THE STORY
OF
KINGS COUNTY
CALIFORNIA

By
J. L. BROWN

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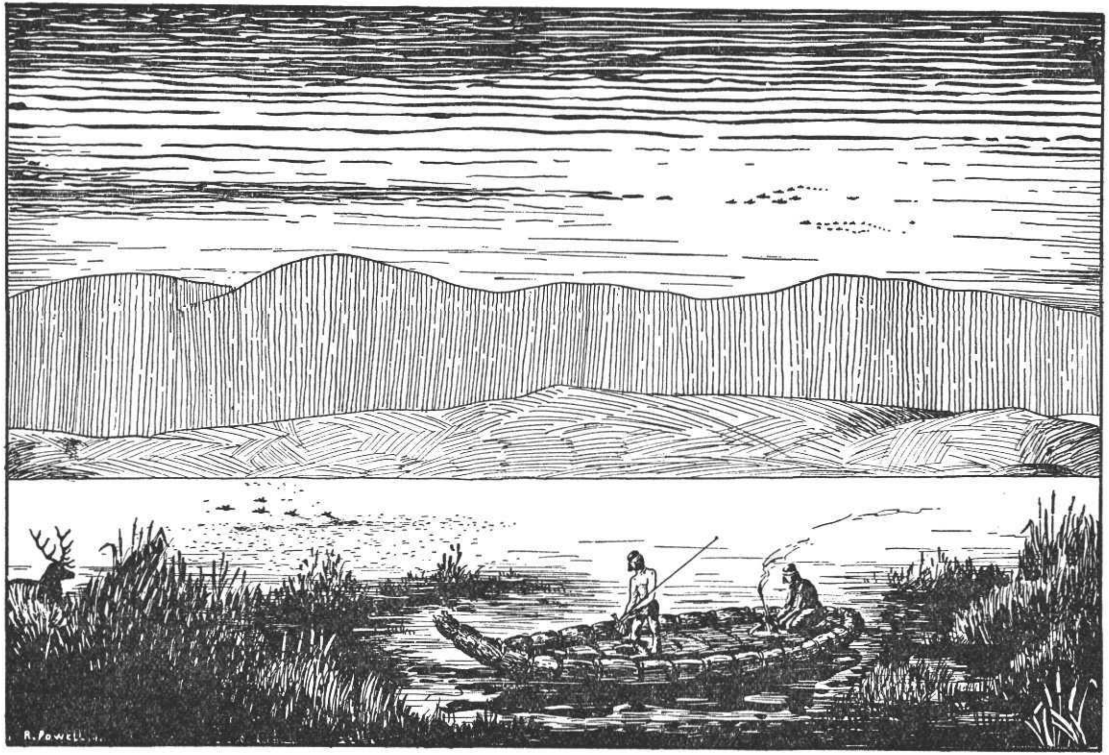
R. Powell

THE STORY OF KINGS COUNTY

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By

J. L. BROWN

HANFORD, CALIFORNIA

FOREWORD

Early in 1936 Mrs. Harriet Davids, Kings County Librarian, and Mr. Bethel Mellor, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, called attention to the need of a history of Kings County for use in the schools and investigated the feasibility of having one written. I had the honor of being asked to prepare a text to be used in the intermediate grades, and the resulting pamphlet was published in the fall of that year.

Even before its publication I was aware of its inadequacy and immediately began gathering material for a better work. The present volume is the result. While it is designed to fit the needs of schools, it is hoped that it may not be found so "textbookish" as to disturb anyone who may be interested in a concise and organized story of the county's past.

Conflict of opinion and disagreement of source materials make the writing of local history particularly difficult, and I cannot hope that in such a pioneering work as this everything has been said just as it should have been. Circumstances have demanded condensation, and brevity—as well as other considerations—has rendered impossible the stressing of the personal element. The curtailment of personal reference and the very act of condensation have eliminated much interest. On the other hand, compression has its virtues.

It would be impossible to prepare such a work without incurring obligations to a number of persons. These obligations I wish to acknowledge and to express my appreciation to all concerned, although to name each individual is impossible.

In the several libraries in which I have worked I have always been accorded courteous helpfulness. Particularly has this been true in my contacts with the staffs of the two local libraries and of the State Library at Sacramento.

The staff of the County Superintendent's office were always helpful.

To Mr. F. F. Latta I am under deep obligation, not only for the use of his many publications but also for valuable suggestions concerning a portion of the manuscript, which he read.

I particularly appreciate the graciousness of Miss Marjorie Whited in preparing for me the Tachi "Rain Song."

Powell's Studio has been helpful in furnishing pictures, and I am greatly obligated to Mr. Ralph Powell for the drawing which appears as the frontispiece.

To Mrs. C. V. Buckner I wish to express my gratitude for pictures and for other favors.

The files of the Hanford *Sentinel* and the Hanford *Journal* have been of inestimable value.

The Avenal *Rotary* provided useful material.

For special help I am indebted to Mrs. Verna Brown, Mr. E. K. Ford, Mr. Roy May, Mr. Rupert Kendall, and Mr. Robert R. Brown.

In connection with publication Mr. P. L. Adams has provided generous assistance.

J. L. BROWN.

Hanford, California,
September 5, 1941.

THE STORY OF KINGS COUNTY

CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE FIRST PEOPLE

When the first Spaniards under Don Pedro Fages entered the San Joaquin Valley through Grapevine Canyon in 1772 and looked toward the north, they saw a "labyrinth of lakes and tulares."[1] The men who composed this party are conceded to have been the first Europeans ever to have seen this beautiful valley, unless—as is probably true—the fugitive soldiers for whom they were searching preceded them. Fages himself described the valley as "thickly settled with many large villages", and his account is probably accurate, although his observation was limited by the fact that he passed through only a little of it, since he turned westward near Buena Vista Lake and went on to San Luis Obispo.

Early settlers have often described those portions of present Kings County which were not subject to frequent overflow as mostly a treeless plain; but willows bordered the sloughs, and a fine belt of oak timber beautified the region adjacent to Kings River. The land was as fertile then as it is now, but was much more subject to the whims of the seasons. For a large part of the driest years portions of it resembled a desert, but within a few months, those very spots might be under water.

Though Kings is called a little county, twenty-three of California's fifty-eight counties are smaller in area and twenty-nine have fewer people. The majority of counties in many states are smaller and less populous. In taxable wealth it ranks ninth in California. A straight line more than sixty miles long could be drawn across it from northeast to southwest. Kings County, indeed, is larger than the smallest state of our Union.

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[1] Bolton, Herbert E., "In the South San Joaquin Ahead of Garces."

Hanford, the county seat, is almost equidistant from the two great metropolitan areas of the state. It is about seventy miles by road from two great groves of the famous Sequoias and about one hundred and thirty miles by road from an ocean beach.

Most of the land surface slopes gently from north to south and from east to west, until the Kettleman Hills are reached in the southwestern portion of the county. These steep hills, rising to an elevation of only a few hundred feet above sea level, overlook the lowest land surface of the county, the bed of Tulare Lake, which is one hundred and seventy-nine feet above the mean level of the ocean.

The early explorers found the San Joaquin Valley inhabited by many tribes of Indians, all belonging to the Yokuts[2] group. There were possibly as many as fifty tribes altogether, with a total population that may have exceeded 20,000, but the Indian population had diminished before the coming of the white settlers. Several authorities have reported a terrible epidemic in 1832 or 1833—possibly during both years—which destroyed whole villages and seriously depleted the population of the entire valley.

Although the whole San Joaquin Valley belonged to the Yokuts tribes,[3] historians and ethnologists have never obtained a thorough knowledge of those in the northern half. From the Fresno River south to El Tejon the tribes have been identified and their former homes located. Between those two points the Yokuts people held also the Sierra Nevada foothills, as well as the Kettleman Hills.

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[2] The singular form of the word is Yokuts. Plurals in this work are as they would be in English, since the Indian plural forms would be confusing.

[3] "A Handbook of American Indians," by A. L. Kroeber, is followed basically in this study of the Yokuts; but two intimate narratives by F. F. Latta have furnished much detail. They are "Uncle Jeff's Story," a published volume, and "The Story of My People," which appeared in the Hanford Sentinel. No one who wishes to understand the aborigines of the San Joaquin Valley can afford to overlook either of them.

It would be an error to suppose that all or even the greater portion of the valley was permanently settled by the Indians. They dwelt in favored localities and roamed at will within their tribal limits. Since their primitive ways made a constant natural supply of water necessary, their villages were close to the streams and lakes. The average area held by one tribe was probably about three hundred or four hundred square miles, and the average population was a few hundred people.

The Yokuts were the only Indians of California who were divided into true tribes, each having a name, a distinct dialect, and a recognized area of its own. Although the tribes were generally on good terms with one another, and while there was cooperation between tribes, there was no supreme government uniting the Yokuts as a nation. Some of the white men who knew them in their primitive condition believed that there was about as much likelihood of war between two Yokuts tribes as between the Yokuts and other tribes.

The eastern neighbors of the Yokuts were the Shoshonean peoples, who held not only the land east of the Sierra Nevada but also the higher western slopes of those mountains. T. J. Mayfield,[4] who lived for ten years with the Choinimni Yokuts on Kings River near Piedra, said that the valley Indians considered themselves much better than their mountain neighbors, and added that he thought they were justified in that belief. Members of the two groups, meeting on the trail, would ignore one another. There was some trading between them, but that was carried on by certain members of the tribes.

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[4] "Uncle Jeff's Story."

Some of the Shoshonean Indians were called Paiutes or Paiutis, and there is no doubt that they often came into the San Joaquin Valley, but any such individual was a foreigner there. Some authorities, however, have believed them to have been a considerable part of the valley's population, particularly in the southeastern section.

The area that is now Kings County was occupied mainly, if not entirely, by four tribes, three of them along the shores and on the islands of Tulare Lake and the fourth on the southern bank of Kings River. The fertile strip of land several miles in width, lying adjacent to Kings River belonged to the Nutunutu tribe. They reached from near Lemoore to a point as far upstream as Highway Ninety-nine near Kingsburg. They had several villages, one of which was *Chiau,* a short distance from where Kingston later stood. This strong and populous tribe has practically disappeared.

Although the three tribes which inhabited the shores and islands of the lake are described by historians as rather warlike in comparison with other Yokuts, they appear to have been on reasonably good terms with their neighbors and to have been friendly to strangers, if not mistreated.

On the southeastern shore and on the islands were the Wowol people, mainly but not entirely outside the present limits of Kings County. Their chief town was on the largest island, later known as Atwell's Island. The town of Alpaugh is now situated there. The fact that the Wowols made the island their chief dwelling place, although they had to transport their wood from the mainland, may be an indication that they were not on the best of terms with their neighbors. A. J. Atwell, an early and prominent attorney of Visalia (whose name was later given to the island), is authority for the statement that most of the Wowols had been removed from their homes and taken to reservations by the United States cavalry as early as 1854. This may account for the fact that the Wowols have not been so well known as some other tribes.

North of the Wowols, along the eastern shore of the lake was the Chunut tribe. Their habitat seems to have been from the mouth of Cross Creek across the mouth of Tule River, extending only a few miles up the streams. One of their chief villages was at the mouth of Tule River, on the south bank. Another was at Waukena.[5]

The north and northwestern shores were occupied by the Tachi tribe, whose territory also extended into the hills almost as far as Coalinga. How far southward they reached on the western shore is not known. They constituted one of the largest of all the Yokuts tribes. They wintered at their village of *Udjiu,* a few miles east of Coalinga, and at *Walna,* near the present Kettleman City. In the late summer and fall they crossed Kings River to gather grass seeds and acorns in the vicinity of Lemoore. The site of one of their villages, *Waiu,* on Mussel Slough, is now the rancheria of Santa Rosa. Most of the present residents of the rancheria are Tachis.

Intertribal relations among the many Yokuts groups are not thoroughly known, but it seems that the Tachis were more friendly with the Nutunutus than they were with the Chunuts. In fact it seems that Cross Creek formed a barrier between several more or less hostile tribes, although there are known instances of friendly intercourse that crossed that line.

As an example of intertribal friendliness, "Uncle Jeff's Story" furnishes an interesting illustration. The "Uncle

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[5] The names and sites of the Chunut villages are said by a leading authority on the Indians of California to be unidentified. Mr. F. F. Latta, through many interviews with Indians and early white settlers, has supplied that information, as he has much additional historical data.

Jeff" of the story—a true story—tells of accompanying the Choinimni Indians on two of their annual trips from their foothill home to Tulare Lake. The journey down Kings River was made by means of a tule raft at least fifty feet long. On the way they saw Indians of various tribes, who appeared friendly and seemed to look upon the trip as a right not to be questioned. The Choinimnis camped on the land of the Tachis, where they seemed to be entirely welcome.

Although they spoke different dialects, they were able to understand one another. Among the Yokuts the individuals of one tribe could commonly make themselves intelligible to those of another, even if they represented as widely separated localities as Bakersfield and Stockton. This fact indicates similarities among dialects, but it is well known that the Indians everywhere were adept in the use of sign language.

The total number of Indians who formerly inhabited what is now Kings County is largely a matter of conjecture; but, if estimates made by such an eminent authority on the subject as A. L. Kroeber[6] can be taken as a guide, there were probably more than a thousand, possibly several hundred more. Of the Nutunutus there were at least three or four hundred, and the Tachi group was probably considerably larger. That these figures are not in agreement with some estimates made by early settlers may be due to the fact that before the settlers had contact with the Indians many of the latter had been removed from their homes to reservations. Many had met untimely deaths. This estimate may be too conservative.

The Indians' way of life is an interesting subject and one which can now be rather thoroughly understood. A fundamental fact is that the natives of the San Joaquin sustained life by utilizing the natural products of the land and water. They cultivated no crops; they herded no flocks.

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[6] "Handbook of American Indians."

They were able, nevertheless, to provide themselves with a rather widely varied diet and maintain a reasonable balance of meat and vegetable constituents. In general, the natives of California, because of the unusually bountiful variety of resources, had access to a much greater diversity of foods than was available to the Indians of most sections of the United States. For that reason if a staple article of food, like acorns, failed for a season, there was not likely to be starvation. In the Kings County area there were other foods more widely available than acorns. The lands of the Chunuts and those of the Wowols were not well supplied with oak trees. The Nutunutus, on the other hand, had an abundance of oaks.

