children. Here night finds him invariably in the enjoyment of their society, unless absent on the affairs of his large business connections.

As Mr. Huffman has been intimately associated with the following described bank, we give its history here.

## **THE COMMERCIAL AND SAVINGS BANK OF MERCED**

This, one of the most substantial financial institutions of the county, is the successor of the First National Bank, of Merced. It is located in a fireproof brick and iron banking house, and is provided with every convenience for the safe and expeditious handling of its large business. As a national bank it was organized June 23, 1887, with a paid up capital stock of \$200,000, and was partly a result of the necessities of a financial nature arising from the building of the Crocker-Huffman canal.

The change from a National to a State institution was effected June 25, 1891, and the bank then assumed its present character and name, the original board of directors and officers being re-elected. The regulations governing national banks proved a barrier to the investment of capital in a manner necessary to promote the best interests of a bank in our community, and considerations of profit in the national system having been more or less removed since organization, the stockholders and managers deemed the conversion of the bank advisable. At the date of re-organization the capital stock was increased to \$300,000 paid up.

This bank ranks as one of the most solid institutions in the State, and its standing is very high. Its management and methods have been best commented upon by its constantly increasing volume of business. The officers are the same now as have held their positions of trust ever since the bank was organized. They are: C. H. Huffman, president; E. T. Dixon, vice-president; M.

S. Huffman, cashier. Directors: C. F. Crocker, H. H. Hewlett, C. H. Huffman, W. H. Hartley, G. B. Cook, E. T. Dixon, G. Garibaldi.

Among the clients of the bank are many of the leading merchants and capitalists of the county, and as the prosperity of the town increases the influence of this banking house is certain to become an important factor in the financial concerns of the valley.

## THE EAST SIDE CANAL AND IRRIGATION COMPANY

The canal property of this company is locally known as the Stevenson & Mitchell canal, and the East Side canal.

The company was incorporated in January, 1887, the first directors and corporators being as follows: James J. Stevenson, John W. Mitchell, Charles P. Harris, Samuel Stevenson and Howard H. Hogan. The principal place of business is given as Livingston, Merced county. None of the stock of this company has ever been sold. The corporation was organized for the purpose of constructing a canal, carrying on navigation on their account, renting water for irrigating and domestic purposes to others, and doing all kinds of business of that nature.

Notice to claim water for this canal was posted on the right bank of the San Joaquin river, in section 16, township 9 south, range 12 east, November, 1886, and recorded in the same month. Work was begun in January 1887 by constructing inlet and outlet gates in Mariposa and Bear creeks. Excavation was begun on the 31st of March, 1887. The construction was done by Stevenson, Mitchell and Co., by hiring labor by the day or month, furnishing supplies, stock, constructing implements, and everything necessary to carry on a work of this character.

About 500,000 feet of lumber was used in this canal for head-gates, inlet, outlet, and stop-gates. These gates cost about \$50 for every thousand feet of lumber used in their construction. They were built in a very substantial manner, the frame work resting upon a sheet piling foundation, which was sunk six feet below grade. All stop-gates are so arranged as to form a bridge across the canal, and all inlet and outlet gates so as to form a bridge across the embankment, thus giving a good roadway along the embankment from the head to the terminus of the canal.

In length the main canal is 20 miles. It is forty-two feet wide on the bottom and forty-eight feet at the natural level of the ground; then there is a "berme" of five feet on each side of the canal, and next to this the bank rising about three feet above the natural surface of the ground, making it seven feet from the grade to the top of the embankments. At a point six feet from grade, the canal is seventy-four feet wide. The slope of the canal is one to one, except in very sandy ground, where it is two to one; the slope is made so steep to prevent the growth of plants, which would obstruct the flow; they will not grow in deep water. The cost of construction was about \$80,000. The canal has a fall of six inches to the mile, and will easily carry and discharge 600 cubic feet per second.

No serious engineering difficulties were encountered in construction, the country being comparatively level. Some bed rock was met with which required blasting, and on our part of the line some rolling ground, but these did not seriously interfere with the work. The canal was finished and water turned in on the 1st of May, 1888, a year and a month after commencement of excavation.

About 80,000 acres of land is susceptible of irrigation from this canal, all of which can be classed as first-rate. Of this land, Director James J. Stevinson owns about 12,000 acres, and Director John W. Mitchell, 10,000.

The present officers of the East Side Canal and Irrigation Company are: James J. Stevenson, president; Samuel Stevenson, secretary; Directors, James J. Stevenson, John W. Mitchell, Charles P. Harris, Samuel Stevenson, and Howard H. Hogan.

Much credit is due the engineer who laid out and directed the work, General John W. Bost. Under his superintendence the canal was built in the best manner and without unnecessary expenditure, while some original ideas and devices of his own incorporated in the work have proven of great advantage in operation.