The flesh of almost all wild animals of the region was used for food. One exception was the coyote, which was not eaten, probably for religious reasons, for that animal held a very important place in the mythology of the Yokuts. There was also a prejudice against eating the grizzly bear. Since the bear might have eaten human flesh, eating the bear would have been considered some kind of cannibalism.

Among the animals most sought for food were deer, antelope, elk, rabbits, raccoons, groundsquirrels, and gophers. The deer was a favorite game and could often be obtained, but the valley Indians were not well equipped for bringing down a large, strong animal like an elk. Rabbits were plentiful and were rather easily obtainable, but groundsquirrels were often the most unfailing source of meat.

In general the Indians of California considered the dog absolutely taboo as food. While that was not true among the Yokuts, history affords no evidence that the flesh of dogs was an important article of food. The Indians had no dogs until the white men came.

Many species of waterfowl and other birds were plentiful in the area and naturally constituted an important part of the food supply. Ducks, geese, mudhens, swans, sandhill cranes, pigeons, doves, meadowlarks—all these and still other birds were sought for food. Birds of prey and of carrion—hawks, eagles, crows, buzzards, and owls—were not eaten, probably for religious reasons, though their palatability may be strongly doubted.

Fish, of course, were very much in use, and the muddy margins of lakes and streams produced many fresh-water clams, called mussels. These the Indians relished when they were baked, and could eat them raw in an emergency. None of the southern Yokuts ate reptiles of any kind, though some other western Indians relished certain snakes, and it is well known that the desert tribes ate lizards, notably the chuckwallas. While it may be surprising and even shocking to learn that the southern Yokuts ate the flesh of skunks, it is said that when these animals are smoked to death in their dens, they are without offensive odor. It is hardly likely that many people will ask for proof.

Grassnuts and the roots of tules were used in great quantities. Several species of tules grew wherever shallow water stood throughout the year, and could easily be pulled from the soft mud. Grassnuts grew in well watered sandy places and were dug by means of a sharpened stick. They range in size from that a small pea upward, the largest being more than a half-inch in diameter. When the thin, tough husk or shell is removed, they are very palatable without any preparation.

There are many grasses in the valley which produce tiny seeds. Many of these the Indian women gathered with painstaking labor and pounded into meal for food. Tender grasses, particularly clover, were eaten whenever and wherever they were found, if the Indian happened to be in the mood for eating. While he was hunting, he might fill his mouth with clover and season it by drawing between his lips a salt-covered stick which he carried under his belt. Some observers have reported seeing many Indians on their hands and knees, cropping clover much as cattle do. Mushrooms, which sprang up abundantly during the rainy season, were gathered for immediate consumption or to be dried for later use.

The San Joaquin Valley was not well supplied with native fruits. There was, however, a fine blackberry in some of the well watered localities, including the swampy places that bordered Kings River and Cross Creek. After being dried these berries could be kept indefinitely.

Long after the Indians had been dispossessed of their lands they used to migrate annually from the foothills to the swamplands east of Visalia when the wild blackberries were ripening. There they would wade to their waists in the cold water of the streams, gathering berries where white pickers would not go. By selling what they gathered to the white residents they earned a little money to provide for their own needs.

The American Indians have generally been considered an improvident race, eating gluttonously when food was plentiful and starving when it was not easily available. This charge cannot justly be made against the Yokuts tribes, for one of their chief concerns in life was the business of gathering, preparing, and storing food for later use. The house was usually well stocked with dried foods of many varieties. While the women did most of the work of obtaining and handling these supplies, the men brought in the game. Not only tedious labor but much practical knowledge was required. Anything that was to be kept for a considerable time had to be dried. Fish and meats, as well as vegetable products, were preserved by drying.

Acorns were dried and pulverized in the well known stone mortars by being beaten with stone pestles. But stone mortars were not always available. In the foothills depressions were made in the outcroppings of granite, where they remain plainly visible to-day. The valley Indians usually had portable stone mortars, but sometimes they hollowed out blocks of oak wood and used them. After the acorn meal was well pulverized, it had to be carefuly treated before it was ready to be eaten. Acorns contain a bitter, astringent substance—tannic acid—which must be removed by leaching with water. This was sometimes done by submerging a porous basket filled with meal in a stream, so that the water could flow through it for a long time. Another method was to place the dry meal in a carefully prepared excavation in sand and to pour boiling water in sufficient quantities through the mass. When the loaf was removed, after drying, the sand could be swept off, and the bread was ready to be eaten or to be stored for future use.

In like manner the roots of tules were sometimes pulverized and leached. On the other hand, the Indians sometimes ate them without leaching. White men have testified that the tender shoots are good. Sometimes, after giving the roots a thorough washing, the Indians pressed the starch out of them into a small amount of water and allowed the resulting liquid to harden into a cake.

Salt was obtained from salt-grass, which was cut and piled to dry. When the dried grass was beaten, salt-crystals would drop from it. Imagine the labor involved in supplying a tribe with salt in that manner!

Cooking consisted of two processes, roasting and boiling. Meat was roasted over an open fire, either by being thrown on the coals or suspended over the fire on a long, flexible stick. Small game was often roasted without being subjected to any process of dressing or cleaning. Boiling was done in water-tight baskets by dropping heated stones into the liquid. For this purpose the cook used loops made of withes, which could also be used for stirring. The thin mush or soup thus made from acorns was highly regarded everywhere.

The houses of the Yokuts were very simple in design, and, while they were of two or three types, were very much alike. The most common habitation of the lake Indians was a long, narrow structure consisting of tules stretched over a framework of poles. A row of forked poles, set in the ground with the forks upward, supported a ridgepole made of light but strong beams, that might extend for two or three hundred feet. Parallel to this were two more rows of boughs, one on each side, with one end set in the ground. The upper and lighter ends of these boughs were drawn to the ridgepole and lashed securely. Poles were then lashed to these in horizontal positions, and over the frame thus formed were thrown tightly woven tule mats. At the top an opening was left beween the mats that covered the two sides to allow smoke to escape. The long tules in the covering mats extended from top to bottom, rather than horizontally, in order to shed water.

In such a long house several families lived, with no partition between them, but each occupied a separate portion, entered by a different door, and respected the rights of others. On the ground, midway between the walls, fires were kept burning in cold weather. Tule mats were laid on the ground, and on them the residents slept, with heads toward the walls and feet toward the fire. The house was used for sleeping and for shelter during inclement weather, and also as a storehouse for food that was suspended from the ridgepole. The Indians liked sleeping out of doors except during rainy or cold weather.

Smaller dwellings were built in much the same manner. These were dome-shaped, with a smoke-hole in the top and an opening for a door at the south side. Some Yokuts excavated a round place about two feet deep, over which to construct such a house, and then built very substantially.

Mud was sometimes plastered over and pressed into the network of tules and sticks, but few houses of this type were in use after the coming of the whites. Probably they were the exception before that time.

Although the Indians have often been called naked savages, they did wear clothes—when they wanted to. Children often went entirely naked when the weather permitted, and the apparel of a man might be very scant. His costume in summer was nothing more than an article known as a "breech clout" in the white man's language. It was likely to be a strip of buckskin ten or twelve inches wide and several feet long. The process of dressing in this suit was first to fold the thing over a cord, and then hold it at the waistline in the back. The two ends of the cord were brought to the front; the folds of the deerskin were drawn between the legs, the ends being lifted to the chin; then the cord was tied, and the deerskin dropped over it in the nature of an apron. In cold weather a man would probably have the skin of some animal drawn around his shoulders. He wore no shoes or moccasins of any kind.

The women wore skirts, which were, in fact, two short aprons, one in front and one behind. These were likely to be made of rabbit's skin, and of the same material was made a cape, which the Indian woman often wore around her shoulders.

The manner of preparing the skin and fur of the rabbit for use is interesting. When the skin was first taken from the animal, it was cut into narrow strips, less than an inch in width. These were made into rolls with the fur outside. When the skin dried, it tended to shrink and curl tightly, so that it was covered with fur all around. These long strips of fur were woven or sewed to make clothing or blankets. The favorite bed coverings were blankets made in this manner. The lake dwellers used the skin and down of mudhens in the same way.

Both men and women wore their hair long. A man might tie a string diagonally around his head to keep his hair from his eyes. This string was made of the fiber of milkweed, and was much like a cotton or linen twine. Into it, when it was to be used as a headband, was likely to be woven a little down from an eagle to give power to the wearer. Under it were often pressed a few feathers, which might or might not be dyed.

For killing game the Yokuts used bows and arrows, made some use of stone-pointed spears, and, whenever possible, liked to make use of some kind of snare. They went into the water to catch fish, or speared them from a raft. A number of men would go into the water and drive the fish to a shallow place, where nets had been woven to hinder their escape. Then a tall basket with an opening at each end would be thrust down over the nearest fish, which could be removed through the opening at the upper end of the basket. Although they made flexible nets for snaring birds and rabbits, they did not use them as seines for taking fish.

To help him in stalking deer the native hunter liked to cover his body with a deer's hide to which the antlers were attached. Tragedy sometimes occurred when a hunter was so skillfully disguised that he was taken for a deer by another hunter.

Rabbits were driven toward a drawn net and killed with clubs. Similar but smaller nets, made of milkweed string, were attached to poles and used for snaring ducks. Squirrels were smoked to death in their burrows. A little digging would reveal them near the surface of the ground, where they had been trying to escape from the covered holes.

The hunters of this region used short bows and held them horizontally or diagonally, never perpendicularly, as European archers did, or as modern American archers do. Some, if not all of the Yokuts got their best bows from the mountain Indians.

The arrows were pointed with obsidian or with hard wood, their size and construction depending somewhat upon the type of game they were designed to kill. Arrows for large game or for war were unusually long, some of them consisting of two shafts. The long main shaft fitted into a socket in the short one, to which the head was attached. Button willow was a favorite wood for arrows. Some were made of arrow weed. Stones with straight grooves cut in them were used for straightening the shafts. The quiver was made of the skin of an animal, preferably that of a fox.

Craftsmanship reached its highest development in the making of baskets. The artistic nature of some tribes found its highest expression in basket-making, though the practical rather than the artistic value of the product was stressed. This work was done by the women. In it the Tachis excelled, but the Chunuts and the Wowols did not.[7] Some foothill tribes of Yokuts also made excellent baskets. When the collecting of Indian baskets became a fad during the latter years of last century and the early years of the present, "Tulare" baskets became famous, as did Yokuts baskets generally. Authorities agree that the work of the basket-makers of the southern San Joaquin compares favorably with the best done by native races anywhere in North America.

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[7] "The Story of My People," written from interviews with Yoi-mut, an elderly Chunut woman.

The native craftsmen used the materials obtainable in their own localities, supplemented by barter. Everywhere willow withes, willow bark, and willow roots were used. The redbud *(Cercis canadensis)* of the mountains was highly prized, as were young twigs from oak trees. The roots of spruce and other trees were used, and certain grasses of the valley furnished roots and fibrous stems that could be worked into the desired pattern.

Designs were worked into the baskets by the utilization of various colors. In some cases only the natural colors of materials were used, but often dyeing was practiced. This was accomplished through the use of highly colored earth or charcoal, by using vegetable stains, or even by water alone—when soaking caused a certain material to change its color. The figures were conventionalized designs copied from nature. The diamond markings of the rattlesnake were extensively copied and widely varied. A band of conventionalized human figures was often used.

There were baskets of many types, varying in size and shape, as well as in construction, according to their several purposes. A cone-shaped carrying basket was common to many tribes. Bowl-like baskets served as cooking pots and containers. A long sifting basket, resembling a cradle, was used in separating seeds from grasses. Woven baby-carriers were a staple article of furniture.

Social life was simple and rigidly restricted by tradition. Families were not isolated from one another but lived in villages. Entertainment consisted of games, stories, songs, and dancing around the campfire, the dances often being connected with some important ceremony. The stories usually had a religious significance, being connected with the bird and animal people who were supposed to have inhabited the earth before the Indians came. Songs were often chants of prayer to the various spirits which might have power over human beings. According to our ideas, these people were superstitious, since they believed in ghosts or spirits, yet they seem to have had a strong sense of the unity of spirit.

Their story-telling art can best be appreciated through reading examples of their stories, which are now available in print.[8] Like all myth-makers, the Indian saw a phenomenon of nature and invented a story to explain it.

There were many games by which they amused themselves, some of them athletic in nature and some purely guessing games. The men and boys wrestled, ran races, and played shinny and a kind of football in which they used a stone for a ball. This they did not kick, for obvious reasons, but carried on their toes. They liked to choose sides and bring a large group into a game. In one of the guessing games a player would take in his hands two pieces of stone, wood, or bone, one of which was marked, shuttle them from hand to hand behind his back, after which a player from the opposing side would try to guess in which hand the marked piece was held. All the players had great fun, laughing and shouting and trying to addle their opponents.

Marriage involved no ceremony. A young man spoke to the parents of the girl of his choice, and they carried his wishes to their daughter. If she made strenuous objection, he withdrew. Otherwise, some payment was made to the girl's parents, and she went to the home which had been prepared for her.

Complete knowledge of marriage customs is not available, but it seems that a man usually sought his wife outside his own tribe, though marriage within the tribe was also practiced. Even distant kinship of bride and groom was usually not permitted. There was another situation, too, which affected the matter of marriage. There were two great divisions of people according to totem. The totem was an animal that stood as a symbol of a group, was sacred to the group, and supposedly added power to it in some mystic way. These totem animals—and birds—were grouped in two divisions, and the people were separated accordingly. In most Yokuts tribes a man was expected to marry outside his own totemic group.

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[8] See "California Indian Folklore," by F. F. Latta.

Polygamy existed but was not commonly practiced. Divorce, or separation after marriage, was unusual.

There were certain well established customs connected with death and burial. It was very important that the body of an individual be buried near the place where he had lived, an indication of the love of home. This custom emphasizes the fact that the Yokuts were not a nomadic people, as some North American Indians were. There was some moving from place to place with the changing of the seasons, but it was within small areas.

Certain close relatives of the deceased cut their hair to show mourning, and abstained from eating meat for a time. There was a crying and dancing ceremony, at which the personal belongings of the dead person were burned, so that they could go to him in spirit. Widows put blackened pitch on their faces and left it there until the next dance for the dead. This was a ceremony at which the people gathered in great numbers and danced for six days and nights. At the end they burned effigies of the dead people, together with gifts to them. Then the mourners were washed, put on new clothes, and felt that their period of mourning was ended.