## SAN JOAQUIN AND KING'S RIVER CANAL

This great canal, at the time of construction of the first portion, completed in 1871, was the most important irrigation enterprise in the State of California, and, though others have been pushed to completion since that are on an even greater scale, it continues to hold the lead in one respect at least, that of length, as it is sixty-seven miles long from its head near the junction of Fresno slough and the San Joaquin river, in Fresno county, to its terminus, at Orestimba creek, in Stanislaus county. It thus passes, in its course, entirely through Merced county, while also covering considerable ground in Fresno and Stanislaus counties. In 1871 there were thirty-eight and a half miles completed, from the head-waters to Los Banos creek, by dint of some remarkable rapid work and great push and energy. In 1877 and 1878, the extension to the Orestimba was completed, making the entire cost of the plant, with alterations, repairs and improvements, something like a million and a half dollars. At the head of the canal are a regulating bridge, with forty feet opening, a sluiceway fifty-five feet in width between the head of the canal and an island in the river, and a brush dam about 350 feet long connecting the island with the east bank of the river. The regulating bridge has a substantial foundation on piles driven thirty to forty feet into the quicksand bed. The

sluiceway on the west side of the island is arranged to permit the passage of steamers and barges during the season when the river is navigable, the vessel being drawn up the steep incline of its apron by means of the capstan.

From the main canal there are now distributing ditches, giving a total length of nearly 200 miles. There is also a "loop" canal, seven miles long, parallel to the main canal for the most part, and connecting with it at both ends, to facilitate the distribution of water to Dos Palos rancho.

The main canal is seven feet in depth, from fifty to fifty-seven feet wide on the bottom, and sixty-seven feet wide on top in the widest part, the fall for the first thirty-eight and a half miles being one foot to the mile, and below that six inches to the mile. The canal can irrigate 100,000 acres lying below it.

A large portion of the water is used in irrigating the tracts of Miller & Lux, lying along its course, though a great deal is sold to other parties.

## THE CHOWCHILLA CANAL

is on the east side of the San Joaquin river, and derives its water from that stream at a point about two miles from Fresno slough, and terminating at Chowchilla slough, on Chowchilla ranch. It was built in 1872 by Miller & Lux, and others. It is thirty miles long, and throughout its course is five to eight miles distant from the river.

The firm of Miller & Lux have utilized the soughs on their vast possessions in the construction of the canal system by which much of their land is watered, and the total of their irrigating enterprises makes a vast showing.

## EDUCATION

This subject receives more than ordinary attention from the citizens of Merced county, whose schools rank very high in efficiency.

The records do not show the existence of County superintendent of Schools in this county until some two years after its organization. By the terms of the law of 1852 the assessor of each county was *ex-officio* School Superintendent, and at the first election held in the county, on the second Monday of May, 1852, J. W. Robertson was elected County Assessor. In 1855, however, the law was changed so as to make the office of County Superintendent elective, the same as in the case of other county officials. The records show that S. H. P. Ross was appointed County Superintendent in February, 1857, by the Board of Supervisors.

The following have been chosen to the office of County Superintendent in the past: S. H. P. Ross, B. F. Howell, Rev. Burnett, F. J. Woodward, R. B. Huey, T. O. Ellis, M. C. Monroe, S. H. Ross (second election), J. K. Law, L. D. Stockton and E. T. Dixon. The present incumbent, Mr. J. A. Norvell, holds until 1895.

From the reports of the census year 1890, the following facts in relation to the school affairs of Merced county appear: Total number of children of school age, 1,647; number that attended school at any time during the year, 1,198, of whom four were negroes and one Chinese; number who attended only private school, 48; average daily attendance, 809; average number belonging, 875; number attending grammar grade, 274; primary grade, 1,082; total number of pupils, 1,356; number of grammar schools, 20; number of primary schools, 21; number of school houses, 41; school districts, 41; number of teachers, 46; average monthly wages paid male teachers, \$70; average monthly wages paid female teachers, \$69; assessed valuation of taxable property, \$14,159,887; balance of school funds on hand at beginning of school year, \$9,081.21; cash received from State apportionment, \$15,442.35; cash received from county taxes, \$19,362.15; cash received from city and district taxes, \$1,036.24; cash received from miscellaneous sources, \$77.75; total receipts, \$44,999.70; amount paid for teachers' salaries, \$25,872.75; total expenditures, \$36,684.60; balance on hand at close of school year, \$8,315.10; total valuation of school property, \$65,131; number of volumes in school library, 5,508.

On the 4th of June, 1863, a convention of teachers met at Snelling, and the first county institute was organized.

The first Examining Board was appointed by T. O. Ellis in 1865; and was composed as follows: Judge J. W. Robertson, Rev. J. C. Pendergast, S. K. Spears and J. C. Breen.

There is one private education institution of magnitude in this county, - the Merced Academy, which was opened in 1888, and which has high standing as a preparatory school for college work.