There were two types of medicine men, one being considered much stronger than the other. They understood the medicinal properties of some herbs, and they practiced bloodletting; but the powerful medicine doctors practiced, or pretended to practice, magic. They were supposed to be able to bring rain or other storms, to make things grow, to make people well or sick. While drawing blood from a sick person they might show an animal, a rattlesnake, arrowhead, or other article, which they claimed to have taken from the patient's body. They must have been skilled at sleight of hand. They always took chances, for if several of their patients died, the relatives of the dead might kill the doctor.

There was an initiation ceremony through which a boy went before he was considered a man. Boys undergoing this initiation were instructed by old men regarding their lives during a period of perhaps six days, during which they ate or drank nothing but thin acorn soup. Then they drank of a narcotic liquor made from the roots of the jimson weed. This put them into a stupor and produced dreams. The experience was supposed to give the initiates power and good luck.

Property ownership was both communal and individual. Shells and beads were used as money, and it was possible to become rich by accumulating them. A chief might become very wealthy, but he was responsible for the welfare of his tribe.

The white man's judgments of the Indian's way of life differ widely, but in many instances were not favorable. A little study, however, will show that the white man, with few exceptions, judged the Indian by his own standards, and very often demanded that the Indian live up to those standards much better than he did himself. He often pronounced the Indian filthy, lazy, and indecent, without taking the trouble to investigate and understand the facts. A common practice among the Yokuts was to take a bath each morning immediately upon rising. Of course, they had no soap, perfumed or not.

When a white man planted a crop, his Indian neighbor might dig up some of the seed, not with any malicious intent, but merely out of curiosity—desire to understand. To the white man such an act was cause for attack upon the Indians.

At the first contact between the two races the Indian's desire to be friendly often caused him to make concessions that later led to trouble. In a moment of generosity a chief might make a grant of land, but land ownership meant one thing to him and something very different to the white man. The chief probably meant to give the same rights that he and his people enjoyed, the right to hunt, without any idea of exclusive possession, cultivation, etc. It is a little difficult to see how the white people had any more right to force the Indians off their lands than one nation has to drive the people of another nation from their homes to-day.

A man who had spent much of his childhood with a Yokuts tribe and had also lived many years among the white people said: "I knew the Indians in their natural state, and I know that they were the finest people I ever met."[9] He said that they had no vulgar language to compare with that of the whites. They knew how to make fermented liquor, but discarded it when it reached that state. Although they knew a strong narcotic, there were no drug addicts among them. "White men," he said, "were always furnishing them liquor, and many of them were killed by whiskey. Whiskey made devils of them. Quarrels and fights would take place between parties who had always been friends, and . . . someone was sure to be badly knifed or shot." In the natural state the Yokuts never felt it necessary to guard their possessions. After all, they had their virtues.

Any person who takes the trouble—if trouble it is—to read the testimony of many white men who knew the North

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[9] "Uncle Jeff's Story."

American Indians intimately will find that those who knew them best saw most to admire in them.

Kings County's present Indian population lives at the Santa Rosa Rancheria, a little more than four miles south of Lemoore and a mile east of the Lemoore-Stratford highway. There are nearly a hundred people, mostly Tachis, though other tribes are represented. The Ramona School is there, and also a little Catholic church is located on the tract. A few years ago the amount of land was doubled, so that it now totals one hundred and sixty acres. Some of it is owned by individual Indians, but the most of it is held in trust by the government for their use.

Unfortunately most of the land is poor, and the residents lack the facilities for cultivating and irrigating it. They support themselves by doing farm work of various kinds for hire. Although they are considered wards of the government, they receive no regular federal aid except through appropriations for school purposes. It is earnestly to be hoped that some plan may be devised by which the Indians' instinct for cooperative work can make possible a higher standard of living for them.

There has been little if any time since the American occupation when the site has not been the home of some Indians. Before 1911 the Indian children attended the Mussel Slough School, but in that year their own school was established. In 1930 a new and creditable school building was erected. The school is well conducted under county supervision, and during the past term had an average daily attendance of about twenty.

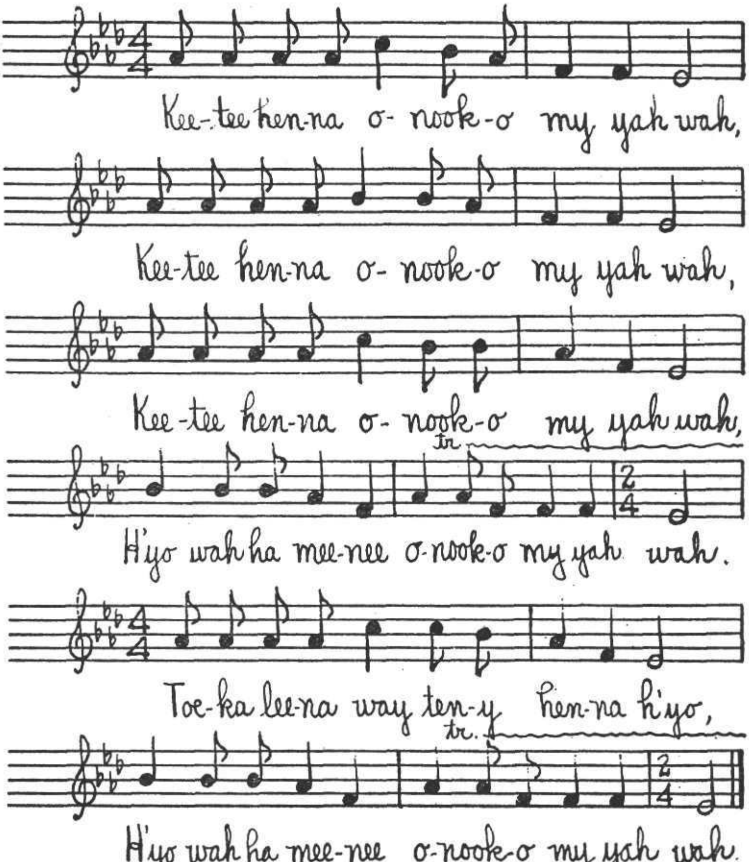
In recent years, some effort has been made to prevent the loss of the Indian arts. Basket-making is still practiced to some extent, but the lack of a ready market and the fact that the baskets are no longer necessary to the Indians themselves prevent much of that work from being done.

Many of their old songs have been revived, largely through the interest of Clarence Atwell, the young medicine man. Recordings of some of them have been made under the direction of Miss Marjorie Whited, Rural Music Supervisor for Kings County, with the aid of Mrs. Estle Brown, teacher of the Ramona School. Mr. J. Leslie Robinson was the operator of the recording machine. Re-recordings are now in the collections of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of California and the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles.

The song given below was transcribed by Miss Whited from a recording made by a few Tachi Indians at the rancheria in February, 1940. She acknowledges the valuable assistance of Clarence Atwell in connection with the pronunciation and meanings of the Indian words. The transcription conforms as nearly as possible to the pronunciation of similar or identical syllables in English.

The words of the song say: "The thunder-rock goes round and round over my head."

THE TACHI RAIN SONG


Kee-tee hen-na o-nook-o my yah wah,
Kee-tee hen-na o-nook-o my yah wah,
Kee-tee hen-na o-nook-o my yah wah,
tr.
H'yo wah ha mee-nee o-nook-o my yah wah.
Toe-ka lee-na way ten-y hen-na h'yo,
tr.
H'yo wah ha mee-nee o-nook-o my yah wah.

(Rattle ♩ ♩ except where trills are marked over the notes)

A LOST COUNTRY: TULARE LAKE, 1850

Down in the marshes the tules lean low on the edge
Of the lake, tules nile-green, and wire-grass tasseled with sedge.
The water lies still where the hollows are deep, and its glaze
Mirrors the willows and reeds and the infinite maze
Of the sky, mirrors the myriad waterfowl high
In the tranquil air, in patterns against the sky.
A splashing prodigious wakens the rhythm of waves
As tall antlered elk wade deep, and the lapping, that laves
The green tules, talks hollowly back to the land,
Where lines of plumed waterfowl lazily lie on the strand;
And the elk browse deep; they lustily champ the soft herbs,
Unmindful of heron and crane, which their greatness disturbs.
Then silently out of the lake a tule-raft glides
With brown, naked Indians crouched at its sides;
And a spear darts in through an aperture there in the raft,
And a flash from the scales of a fish, poised high on the shaft,
Is word to the silent men of food and a feast to be.
The wild things leasurely go; they unperturbedly flee.
So the pontoon of tules moves on, and contentment is rife,
As the generous sun pours down its guerdon of life.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORERS, TRAILS, AND EARLY SETTLERS

It is impossible to say just who were the first white men to set foot upon Kings County soil. Perhaps those two runaway Spanish soldiers were the first. It has been seen that their pursuers turned westward too far south, but they at least saw this Valley of the Sun in 1772.

The date of the entry of the first Europeans into the valley is worthy of a passing notice. It was four years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and three years after the coming of the first Spaniards to California. These references may serve to remind us that the San Joaquin Valley, one of the later portions of the United States to be settled by Americans, has been known for well over a century and a half.

As the Spanish padres, under the protection of soldiers, established the chain of missions along the coast of California, they were always eagerly searching for new mission sites. It naturally followed that several expeditions were made into this area, some for that definite purpose. Others were made in search of escaped neophytes.

In 1776, four years after the coming of Fages, Father Francisco Garces entered the valley of the San Joaquin by the same route. Scouting the country for mission sites, he became the first explorer of the Kaweah delta, but probably kept too far east to touch Kings County soil. The importance of such expeditions to this locality lies, of course, in the effect they produced upon later history. His report was favorable in most respects, but he considered the lack of trees suitable for lumber a serious drawback. Evidently the magnificent groves of oak trees through which he passed did not impress him. He went as far north as Woodlake, Tulare County, turned south there, and went back to southern California.

An expedition that did reach what is now Kings County was made by Father Martin in 1804. He came from San Miguel for the purpose of investigating the Indians of the Tulare Lake region with a view to establishing missions or a mission there. He found an Indian village on the shore of Tulare Lake, around which there was a population which he estimated at about 4,000. He considered this a desirable place for missionary effort, and for years it was given consideration in the padres' plans for expansion, though no mission was ever established in the area.[1]

Father Martin was greatly concerned about the moral welfare and the health of the natives, and was very sorrowful at finding that, even at so early a date, many had become victims of diseases acquired through contact with the Europeans. Diseases contracted from the whites constitute one of the chief reasons for the rapid decline of the Indian population.

No exploring party of the Spanish period is of more interest to Kings County residents than the one that resulted in the discovery and naming of Kings River. The first of several journeys led by Gabriel Morago into the southern San Joaquin was made in 1804 and 1805. On January 5 of the latter year Morago reached Kings River, and there he spent the following day, January 6, which is celebrated by the Catholic Church in honor of the Magi, the three Kings of Orient. In honor of the holy day, the river was given the lovely Spanish name *El Rio de los Santos Reyes*—the River of the Holy Kings. Other names have been given it, but the name supplied by Morago still persists in its abbreviated English form. It seems that English-speaking people have no time for long names.

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[1] Beattie, George Wilson, "California's Unbuilt Missions."

Morago made later trips into the region, as did other Spanish leaders, sometimes accompanied by priests who were always in search of new sites for missions. In general they found conditions discouraging, but the Kings River area was one of the few that they recommended for the purpose. Some preparation was actually made toward erecting a mission near Laton.

One cannot read the story of the Spanish padres and military explorers in California without being strongly impressed by the remarkable courage and stamina shown by some individuals of each group. This impression is so completely in contrast with the general idea of Spanish-Mexican life in the colony that it deserves mention. Certainly neither the final failure of the missionary conquest nor the fact that it never actually spread to this valley was due to the lack of individuals who were strenuously energetic and passionately devoted to the cause.

One of the problems of the padres grew out of the presence of the soldiers. The protection offered by the military men was deemed necessary, but some of the soldiers were men of low morals, whose influence undermined the teachings of the priests. Many difficulties grew out of mistreatment of the Indians by the soldiers. Moreover, the missionaries, instead of relying upon persuasion, undertook to compel the Indians to come to the missions and submit to their discipline. The rigid restrictions of mission life naturally became irksome to the neophytes, and many of them fled. Soldiers would then be sent to bring them back, and battles often followed. All this greatly hindered the cause of the mission fathers.

The San Joaquin Valley became the place of refuge for escaping neophytes, and was therefore the scene of many battles. During the years from 1805 until the secularization of the missions in 1834 many exploring parties as well as companies in search of fugitives from the missions came into the valley. Some of them touched Kings County; some did not. They obviously failed to bring about any betterment of relations between the two races.

The first Americans to enter California by overland route, so far as history records, came in 1826 under the leadership of Jedediah Strong Smith,[2] a trapper and fur trader. While still a young man he had become a partner in one of the most active fur companies of the West, working from St. Louis. Though his main business was trapping and trading for furs, he was one of the most important American explorers of the Pacific slope.

In the late summer of 1826, with a company of some sixteen men, he set out from his camp near the Great Salt Lake, hoping not only to find profitable trapping grounds but also to establish a shipping post on the Pacific. After following a devious route across the mountains and deserts of the Southwest, they reached a point on the Colorado River some eighty miles above its mouth. From there they crossed the desert and finally arrived at Mission San Gabriel, where they were hospitably received by Father Sanchez and his associates.

The civil authorities, however, were not so agreeable to the presence of armed foreigners in the province. Smith went to San Diego to interview Governor Echeandía in the hope of obtaining permission to continue the journey northward to Oregon. Instead of granting the favor, the governor ordered Smith to leave California immediately by an eastern route, and to avoid the Spanish settlements.

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[2] Jedediah Smith's story is well told in "The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific," by Harrison Clifford Dale.

Smith did not choose to go immediately toward the east, but moved northward, entering the San Joaquin Valley in January, 1827. He passed along the eastern shore of the lake and reached Kings River, where he camped for a time. He attempted to cross the mountains with his party, but found the snow too deep. After proceeding on as far as the Stanislaus River, he left the main body of his men and, with two companions, crossed the mountains in May and returned to the Great Salt Lake.

After an exhausting journey he rested only briefly and was soon on his way back to California with a small company, following practically the same route he had taken the year before. At his last crossing of the Colorado River he was attacked by Indians, who had received him with a show of friendship. All but seven of the party were killed, and those who escaped faced the terrible ordeal of fleeing across the desert without adequate preparation. After nine days of desperate struggle against heat, thirst, and fatigue, they reached Mission San Gabriel, and Smith again enjoyed the hospitality of the priests.

He obtained necessary supplies and hurried on to meet the companions he had left in the San Joaquin Valley. He found them in a bad situation, almost without food and lacking animals necessary for a long journey. Again he called upon Governor Echeandía, then at Monterey. Echeandía was not an easy man for a foreigner to bargain with, and Smith had much to explain. Instead of being helped, he was thrown into prison; but after some delay he was—through the intervention and financial backing of an American sea-captain—supplied with provisions and allowed to go.

He proceeded up the Sacramento Valley, crossed the mountains to the coast in northern California, and was again attacked by Indians. Only he and two followers escaped and reached a British trading post on the Columbia River. But the time came when he did not escape; he was killed by Indians on the Cimarron River in the summer of 1831.

The indomitable spirit of Jedediah Smith is an inspiration to all who read his story. His character was so different from that of the average trapper of his time that one regrets the necessity of telling so little of his life. He had ambitions to make a fortune, it is true, for the benefit of his family; but he had a patriotic interest in supplying his country with much-needed geographical knowledge of the West. Always he upheld high principles, deported himself as a Christian gentleman. On the map of California there is one reminder of him, the beautiful Smith River in Del Norte County, which was named in his honor.

The name of Thomas L. (Peg-leg) Smith, whose reputation is not so savory, is possibly given more attention than it deserves by writers on the history of the San Joaquin, though it would probably be too much to say that his horse-stealing activities did not bring him into the valley. He may also have followed here his other vocation of trapping. His story is so colorful that writers have been much attracted to it. The facts, however, are very difficult to establish, for those who first wrote of his life secured their information directly or indirectly from him. One writer who knew him personally said: "Peg-leg was the biggest horse thief that ever ranged the country between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean . . . and the most superlative liar that ever honored California with his presence."[3] It can be admitted that that is putting the matter rather strongly.

The latter years of Smith's life were spent in San Francisco, where he entertained with stories of his adventures any one who would buy him a drink.[4] No doubt, in his life on the plains he displayed stamina and fortitude, but for the most part he put them to bad use.

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[3] **Bell, Major Horace, "On the Old West Coast."**

There is a familiar story of his being shot in the leg by an Indian while he was heroically attempting to rescue the body of a companion. This story has it that when no one could be found with sufficient nerve to amputate the shattered leg, just above the ankle, Smith did the job himself with a butcher-knife. Major Bell reports that Smith stated the wound had been received in a battle with Spanish rancheros from whom he had stolen horses. His Indian associates corroborated this story. One authority stated that Milton Soublette assisted in the amputation,[5] another that it was done by an Indian.[6]

Among the famous trappers and explorers who operated in this area was Ewing Young, who led his men into the valley from the south in 1829.[7] His success in trapping for otter and beaver along the streams and lakes was so satisfactory that he returned to cover the same ground the following year and perhaps at other times. With him was a young man who later served as guide for John C. Fremont—Kit Carson, one of the greatest and most famous of western scouts.

Young's party met somewhere in the valley a group of trappers under Peter Skene Ogden, who represented the great Hudson's Bay Company, which operated extensively in the north. The interest of this English company in California was becoming a threat to the Mexican authorities, and awakening the Americans to the thought that they might have to compete with other nations in California. The Mexican hold upon the province was not strong, and the United States was unwilling to see it fall into the hands of a nation more powerful than Mexico. The many expeditions through the territory gave the American people knowledge of California's potential wealth.

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[4] San Francisco Evening Bulletin, Oct. 26, 1866.

[5] "Hutchings Magazine of California," Vol. V.

[6] Bell, Major Horace, "Reminiscences of a Ranger."

[7] Smith, Wallace, "The Garden of the Sun."

In 1833 another party of Americans entered the valley and trapped along the Kings and other rivers. They, like many others, skirted the eastern shore of Tulare Lake. Captain B. L. E. Bonneville, whose story is told by Washington Irving,[8] secured a leave of absence from the army of the United States and organized a party for exploring the territory lying westward from the Rocky Mountains and carrying on a trapping enterprise at the same time. He sent a portion of his company under Joseph R. Walker[9] from the Green River to explore the region lying toward the Pacific in search of beaver. Just how far west they were expected to go is not known. Finding a river which they called the Mary, now known as the Humboldt, they followed it until it disappeared in the sands of the desert. They turned southward and moved on to the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Doubtless by that time they had decided not to turn back until they had reached the California settlements, for they undertook a crossing of the mountains. After twenty-three days of severe hardship they emerged in the San Joaquin Valley, having passed near Yosemite and through a grove of the now famous Big Trees, the first white men ever to see these wonders. The crossing was so difficult that, by the testimony of one of Walker's men,[10] they took little time "to view an occasional specimen of nature's handiwork," though they saw precipices that appeared to be more than a mile high.

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[8] "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville."

[9] The most detailed account of this expedition is given in the journal of Zenas Leonard, one of Walker's men.

[10] Zenas Leonard.

Walker and his men hurried on to Monterey, where they were hospitably received both by the civil authorities and by the mission fathers. The governor, Jose Figueroa, one of the best of the Mexican governors of California, made no objection to their trapping. His own people were not interested in trapping, and apparently he did not share Echeandía's hostility to foreigners. After enjoying several weeks of generous entertainment at Monterey, they resumed their journey, taking time to trap in favorable places. They traversed the full length of the San Joaquin Valley and left it by a pass east of Bakersfield which still bear's Walker's name.

The man who had most to do with exploring and giving out information concerning the regions west of the Rocky Mountains was John C. Fremont.[11] He traveled with a commission from the United States government, made scientific observations, and kept a journal, which was published and widely read.

Fremont's first entry into the San Joaquin Valley occurred early in the year 1844. Having made a difficult and dangerous crossing of the Sierras, he arrived at Sutter's Fort on March 6. The party tarried there for a short time and then made a rapid journey southward through the central valley, intending to leave it by way of Walker's Pass. On April 8 they reached Kings River, which Fremont called the River of the Lake. There they were met by a large party of Indians, who escorted them a few miles up the river to a place where they chose to camp for the night. They carried on a little trading with the Indians on friendly terms. Fremont's report gives the location as 36° 24′ 50″ north latitude and 119° 41′ 40″ west longitude. These figures indicate that they crossed Kings River almost due south of Laton.

The explorer was favorably impressed by the belt of land along Kings River. The Indians he described as "dark-skinned but handsome and intelligent."

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[11] Fremont, John C., "Memoirs of My Life."

He missed Walker's pass, but made his exit from the valley by way of Tehachapi Pass and returned to St. Louis. In August of the next year he was on his way to California again, this time with a company of sixty men. At the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains he divided his party, sending the larger group southward with Joseph R. Walker as guide to enter the valley by way of Walker's Pass. With fifteen men Fremont crossed the mountains near Lake Tahoe, intending to meet the other group at "a little lake in the valley of a river called the Lake Fork", probably Kings River.

A few days before Christmas the smaller group reached Kings River, but the other party had, through a misunderstanding, stopped on the Kern. Fremont led his men up Kings River to the summit of the mountains in a vain—and apparently foolish—search for Walker and the others. Failing to find them, he went north and called upon the Mexican authorities and the American consul at Monterey. The larger party finally went north along the eastern edge of the valley and joined the leader.

On these excursions large droves of wild horses—which were not native to the region—were seen, as well as such animals as elk, deer, and antelope. Fremont reported that the valley and lower foothills constituted a region very rich in natural resources.

The names of several men who accompanied Fremont may be found on the map of California. In addition to Walker's Pass, there is the Kern River, named for Edward M. Kern, topographer for the expedition, and Owens Lake, reminding us of Richard Owens, one of the leader's assistants. But there was another great scout in the party, Alex Godey, whom Fremont rated as the equal of Carson himself.

He was a St. Louis Frenchman, and after long and varied experiences on the plains he lived for several years in Bakersfield.

The rich agricultural possibilities of the region having been observed and made known to the world, it was inevitable that people would come seeking homes. During the fifties and later there was an overflow of population from the mines, and grazing and farming lands were eagerly sought. The early cattlemen recognized the shores of Kings River and Tulare Lake as some of the finest grazing land in the entire Tulare Valley.

As more travel and transportation became necessary, definite routes were established, some of which have historical interest. Even before the time of the settlers there was *El Camino Viejo,* The Old Road, reaching from Los Angeles to Martinez. The San Joaquin Valley portion skirted the Coast Range foothills to avoid the frequent fordings that would have been necessary through the middle or eastern portion of the valley. Along its arid course lumbering oxcarts creaked from watering place to watering place before the first American explorers came. A leading historian of the San Joaquin has traced out its course and told of its history and romance in a valuable booklet.[12] There are still places where the marks of the old road can be seen.

Of greater interest, perhaps, to Kings County residents is the old Overland Mail road, over which stagecoaches operated between San Francisco and St. Louis and Memphis. From San Francisco it passed through San Jose, crossed the Coast Range Mountains by way of Pacheco Pass, and entered what is now Kings County at Kingston. From there it continued southeasterly to Cross Creek and on to Visalia, then out of the valley by way of Tejon Pass. Tracing the Kings

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[12] Latta, F. F., "El Camino Viejo a Los Angeles."

County portion of it a little more closely, we find that it followed the highest ground that was available, passing near the Kings River School, the Putz corner, and what was formerly the Cotton home and the Jonesa post office, a mile north of the Eureka School. Cross Creek was forded, but Kings River was crossed by means of a ferry.

The company which established this route, with a station at Kingston, called their enterprise the Great Southern Overland Mail, but it has often been called the Butterfield Line after John Butterfield, the organizing genius who founded and managed it. The United States government gave the company a contract for carrying the mail, and at great cost the company equipped itself with teams, wagons, and stations. After a year of preparation the stages were started in September, 1858, and they continued until April, 1861. At the opening of the Civil War the southern route was abandoned in favor of a northern one by way of Salt Lake City.

The Butterfield stages carried mail to St. Louis at the rate of three cents for a half-ounce and made the trip in about twenty days when not delayed. It came and went twice a week. The government lost heavily because the postage paid only a small part of the contract price. The stages also accommodated passengers.

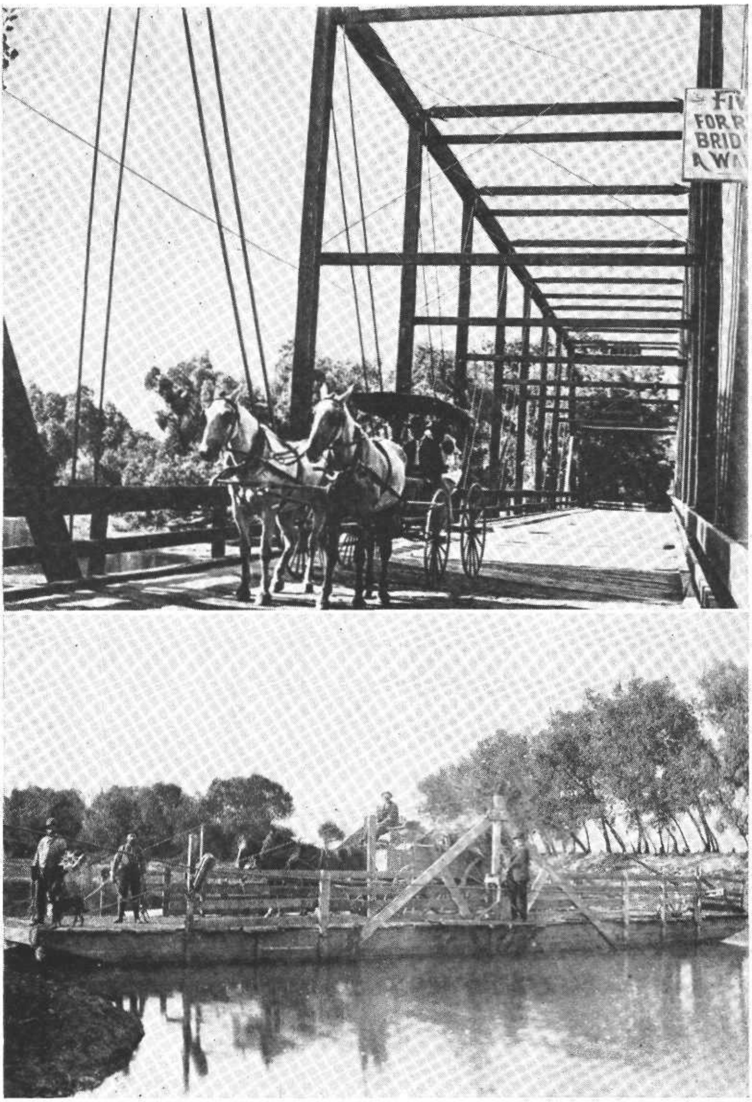
After the Civil War stagecoaches again followed the route of the Overland Mail. In 1874 a post office, called Jonesa, was established a mile north of the present Eureka School, with G. W. Cotton as postmaster. It was one of the earliest post offices to be established on what became Kings County soil, and it continued until 1879. A store was operated in conjunction with it. The importance of the road is seen in the fact that some of the earliest settlements in this region were close to it.

When it was necessary to haul freight by wagon from Stockton to valley towns of the south, that road was very much used. The building of the railroads diminished its usefulness until it was abandoned, but a diligent search on the saltgrass flats near Cross might show places where the wagons of the past cut into the earth.

The people of the interior felt the need for finding the shortest and easiest way to the coast and to ships. In pursuance of that idea, the merchants of Visalia once sponsored an investigation of the passes over the Coast Range, and as a result a move was started to build a road past Tulare Lake, either north or south of it, through Cholame, and onward to the sea. Little if any road-building was done, but the route was traveled considerably. The northern branch, passing close to Lemoore became one of this area's most important early roads. A map made in 1867 shows the route of a proposed railroad through the pass and across the valley north of the lake.

Another route of travel from the Mussel Slough area northward is indicated by the location of the Van Valer ferry, a mile east of the present Alcorn Bridge.

The earliest settlers naturally sought the best land and the most abundant water. Kings River furnished water, and the soil adjacent to it was fertile. Cattle were being pastured on its banks as early as 1854, possibly even earlier, but by 1860 the number of families established on land that now belongs to Kings County was very small. Some concrete evidence regarding the population of the Kings River area is seen in the returns from an election held at M. Isley's house, Kingston, on September 7, 1859. Eighteen votes were cast, and the precinct included both sides of the river and extended for many miles along the stream.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Above, Old Kingston Bridge
Below, Ferry on Kings River Southwest of Lemoore

CHAPTER III

TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES

Kingston was the first town to be established on what is now Kings County soil, and yet the town of Kingston never was in Kings County. It started as a Tulare County settlement, but was in Fresno after the formation of that county in 1856. However, nobody knew for several years that it was not still in Tulare. In 1859 the Tulare County supervisors granted O. H. Bliss a license to operate a ferry across the river at that point. The post office was established there in November, 1859, supposedly in Tulare County; but during the next month Visalia people read the shocking news that Kingston was in Fresno County.[1]

L. A. Whitmore had come to Kings River in 1854 to raise cattle, but he soon started the first ferry that was ever operated at that point, probably in 1855. When the United States cavalry undertook to round up all the Indians of the region and place them on reservations, they came to take Whitmore's Indian wife. He offered resistance and was killed.[2] The stern measures indicated by this incident did not result in the removal of all the Indians from the Kingston area. They were fairly numerous for years afterward.

Bliss's ferrying charges were advertised in 1859 as follows: For one horse and carriage, seventy-five cents; for each additional horse, twenty-five cents; for loose horses and cattle, twelve and one-half cents; for hogs and sheep, five cents each; for a person on foot, twenty-five cents. After some years Bliss replaced the ferry with the first bridge that spanned the river at that point. He finally sold his interests to the cattleman John Sutherland and left—in 1873, several authorities say—although he was reported present on December 26 of that year.

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[1] Visalia "Delta," December 31, 1859.

[2] McCubbin, J. C., Typescript.

James Edward Denny suggested the name for the post office, became the first postmaster, and kept a trading post in connection with the office. Biographical sketches state that he purchased a ferry and operated it for about four years in partnership with W. G. Sanderson, and that he went to Visalia in 1864. Bliss's connection with the ferry during these years is not clear. Possibly he owned it and leased it to the other men.

For many years Kingston was an important trading point, to which freight was brought by wagon from Stockton. The post office was discontinued in November, 1862, but was reestablished in April, 1866. The Overland Mail had been removed from the southern route in 1861 because of the Civil War. A plat of the old village showing several streets running east and west intersected by several running north and south, makes it look like a good-sized town, but most of those blocks contained no buildings. The last structure to remain was the old barn which stood until about 1930 on the south bank of the river near where the old bridge piles may still be seen—about a half-mile below the present Laton Bridge.

An idea of what Kingston was during its prosperous years may be had from the story of an exciting robbery which took place there on the day after Christmas in 1873.[3] Just after dark the bandit gang of the notorious Tiburcio Vasquez left their horses under guard north of the river and crossed the bridge on foot. Meeting Mr. Bliss near the bridge, they tied him and left him lying on the ground. He complained that he was not comfortable, and one of the bandits took a blanket from a wagon and placed it under his head. They met and tied John Potts, Presley Bozeman, and Milt Woods —and robbed them, of course. They placed guards at the store of Jacobs and Einstein, at that of Solomon Sweet, and at Reichert's Hotel. In the barroom they tied down and robbed ten men, collecting about four hundred dollars. In the sitting room of the hotel Ed Douglas of Visalia refused to be tied; but a bandit struck him on the head with a revolver, knocked him down, and relieved him of his valuables.

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[3] Details given here follow substantially the account as told by Mrs. Florence Morton, daughter of Perry C. Phillips. She has the distinction of having been the first white child born within the present limits of Kings County. She was born in 1860.

In the dining room a girl waitress screamed as one of the Mexican bandits entered. (Some of the gang were not Mexican.) Launcelot Gilroy, who was at the table, thinking that the man had insulted the girl, struck him with a chair and knocked him down. The bandit was soon up, and, swinging his revolver, dealt Gilroy a stunning blow on the head, which ended his resistance. According to one version three members of the gang were in the clash with Gilroy.

A clerk in Jacobs and Einstein's store shouted an alarm, but by that time the bandits had the situation well in hand. They demanded the keys to the store safe. Einstein denied having them; but, on being threatened with death, gave them up. The safe yielded eight hundred dollars.

While they were looting the Sweet store, a guard outside yelled that he had been shot. James W. Sutherland and James E. Flood, who lived near the village, had seen or heard things that made them suspicious. They collected a few men and went to investigate, but one man in his excitement fired prematurely the shot that sent the bandits on their way. They had collected twenty-five hundred dollars in money and jewelry in the little town.

A posse of local men took up the trail the next morning, but the gang was not found. They caught one Mexican at the time, but ultimately at least three men served penitentiary terms for participation in the hold-up. Vasquez, the leader, who was guilty of many crimes, was captured about a year later in southern California. Although he was not regarded as a killer, he was convicted of murder—possibly the only murder of which he was guilty—and was hanged on March 19, 1875.

The building of the Santa Fe railroad resulted in the beginnings of Laton, in Fresno County, and was the deathblow to Kingston. The old bridge, the second at that spot, fell long after the decay of the town, and a new one was built a half-mile up-stream. Kingston, off the main road, became only a memory.

In the meantime Grangeville had risen to prominence, and was already on the decline. The post office was established there in September, 1874. The mail was brought by stage by way of Kingston, from Kingsburg, through which the railroad had been built two years earlier. The Grangeville post office was in existence for nearly forty-six years. It was discontinued in 1920, long after rural delivery was in operation.

Situated in a particularly fertile area, Grangeville gave promise of being the principal town of all the western plain between Kings River and Tulare Lake, but the railroad shunned it, and other towns superseded it. When the Southern Pacific was securing its right of way from Goshen to the west, the Grangeville people thought and hoped it would pass through that place. Sufficient attraction was not offered the company, however, and the road went by two miles too far south. Again in 1889 when the West San Joaquin Valley line was being projected, there was hope, but this time the road passed too far to the west and added life to the new town of Armona at the junction of the two branches.

Settlement in the Grangeville—or Mussel Slough country, as it was called—began in the sixties, and soon after 1870 it was sufficient to give rise to the beginnings of a town. The first store was opened in 1874, or possibly earlier. Within a few years there were two general stores, a blacksmith's shop, a drug store, two harness shops, a hotel, and two saloons. There was even a steam-driven flouring mill.

The name Grangeville became attached to the place through the naming of the post office, but it came from the Grange, an organization of farmers, which had built a hall that was also used as a schoolhouse. Although the date of its founding may not be given positively, the concensus of opinion among early residents is that it is older than Lemoore.

The Methodist Church of Grangeville is the county's oldest religious organization with continuous existence in one locality. Its Methodist recognition was in 1876, but it was probably functioning as a group before that. For many years there was a strong Good Templar's Lodge, which began in 1876. Somewhat later a unit of the Ancient Order of United Workmen was formed.

A portion of a letter addressed to a Visalia newspaper is included here for the picture it gives of the community and for its revelation that the town very early became aware of its doom.

"Grangeville,
"March 5, 1877.

"Editor *Times*—Sitting here alone this evening, I thought perhaps you would like to hear a word from our Mussel Slough country this dry season. We have been anxiously gazing toward the bright blue sky for a long time; still no genial showers descend to gladden our hearts and relieve our anxieties, except one or two light showers. The plains, which a year ago now were so beautifully carpeted with green grass and decorated with sweet, lovely flowers, have donned their robes of sombre hue, and are looking brown and sere.

"Towns are springing up around us like magic, and Grangeville, in her desire for something new, is daily walking off to Hanford and Lemoore, and ere long Grangeville, that great, powerful city . . . will be remembered among the things that were.

"Carrie."

There is a strange pathos in that letter.

Grangeville, not to be outdone by Kingston, was also robbed by a famous bandit. One of the associates of Vasquez was Procopio, a nephew of Joaquin Murieta. In 1878 he raided Grangeville, tying his victims as Vasquez had done, and made his escape. In attempting to arrest him on the West Side, Solomon Gladden, who had a harness shop at Grangeville, was killed. Procopio was not caught.

Lemoore was started almost as early as Grangeville, but did not grow so rapidly until after the building of the railroad. The first settlement was near the site of the present high school. The first school was a block or two north of the high school campus.

The petition for a post office was submitted by Dr. Lovern Lee Moore, and the name suggested was La Tache. The government granted the post office but rejected the name, substituting for it the present pleasing coinage from the name of the petitioner. It was established on September 21, 1875, exactly a year and a week after the establishment of the office at Grangeville.

After the railroad came in 1877, the new town sprang up beside it. Dr. Lee Moore cut up a portion of his land and offered it for sale as town lots. A record of sales shows prices ranging, in the main, from seventy-five to one hundred and twenty-five dollars per lot, but one lot brought six hundred and twenty-five dollars. The following partial list of purchasers contains names that will be familiar to many Kings County residents: J. J. Mack, Launcelot Gilroy, A. B. Cowell, J. R. Heinlin, and Daniel Rhoads.

Lemoore then began a steady growth that soon made it a substantial town, but there was no mushroom growth. Although it did not keep pace with Hanford, its sister town, it soon had a full complement of business houses and was a busy trading center. A description published in 1883 said that Lemoore had one of the largest store buildings in the state outside of San Francisco, and then gave the dimensions as 35 feet by 150 feet—not very imposing, to be sure, but large for that time. The town then had a flouring mill of 200 barrels daily capacity. It was an important shipping point for wheat and wool, and not long afterwards became a center for fruit, but in its early period many fires retarded its growth.

It became Hanford's chief rival, but had fallen considerably behind in the race before county division was accomplished. For many years it was the second city in size in the county, until, by virtue of the agricultural development of the lake area, Corcoran assumed that position. In 1940 the population was 1707, there having been a gain of twenty-two per cent in ten years.

Many of the early settlers of the Lemoore district were cultured people, and Lemoore attained a reputation for literary and musical accomplishments unmatched by many pioneer towns. There was an early literary society that had a long and noteworthy existence.

Failing in its effort to become the county seat, Lemoore proceeded to organize for local purposes. It became an incorporated city of the sixth class in June, 1900, the first city board being made up of C. H. Bailey, R. E. Foley, R. A. Moore, C. Dahken, and Morris Howells. Mr. Bailey was chosen as the first chairman of the board, or mayor. W. F. Holser was the first city clerk, and W. P. Bladwell was the first city judge.

Lemoore has active fraternal, civic, and religious organizations, has always maintained excellent schools, and recently has shown a healthy growth. Its nearness to the oil fields has stimulated business and caused some building. Just now, August, 1941, there is intense interest in the construction by the government of a huge airbase eleven miles southwest of the city. Work is progressing upon the project, and Lemoore is busy preparing to meet the demands that will be made upon it. The lasting effect upon Lemoore and Kings County will depend upon whether the airbase becomes a permanent or only a temporary establishment.

The city of Hanford is where it is today because the railroad put it there. The Southern Pacific built its line from Goshen to Coalinga in 1876 and later. The site of a sheep camp some four miles from Grangeville appeared to be a good place for a station, and there a station was placed. The company sold the first lots early in 1877, and people immediately began the erection of homes and stores. The first business building ready for occupancy was that of J. T. Baker, and was built in March of that year.

The railroad, which could make or break a town almost at will, named its new station in honor of the official, James M. Hanford, who had acted as paymaster during the progress of the construction work there. Soon the town began to forge ahead of its older neighbors, for it was closer to the county seat, Visalia, the valley metropolis, and closer to the main line of the railroad. Enterprising business men came and invested capital; but the deciding factor in the rivalry between towns was location, and that favored Hanford.

The firm of Robinson and Rawlins, which began business in 1881, developed the Hanford Water Works, with a high tank tower and pipe and hose to reach all parts of the town. This was highly praised as a means of protection from fire, but Hanford suffered terribly from fires. In July, 1887, a fire destroyed the major portion of the business section. The wooden buildings were swept away with alarming swiftness, and only the walls were left of the few brick structures that lay in the fire's path.

With inadequate equipment, scores of men joined the fight against the fire. The Kutner-Goldstein Company had a pumping device worked by man-power in the manner of the early hand-cars. Bucket brigades were formed, and some of the better buildings were saved. A fire engine was summoned by telegraph from Tulare, and arrived by train in time to render valuable help. With it was brought a tank of water on a flat car.

Better buildings were erected, and better fire-fighting equipment was planned, but the fires continued. People talked about incorporation as a means of getting fire protection. A fire district was formed, but the editor of the *Sentinel* on February 5, 1891, lamented the defeat of a proposed fire tax and called attention to the need of five hundred feet of hose. On June 19 of that year the town suffered a $200,000 fire, and placards appeared with the words: "Incorporation or burn again!"

On the following August 8 the town voted to incorporate, with a ballot of 127 to 47. That night there was another devastating fire. By the same election the following city trustees were chosen: E. Axtell, B. A. Fassett, James O. Hickman, James Manasse, and George Slight. The board

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chose B. A. Fassett as its chairman and the city's first mayor. Other officials were W. R. McQuiddy, city clerk; N. Weisbaum, treasurer; William A. Bush, city marshal.

Even before the town was incorporated, business enterprises were rapidly developing, and public improvements were taking place. In February, 1891, a newspaper mentioned that "a sewerage system has been commenced that will extend to all parts of the town."[4] Many other items of interest could be given if space permitted.

In 1890 J. H. Johnson of Visalia started a new flouring mill under the management of H. G. Lacey. During that same year S. C. Lillis proposed to erect an incandescent light plant to cost $6,000, and asked that citizens subscribe $1200 to $1500 in the interest of the enterprise. At least $800 was subscribed, but when the current from the two Edison dynamos was turned on, April 8, 1891, Johnson was the owner and Lacey the operator. The H. G. Lacey company soon became the owner of both the mill and the electric plant. Electric lights were popular, and the plant had to be enlarged almost immediately.

The H. G. Lacey Company continued to furnish electric energy to the users of Hanford and vicinity until 1916, when the plant was sold to the Mt. Whitney Power and Electric Company, which in turn was absorbed in 1920 by the Southern California Edison Company. H. G. Lacey is now deceased, but the Lacey Milling Company operates the much enlarged mill and does a large volume of business in grain and grain-products. H. E. Lacey is the present manager, and the company maintains a branch business in Fresno.

Another big event in the life of Hanford came when Kings County was formed in 1893, Hanford having been designated as the county seat. That event was a strong stimulus to growth, and Hanford expanded far beyond any other

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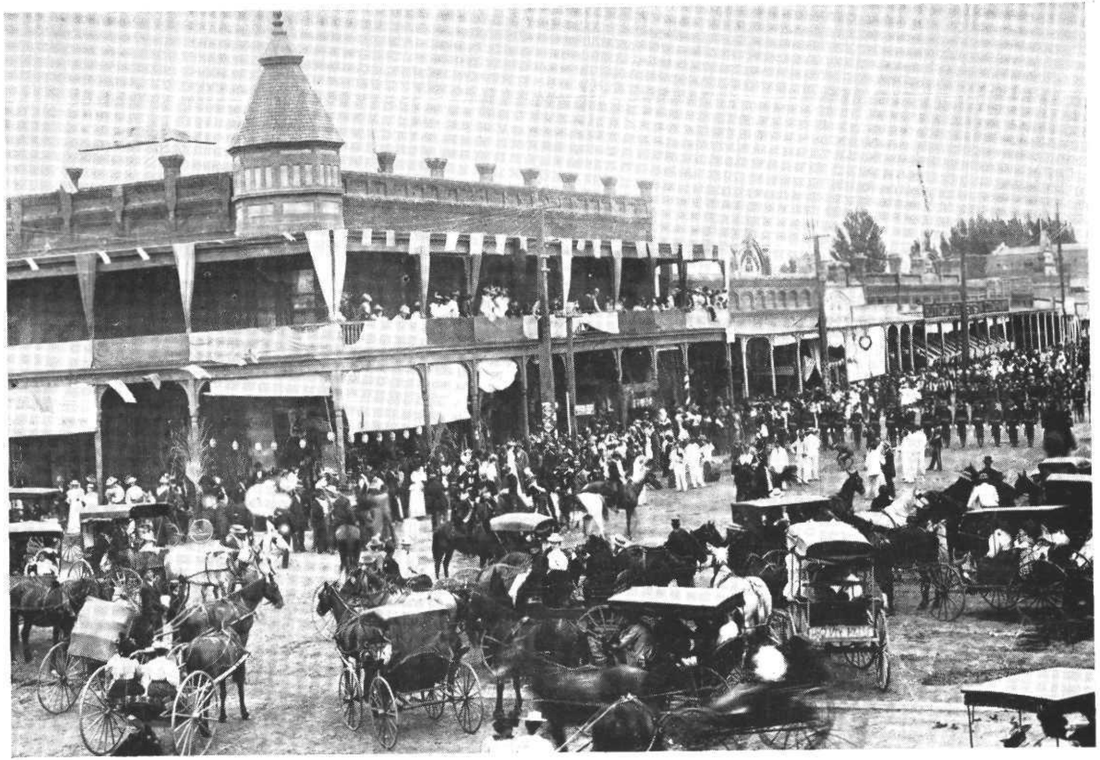
[4] **Hanford Sentinel.**



Hanford in the Horse and Buggy Days

town of the county. Now little is left of the old town of the early nineties, but one may see along Sixth Street—formerly the town's main street—and in the blocks adjacent to it a few business buildings which have stood since that time. South of the Southern Pacific tracks also there are a few such old buildings, but most of the city belongs to the more modern era.

For many years the streets were very bad—ruts and mudholes in the winter, and in the summer ruts and dust. Then came the sprinkling wagons, a boon in summer, but still there was dust. In 1907 the city undertook paving in earnest and soon had fifteen blocks of pavement. Some additional paving was done from time to time, and then in 1919 a big paving program was inaugurated. When this was completed within the next few years, there were more than thirteen miles of paved streets.

In fire-fighting equipment Hanford has kept pace with modern improvements, and in 1939 a fine new building for housing it was completed.

There are several city parks and playgrounds, including the new swimming pool near the fire house, Lacey Park in the midst of the main residential district, and a new park and playground in the southern part of the city. Another important city property is the municipal auditorium, with its wide, shady lawns.

When people were taking up land in this valley, the Lakeside district became a favored spot. As the name suggests, it was near the lake, for the lake was large in those days. The chief enterprise was farming rather than grazing, and a good many farms were developed in the early seventies.

Community spirit developed early and has always continued. Interest centered in church, school and Good Templar's Lodge, where neighbor greeted neighbor. An old cemetery marks the spot where the church once stood. There was once a post office called Short, and in connection with that a little store.

After the Sante Fe railroad built its station at Guernsey, the place became an important shipping point for grain, but no town grew up. A store or two, a community hall, a railroad station, space, and neighborliness—all constitute the Lakeside Community.

Armona was doubtless named by the railroad company, but the source of the name is obscure. Stories have been told to explain it, but the stories are doubtful. One story is that it was the result of chance crossing out of letters on a blackboard by a blindfolded man. Another gives it an Indian origin.

Several farms were grouped about the place when, sometime near 1885, the village began to show itself. There were Mrs. McGregor's hotel, Samuel Young's blacksmith-shop, and on March 22, 1887, the post office, with M. A. Harding as postmaster. There was a railroad switch but no station until 1891, after the west valley line of the Southern Pacific met the other branch at that point. The station was first placed farther east than it now is. People protested, and the station was moved.

There was talk of railroad shops, but nothing came of it. The fruit industry was developing, and packing houses and a large cannery were erected, and became Armona's chief support. During the summer months especially it is a very busy place. Little local organization exists, since the town is unincorporated, but there is a water district, through which homes and businesses are supplied with water. There is also a volunteer fire department. In the past artesian water could be developed.

The Hardwick district gave promise of developing a town when the Southern Pacific was laying the rails of its line from Tracy south through the west side of the San Joaquin Valley in 1889 and 1890. A station was established and a townsite laid out, but the plat was never recorded. Charles King, a Hanford capitalist, made it the terminus of his Summit Lake and Hanford Railroad in 1909. He made and recorded a new plat for the town, started a bank, and erected store buildings; but the day of automobiles came, and Hardwick, like other small centers, failed to grow.

As the waters of Tulare Lake receded and laid bare a large area of rich soil in the southern part of the county, farmers followed the water-line with their crops. Two Kings County trading centers owe their existence to this expansion, though both began as railroad stations.

The San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railroad—now the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe—passed through Hanford in 1897. Somewhat later a branch line was run through Visalia to connect with the main line at Corcoran Junction, which remained only a junction until 1905, when J. W. Guiberson erected the first building.

Soon a large sugar factory, reputed to have cost a million dollars, was constructed. It manufactured no sugar, but it helped to sell land. Farmers, however, found other crops more desirable than sugar beets. The old factory building still stands, and is sometimes used as a warehouse.

The rich agricultural surroundings attracted sufficient capital to develop the area, and the town grew accordingly. It was incorporated as a city of the sixth class in 1914. It has been progressive in the matter of public improvements, and at the same time has avoided heavy indebtedness. Facilities for handling the crops of cotton and grain and for servicing and keeping in repair the machines and implements used on the farms contribute a large part of the town's commercial life. In 1940 Corcoran's population was 2093, making it the county's second city in size.

The Southern Pacific built a short spur line to tap the grain farms at the north side of the lake and laid out the site for a new town. The name Stratton was chosen in honor of a pioneer of the area; but when, in 1907, the application for a post office was submitted, the postal department substituted Stratford, because there was already a Stratton post office in the state.

The Stratford people have been active in community development, and have provided themselves with light, water, fire protection. Dairying and the growing of grain and cotton make it a busy place.

Kettleman City is one of the two towns which came into being as a result of the development of the Kettleman Hills oil fields. It was founded in 1929 and grew rapidly to have a population of five or six hundred. For its size it has a considerable commercial activity.

Over the ridge to the west from Kettleman City is Avenal, which was also begun in 1929. Being near to main producing fields, it outstripped its neighbor and has become a city in everything but organization.

The Standard Oil Company laid out the town and installed a system of water mains and a sewer system. The community formed a fire district in 1934, and recently voted to form a sanitary district and take over the sewer system.

The maintenance of law and order, as well as other governmental functions, is accomplished chiefly through county agencies, but Avenal is the seat of a township court.

The growth of the town has been very rapid. In the twelve years of its existence it has grown to be a town of considerable size and commercial activity, supplying the oil fields with materials and service. Local authorities estimate the present population at about four thousand.

Community life is active, with service clubs, lodges, and churches taking part. The town supports a weekly newspaper. Its schools are excellent, having fine, modern buildings and equipment. Schoolhouses as lovely as that of Avenal High are rare even in California.

CHAPTER IV

KINGS AS A COUNTY UNIT

When California became a state in 1850, there were twenty-seven counties. One of these, Mariposa, occupied a vast territory reaching from the Mother Lode country to Los Angeles County and from Coast Range to the Nevada boundary, though nobody knew where that was. In 1852 a group of adventurers from Mariposa came to the Kaweah Delta, known then as the Four Creeks Country, and formed Tulare County, with boundaries that included roughly, besides present Tulare County, Kern, Kings, Fresno, and Inyo Counties. At different times those other counties were formed from portions of Tulare, and finally in 1893 Kings County was organized.

The first real effort to break away from Tulare and make a new county where Kings now is bore fruit in the election of Dr. A. B. Butler, a physician of Grangeville, as a member of the California Assembly in 1886. This portion of Tulare County was then called the Mussel Slough Country or spoken of as the West Side. In politics the county was strongly Democratic, but the Republicans had considerable strength in the Grangeville section. Dr. Butler, a Republican, was popular enough to win the election in a Democratic county. County division had not openly been made an issue of the campaign, but quiet work had been done.

Dr. Butler introduced a bill to cut off the western end of Tulare County, add to it a portion of Fresno County, and form a new county. Tulare and Fresno Counties promptly sent a strong lobby to Sacramento and defeated the bill.

Dr. Butler did not return to the Assembly for another term, but W. S. Cunningham of Lemoore, a Democrat, succeeded him. Mr. Cunningham was supported by many Republicans who were willing to overlook party interests to accomplish their chief objective. He introduced a second division bill, but it, too, failed to pass.

Next Frank A. Blakeley, a Hanford Republican, became Assemblyman and took up the fight. In those days Tulare County sent two members to the Assembly, the western portion being entitled to elect one. A strong organization of citizens from various communities gave support to Blakeley's bill both before and after it had been introduced. This time a lobby was sent to the capital to work for the passage of the bill. It happened that during the spring of 1893, when this fight was going on, efforts were being made to form two other new counties in California. The people of Madera were seeking separation from Fresno County, and those of Riverside from San Bernardino and San Diego. The three regions joined forces in the Legislature, and their combined strength was sufficient to overcome opposition. All three new counties came into being.

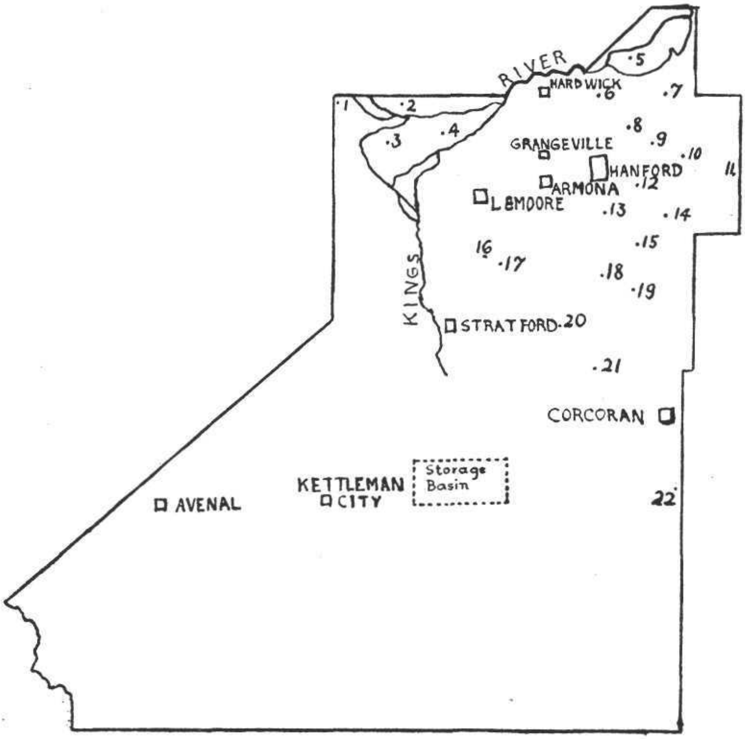
At first the name Lorraine was chosen for the new county in this area; but during the years of agitation for division that was abandoned in favor of the name Kings, taken, of course, from Kings River, the source of most of its water supply, and one of the first physical features in the south San Joaquin to be named.

The original amount of land, all taken from Tulare County, was 1257 square miles. In 1909 there was added, by an act of the Legislature a large triangular area and a small irregular piece both cut off from Fresno County, and together containing 118 square miles. It is readily seen that this addition brought the total area to 1375 square miles, and no subsequent change has been made. The smaller portion of the addition lay along Kings River and contained the location of old Kingston as well as Hardwick. The hypotenuse of the triangle was the old county boundary line. Its other sides were a line running north from a point on the former boundary west of Stratford and a line running west from a point on the old boundary near Laton. The intersection of the two lines formed the right angle of the triangle.

Naturally the period of struggle for county division brought out differences of opinion. Some people—mainly the larger property holders—opposed the move because they feared that higher taxes would result from having to support a new county government. The mass of the people, however, within the limits of the new division were eager to bring the facilities for transacting public business nearer to their homes. Living from twenty to thirty miles from the county seat in those days was a great inconvenience. Doubtless there were some ambitious persons, as there always are, who hoped to improve their own condition by becoming office holders or through receiving a share of the public patronage that would result.

The tone of the arguments can be seen in a few brief quotations from the Hanford *Sentinel*. After a reference to an editorial note in the paper from Tulare the editor continued: "The Hanford newspaper men have had this year nothing to say about cutting up the county. But we will just here state that the creation of a new county out of part of Tulare would be a good thing and we are in favor of it. There is territory enough, people enough, wealth enough and good sense enough among the people over here to build up a good county, sufficiently broad and prosperous to entitle it to a place on the map. It's going to appear there one of these days, too, gentlemen."

MAP OF KINGS COUNTY



RIVER
KINGS
HARDWICK
GRANGEVILLE
HANFORD
ARMONA
LEMOORE
STRATFORD
CORCORAN
KETTLEMAN CITY
AVENAL
Storage Basin
1
2
3
4
5
6
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17
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21
22

One inch = ten miles.

Schools outside named places: 1, Glendora; 2, Crescent; 3, San Jose; 4, Island; 5, Oakvale; 6, Kings River; 7, Excelsior; 8, Wayne; 9, Eureka; 10, Willow Grove; 11, Delta View; 12, Cross Creek; 13, Youd; 14, King; 15, Eucalyptus; 16, Central Union; 17, Ramona; 18, Frazer; 19, Lakeside; 20, New Home; 21, Dallas; 22, Tensmuir.

In the same issue the editor paid his respects to Fresno as follows: "The Fresno papers have a horrible nightmare just now. They claim to have discovered a horrible plot by which the people of Hanford are endeavoring to slice off a chunk of Fresno County and hitch it to a part of Tulare County and form a new county." After asking what objections there might be to that idea the editor continued: "The Fresno County papers pretend to love this country as hard as a mule can kick when they work it for patronage, but when they imagine that people down here, for their own relief from corrupt and burdensome county governments, and for better business accommodations, have a desire to form a new county out of the vast territory included in the two old counties, they bellow like mad bulls."

The real fight for and against division in the local area came after the passage of the division bill by the Legislature and the appointment by the Governor of a Board of Commissioners to perfect the organization of the new county. The Commissioners, S. E. Biddle, E. E. Bush, W. M. Ogden, W. J. Newport, and J. H. Melone, set Tuesday, May 23, 1893, as the date for voting on the proposed division and for the selection of officials to take office if division carried by a two-thirds majority. The Democrats and the Republicans nominated candidates; Populists, then rather strong in the west, made nominations for three offices; and there were eight independent candidates, nominated by petition. Naturally the question of division was the issue over which the voters contended.

The two factions—for and against division—held meetings at various places, with music to induce good feeling and speakers to convince the voters. The Hanford newspapers, the *Sentinel* and the *Journal*, supported division, but the Lemoore *Leader* opposed it. In fact, the anti-division element was strongest in Lemoore. According to one of the earlier moves for division, Lemoore was expected to be the county seat, and the town had not given up its aspirations in that direction. It must be admitted that there were arguments in its favor, but Hanford was larger. Unfortunately for Lemoore, the bill which created the new county had designated Hanford as the county seat.

A short time before the election a resolution was published in Lemoore condemning the methods which had been used in making the nominations and calling upon all voters to reject division. Surprisingly enough, the name of former Assemblyman W. S. Cunningham was signed to that resolution. It should not be assumed that there is any hint here that the men who opposed division in that campaign were insincere, but there probably would never have been organized any very strong opposition if the question of the selection of a county seat had not been involved.

A bit of doggerel verse, which appeared in the *Sentinel* at the time, may help to show the spirit of the rivalry between factions—bad as it is in a literary way. It is presented here just as it appeared in the paper, though a sense of literary values protests.

"Division we'll win it,
  The antis ain't in it,
We'll shout hip hooray!
  On May 24th.
The jaw-wagging creatures and boodled payed
  Preachers like Sultana Seedless
Will be crushed to the earth."

The vote was 1452 for division and 412 against it, just a little over three and one-half to one. In Hanford there were 715 votes for the measure and 10 against it. Lemoore cast 41 favorable votes and 130 unfavorable. Three other precincts voted against the proposal, Kings River, West End, and Paddock, the latter by the close ballot of 36 to 37. All of the unfavorable precincts were in the western part of the county, the farthest from the seat of government at Visalia. Obviously those communities had most to gain by bringing the county seat closer.

It has been said that many illegal ballots were cast in Hanford that day. With no attempt to confirm or deny that statement, one may say that 725 voters in a town which could hardly have had much more than twice that population seems rather unusual when one remembers that only men voted. Perhaps the voting precinct included something more than the town. It has been said that some workmen, whose residence was not long enough to entitle them to vote, were nevertheless allowed to cast their ballots.

The choice of county officials reveals some interesting facts, one being the obvious fact that they were not chosen on a party basis. Of sixteen officials eight were Democrats, five were Republicans, and three had run as independents. The first Kings County officials were:

Justin Jacobs, Republican, Judge of the Superior Court;
M. L. Short, Independent, District Attorney;
Francis Cunningham, Democrat, County Clerk;
W. V. Buckner, Republican, Sheriff;
F. J. Peacock, Republican, Tax Collector;
W. H. Slavin, Democrat, Treasurer;
F. M. Fraser, Independent, Recorder;
C. C. Farnsworth, Democrat, Auditor;
John Rourke, Democrat, Assessor;
A. C. McCourt, Democrat, Superintendent of Schools;
E. P. Erwin, Independent, Surveyor;
B. R. Clow, Democrat, Coroner;
Frank McClellan, Republican, Supervisor, District Two;

J. G. Mackey, Democrat, Supervisor, District Three;
W. A. Long, Republican, Supervisor, District Four;
S. E. Biddle, Democrat, Supervisor, District Five;
J. H. Fox, Supervisor, District One.

Mr. Fox had been serving as Supervisor of Tulare County, and retained that position in the new county without being voted in at the election.

A complete political history of the county would bring to light many interesting facts, but space does not permit giving it here. Mention has been made that for a long time it was predominantly Democratic in most sections. At the beginning of the present century the two major parties were nearly equal in strength, but the Republicans gradually grew to outnumber their rivals. About 1930 there was a reversal of that situation, and in recent years the Democrats have had a larger registration than the Republicans. Fortunately, however, through the operation of the direct primary law, party politics ceased to exert strong influence in the affairs of local government. Even before local officials began to be chosen on a non-partisan basis, people often voted, in local elections, for the man rather than for the party.

The original Board of Commissioners, appointed by the Governor to organize the county government, divided the proposed new county into five supervisorial districts, and their partition still holds. The districts are very unequal in size, but were designed to have approximately equal population. District One comprises more than half the county and takes in the west and southwest portions. In it are Lemoore, Stratford, Kettleman City, and Avenal. District Two contains much more than half of the remainder of the county, includes Guernsey and Corcoran, an extends on southward to the county line. District Three extends from Eucalyptus north, and lies mainly east of Hanford. District

Four lies west of Hanford, a narrow strip of it running along the northern county boundary to the western boundary. Armona, Grangeville, and Hardwick are all within its limits. District Five is the city of Hanford.

When the lines of the supervisorial districts were first established, the southern and western areas were so thinly settled that those very large districts had fewer people than the smaller ones. As populations have shifted and increased, the numbers of people in the various districts have not become greatly out of proportion. Districts Three and Four —particularly the former—are considerably below the others, however.

The Board of Supervisors is the administrative as well as the law-making body for the county. It has authority over county roads and bridges, health, welfare work, agricultural and livestock inspection and quarantine, fire protection outside incorporated towns, the County Library, county parks and buildings, and a few other things. The functions of the Board have expanded greatly since Kings County was formed.

The county is also divided into judicial townships. In California the judicial township is not an important governmental unit, but there are a few factors to be noted. There is a justice court in each township, presided over by a justice of the peace, and for each court there is at least one constable. There are at present four judicial townships, with justice courts in Hanford, Lemoore, Corcoran and Avenal respectively. The Avenal township has been in existence a little less than five years. Formerly there was a justice court at Armona, but that was discontinued some years ago. The Hanford township used to be called Lucerne.

There are only three incorporated cities in the county. Hanford, Lemoore, and Corcoran. The Avenal community has sufficient population to incorporate, but so far the residents have not chosen to establish city government.

One of the important functions of county government is the building and maintenance of roads and bridges. Kings County has the benefit of an extensive system of paved highways and a network of good oiled roads. In 1915 the state constructed the highway from Highway 99 to Hanford, and then extended it through Armona and Lemoore. The county then began the laying of more than a hundred miles of pavement, and was very fortunate in having the work done at a cost of about $8,000 per mile. Ownership was later transferred to the state.

When automobiles were coming into popular use some thirty years ago, good roads became a necessity. It was then that grading and oiling became common practice.

CHAPTER V

PIONEER LIFE IN KINGS COUNTY

The period of pioneering in Kings County passed so recently that the memories of many people now living reach back to it. Even fifty years ago homes were without telephones and electric lights. Thirty-five years ago automobiles were just becoming practical, and since that time good roads have come into being. Moving picture entertainment is not much more than thirty years old in small towns, and the radio belongs to the past two decades. It was close to 1900 before many people experienced the wonders of the phonograph. During the nineties of last century bicycle-riding furnished many thrills to adults as well as to the younger people.

Within the present century living comforts have greatly increased. The average house is better built and much better equipped than those of the past. It is safe to say that in 1890, even in town, the residence in which there was a bathtub was the exception. The water-bucket and dipper were familiar objects; and, as for electrically operated household appliances, they, for the most part, belonged to the extravagant dreams of inventors, who fortunately have always constituted a numerous tribe in the Yankee world.

The average settler's house in 1870 or 1875 was small, built of rough lumber, and unpainted. It contained rude furniture, some of which was almost sure to be home-made. There was a wood-burning stove in the kitchen, and possibly a fireplace to heat the living room, if there happened to be a living room which was not also the kitchen and dining room. Windows and doors were without screens, in spite of the great need for them in this valley. The inside walls might be bare, but in many instances were papered, sometimes with newspapers. The beds, especially those in which the children slept, were likely to have no springs, and the matresses were often filled with straw. Candles and kerosene lamps supplied the light.

Water drawn from an open well was carried into the house in buckets, and waste water usually had to be carried out. When pumps came into common use, they were nearly always situated at a considerable distance from the house, because the stock on the farm drank more water than was used in the house. By 1890 windmills were becoming rather common on the ranches and farms.

A common adjunct of the dwelling was the smoke-house, where meat was cured. There might be an ash-hopper, used to extract lye from ashes, to be employed in making soap. Attached to a tree or a wall somewhere was sure to be a coffee-mill, for the coffee was ground and probably parched at home. Sometimes, it is true, barley had to be substituted temporarily for coffee, but nobody minded that very much. Inside the house and above the door, supported by two forked sticks nailed to the wall, could usually be seen at least one gun. No implement or article of furniture was more important than a gun; it provided food as well as security.

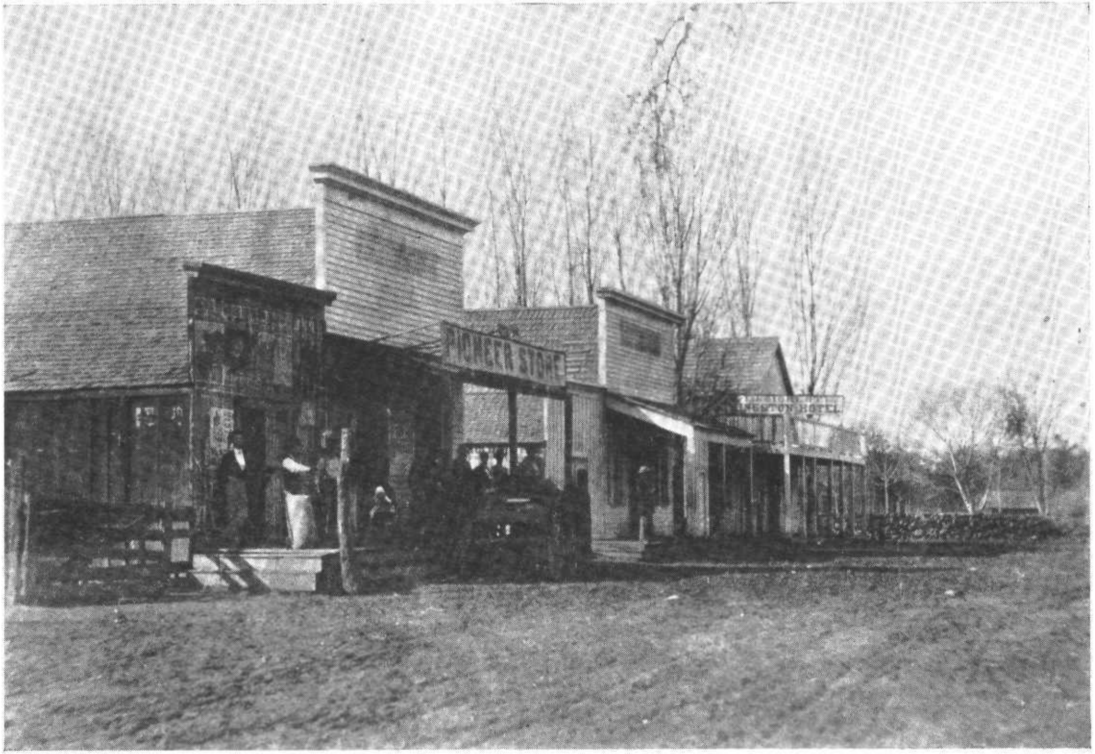
Many early settlers of Kings County, after they had been established for a number of years, turned their attention to building good and commodious homes. Several such houses, erected before 1900, are still in use. Some of them, set among old palms and cypresses, are rather imposing sights. In the southern part of Hanford is an old mansion, known as the old Robinson house, which originally stood outside but near the village of Hanford. Near Burris Park is the old David Burris home, which has stood since 1885, but now is in a bad state of disrepair. Fire occasionally destroys one of these old houses, but while they remain they deserve notice.

Trips to the early trading posts for supplies were spaced from one to several weeks apart, according to the distance and the condition of the roads and the weather. The variety of foods in the family larder might not always be great, but under the least favorable conditions the housekeeper could usually put a meal on the table that would accommodate any reasonable number of unexpected guests. By the code of the frontier, any caller, friend or stranger, was invited to stay for a meal.

One grim aspect of pioneer life is seen in the difficulties of coping with sickness and injury. Doctors and dentists—particularly the latter—were few, and the difficulties of travel sometimes made it impossible to bring the doctor and patient together. Medical supplies were limited, anesthetics little used. Sanitary conditions were bad in some respects; epidemics were hard to control; malaria was so prevalent that not infrequently a man expected to be up and doing for two days and down with a fever on the third until liberal dosages of quinine conquered the disease.

Hard work and long hours were accepted as the normal way of life. In the grain harvest the length of the working day ranged from twelve to fourteen hours. Men developed a good-natured rivalry, as they pitted their strength and hardihood against the job. It must be admitted that they might wear the same sweaty clothing for as much as a week, and—unless a welcome swimming hole was near at hand—they might not have a bath between Saturday nights.

Voluntary cooperation was the solution of many of the problems of the frontier. If a man faced a difficult undertaking like the erection of a barn, the neighbors might come and work together on the project for a day or two. If one fell ill at planting time and was in danger of not being able


PIONEER STORE

A View of old Kingston

to plant his crop, the neighbors moved in with teams and implements and did it for him. If a fire left a family without a house to live in, again the neighbors came to the rescue, with labor and money if both were needed.

There was little organized charity, but there was openhanded liberality. Neither federal, state, nor local government offered support to the poor. On the other hand, there was a strong spirit of independence, a will to be self-supporting. There was something peculiarly American in the pioneer's readiness to adapt himself to conditions as he found them.

There were items on the other side of the ledger. It would be an error to represent that everybody was always cooperative and law-abiding. There were then, as there always are, people who were grasping and unfair in their dealings. There were crimes, sometimes shocking crimes, but a large percentage of the criminal acts were committed by roving men, rather than by the actual settlers.

A saloon was one of the first businesses to be established in a frontier town, and saloons have never contributed constructively to social behavior. Some men drank moderately, some drank in excess, and some were teetotalers. Good Templer lodges, whose members were pledged to abstinence, flourished in some localities. In Visalia, a pioneer San Joaquin Valley town, there was as early as 1859 a Dashaway Club, the name signifying that if a member were offered a drink, he would dash away, rather than to accept.

Credit was commonly extended to ranchers whose incomes depended upon annual crops or the sale of stock at long intervals. Often almost the entire sum brought by the sale would be turned over to the merchant and a new account started immediately.

An early resident of the Lemoore district told an interesting story of his own life, which may be worth including here for its points of difference from, as well as for its points of similarity to the experience of the average pioneer. After the wheat harvest he sold his crop, paid his "store bill," bought a few things that were needed at home, and his money was all gone. Next he started giving an order for groceries on credit as he had been in the habit of doing, but the merchant told him he could not "carry" him for another year.

The rancher was stunned, but as he drove home, he decided that the family would have to live on the products of the farm. He had saved seed for another crop of wheat. He had cows and pigs and chickens. There was a garden and there was a small acreage of Indian corn. The latter he took to the mill and had it ground. With those resources the family subsisted for a year, and when harvest time came again, there was no "store bill" to be paid. Many years afterward Mr. Garrett remarked that from that time on he had always paid cash for what he bought.

It may be natural for one who has never experienced anything like frontier life to believe that it must have been dreary and uninteresting; but it would be hard to find a person willing to say so who remembers that life. There was always interest in the things of the out-of-doors, the wild animals, the changing of the seasons, even in floods and storms. The contacts with untamed nature were not always pleasant, but they prevented monotony. The early settlers have had much to say of the sandstorms, the swarms of flying ants that might invade a dwelling unexpectedly, and the "grease-bugs" that overran them at times. One early settler, in his reminiscences, said that they seemed to have a different kind of bug for each month of the year.

On the other hand, they had their fun and entertainment. A rough floor in a room twelve feet square often served for dancing, and a few miles by wagon or on horseback mattered little, even if a mile or two of the road happened to be under water. The dancers could always wait until daylight before starting home if necessary. The music furnished by the old-time fiddlers is well known to-day, having been kept alive by old fiddlers' contests and by radio programs.

The dwellings were so widely scattered that any gathering was a diversion. The women had their sewing parties and quilting bees. There were picnics and seining parties. Families might join forces at hog-killing time. The men went out occasionally on hunting expeditions. Anything that brought people together was a social event, and people took advantage of it as such.

On Sunday afternoons young people often gathered at some home and sang for a few hours. Walking home in the evening by twos was considered no hardship. Occasionally a singing teacher would organize a class in some community and lead it for a few weeks, affording instruction and entertainment at the same time.

There were literary and debating societies, which not only supplied entertainment but also became factors in the educational advancement of those who participated. Two men—the late M. L. Short and Mr. John C. Covert—who were prominent debaters at Lakeside, later became superior judges of the county. The Eureka School was the scene of many contests in debating and in spelling, some of them arousing keen interest and drawing large crowds. No doubt other communities were just as active.

As a sample of public school entertainment—often called "exhibition"—there is included below a program which was presented by the Lakeside School, under the direction of the teacher, Miss Jeannette Smalley, in commemoration of Washington's Birthday, in 1891. Contrast between it and many modern programs may suggest one point of difference between the past and the present.

PROGRAM

Washington's Birthday, Wallace Collins
Our Flag, by five boys and girls
Star Spangled Banner, by the school
Concord and Lexington, composition by Bert Cross
Paul Revere's Ride, Laura Cross
Our Country, a song by Ida McNamee, Gussie DeWitt, Sarah Welton, Laura Cross, Gracie Clute, and Ruth Lewellyn
Battle of Trenton, composition by Charlie Church
The Reason Why, by George Meadows
Keller's National Hymn, by school
The Presidents, Edna Lewellyn
Surrender of Yorktown, composition by Caroline Orton

INTERMISSION

Hymn, Washington, by the school
Washington's Life and Character, by the school
Mt. Vernon Bells, Carrie Church, Nellie Cross, Edith Clute, and Ella Orton
Washington's Our Model, ten boys and girls
Soldier Rest, school

Is it necessary to say that they took their entertainment seriously?

The pioneers were as quick to provide for public worship as they were to make provision for public schools. If a minister were available, there was preaching somewhere. Sunday Schools were conducted at convenient places, and children eagerly attended. "Protracted meetings"—places of dire preachments and stern decisions—were also a feature of entertainment.

Among the few great occasions of every year, Christmas was celebrated as a time of feasting and joy. Santa Claus nearly always found his way down the remotest chimney, even if the things he left might have a practical rather than an amusement value.

There were picnics during the fine spring weather; but the Fourth of July brought people for miles around to some town, where they indulged in a big day of celebrating. There was a parade, led by the "brass" band, and participated in by fraternal organizations and others. In this the town's fire-fighting equipment was usually displayed, and a band of callithumpians—in grotesque costumes, beating tin pans and blowing tin horns—brought up the rear. But the feature of the parade was the Goddess of Liberty on her decorated float. Few honors as great as being chosen for the role of Goddess of Liberty could ever come to a young lady.

There was a program at which someone read the Declaration of Independence and someone sang "The Star Spangled Banner." Then the crowd settled down to an hour of good old-fashioned oratory, in which the American Eagle soared high if it did not scream.

Athletic contests formed a part of the day's entertainment—foot races always, sometimes weight-throwing or wrestling. Climbing a greased pole for a twenty-dollar prize was sometimes attempted, or catching—and holding—a greased pig. A tug of war—perhaps between married men and single men—was a common feature, as was a fat man's race. A water fight between the fire departments of two towns aroused enthusiasm in the spectators. Firecrackers exploded the whole day long, and at night illuminating fireworks brightened the sky.

It might be well to point out that this general description fits the middle rather than the early period of Kings County history, although some features can be traced back a long way.

Horse-racing might be seen on a Fourth of July but was featured more at other times. When most men rode horses, it was only natural that they should race them; but a good saddle horse might not be a good race horse, and so men turned to the breeding of horses especially for racing. Great rivalry developed among owners of different horses, and some good animals appeared. Among the early tracks of the county were the following: one a short distance south of Kingston; one south of Lemoore, where the golf-course now is; and another outside of Hanford, lying just north of the present airport. Later a half-mile track was constructed at the fair grounds west of Hanford, and that was replaced by one twice that length. Before the days of pavements a town street often served as a track for horse races.

Amateur theatricals were much indulged in, and traveling entertainers sought a new community just as soon as the population was sufficient to promise a profit—which was not always forthcoming. A traveling troupe of players was likely to appear as soon as facilities for their performance were offered, and sometimes good plays and good actors came to small towns. As early as 1891 the noted actor, Frederick Warde, played in Visalia.

There were other types of entertainment. Vendors of patent medicines and soaps would set up their stands, with smooth-tongued "doctors" and varied programs designed to help extract dollars from the pockets of the entertained. The time was when the coming of the circus was an exciting annual event. It brought to many people their only opportunity to see things that belonged to far-away places.

In the beginning the pioneers had shacks for houses, and they had to devote their energies to the business of sustaining life; yet almost as soon as they had gained a hold upon the land, they began to beautify the spot where they lived. Shrubs and trees, brought from distant places, were planted and carefully tended. Among the favorites were rose and oleander, cypress and palm. Eucalyptus trees, too, were early importations. Lombardy poplars sprang up quickly, but did not live to a great age.

To-day one may often identify the place where an early settler lived by noting the old cypress, palm, or eucalyptus trees. It would be interesting to know just how old the oldest planted trees are. One cypress, which stands just west of the Lemoore High School, was planted by the Skaggs family in 1875. There may be some older imported trees in the county, but most of the old trees were planted no earlier than 1880.

Some of the eucalyptus trees have attained such an impressive height that one wonders how tall they may be after a few centuries of growth. Will they rival the Sequoias?

We marvel at the styles of the past, though we know that what is new to-day may have been in vogue long ago. However, it is hard to believe that women ever again will adopt for street and home wear the skirts—flounced or not—that touched the floor, to say nothing of those bulging bustles. The once common mustache cup will continue to be a relic, and the gold-banded quill toothpick may be remembered with a touch of shame.

Often one hears, when pioneer days are being discussed, some such remark as, "The old-timers had something that we moderns have lost. They could take the hard knocks and never fail to come up for more." The truth is, they loved their life, and lived it with little thought that it was a hard life. Their pleasures were not dependent upon expensive arrangements, and they did very well without the many devices we are sometimes pleased to call "gadgets."

CHAPTER VI

THE MARCH OF INDUSTRY

Every one knows that the first important industry of Kings County was stock-raising. The first cattle to graze within the present limits of the county were brought by the Spanish rancheros to the hills west of Tulare Lake. Then came David Kettleman in 1850,[1] and soon after him a few other settlers, to the West Side. The so-called cattle barons were establishing themselves along Kings River as early as 1855.

At first cattle and horses were allowed to range almost at will, the only restrictions being those imposed by a few watchful vaqueros. Naturally there was a great deal of intermingling of animals belonging to various owners, but little attention was paid to that until a rodeo was held. Then the riders would gather thousands of cattle, brand and mark the young ones, and separate those that were to be driven off to market. These would be herded northward along the San Joaquin River where they could be well pastured as they went. It has been said that nearly five hundred riders took part in one round-up near Burris Park.

The cities and mining camps of the north were the ultimate destination of the beef. Stockton was the point to which most of the cattle were driven.

Sheep raising was also undertaken at an early period, but never came to be quite as important as the raising of cattle. Since cattle do not like to graze where sheep have been, there was the usual rivalry between the two interests. For many years wool continued to be an important product, especially of the West Side, and Huron, in Fresno County, was said to be one of the world's greatest shipping points for that commodity.

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[1] Avenal Rotary Vol. VIII, No. 6, June 20, 1940.

Among the larger early cattlemen were Daniel Rhoads, Jonathan Esrey, John Sutherland, and David Burris. Perry C. Phillips was a pioneer in the sheep industry, having owned as many as eighteen thousand sheep at one time; but he did general farming as well. Later he made dairying his chief interest.

For nearly twenty years after settlement was begun this area was given over almost exclusively to stock-raising. During that time many settlers were coming to take up land, and some general farming was being done; but products that required facilities for transportation could not be profitable unless the value per pound was high. Sometimes wool and hides were hauled by wagon to Firebaugh and shipped down the San Joaquin River by boat.

Two things had to be accomplished to make way for the valley's second industrial phase. The first was the building of the railroads, which is treated in another chapter, and the second was the passage of the "no-fence" law. The coming of the first railroad into the valley—the Southern Pacific through Goshen—opened the way for the growing of grain for more than local use.

The cattlemen believed that farmers who planted crops should protect them by fencing. The farmers, on the other hand, contended that the owners of stock should be held responsible for keeping them off other people's property. A bitter struggle grew up between the two factions over a proposed law which came to be known as the "no-fence" law because its purpose was to make possible the collection of payment for damage done to crops that were not inclosed by fences.

In 1870 Stephen Barton, editor of the Visalia *Delta,* started agitation for the law. The cattlemen thought it would ruin their business because the cost of fencing was then about $1,000 per mile. The day of the barbed wire fence had not arrived. Opposition was led by Thomas Fowler, a wealthy cattleman and member of the state senate. In 1873 he ran for reelection, and Tipton Lindsey was his opponent. The senatorial district included the counties of Fresno, Tulare, and Kern. Fowler, a Democrat, carried Tulare County, but Lindsey, running as an independent, was elected because he favored the "no-fence" law. He introduced the bill, and after a bitter contest, it became a law in 1874.

By that time the railroad had been built through the valley, and grain-raising was becoming the principal industry. For several years it increased in importance. The grain was cut by headers and threshed by portable threshing machines, until combined harvesters came into use. The latter machines were becoming popular by 1888.

Immense warehouses dotted the railroads that soon served the valley, and wheat was the chief export for many years. In this county Guernsey became the chief shipping point for grain.

In the meantime other crops were being introduced. Alfalfa was raised on many farms where irrigation was possible, and the culture of fruit was being developed. Much of the soil of Kings County could then be irrigated by seepage, and alfalfa grew so rankly that often there was great difficulty in cutting it with a mowing machine.

After the era of grain the next general change was the development of the fruit industry. Fruit trees were brought into the valley by the early settlers, and it soon became evident that the area was an excellent place for horticultural pursuits, but for a long time only local markets were available. After the railroads came, there was much to be learned about the growing and processing of fruits before the industry could become very important. However, during the late eighties many acres were planted to trees and many to vines. The early nineties produced a planting boom.

Peaches, apricots, prunes, and pears were the fruits most extensively grown, but experimental plantings of many varieties were made. To process and store the fruit large plants were erected in Hanford, Armona, and Lemoore.

In 1883 Cassius M. Blowers shipped the first boxed raisins from the region. In 1890 the Lucerne Vineyard of nearly one thousand acres of muscat vines was planted. It was considered the largest raisin vineyard in the world, and was well equipped to handle the crop.

In time the acreage of both muscat and Thompson seedless grapes became very large, and, although it has been greatly reduced during the last twenty years, it is still considerable. Peaches and apricots also remain important, though greatly reduced, crops. Very few prunes are now grown, but olives and walnuts have assumed some importance.

Dairying was receiving some notice as early as 1890. Hanford had two cheese factories, which consumed the product of the surrounding dairy farms. The Excelsior cheese factory was said to be capable of handling the milk from one thousand cows.

After a few years the cheese factories were replaced by creameries, and dairying became one of the most stable of the county's industries. It has grown steadily through the establishment of large and small dairies. Much attention has been paid to the improvement of herds and the betterment of sanitary conditions and equipment. Still only about twenty percent of the dairies of the county are producing Grade A milk.

Many years ago experiments proved that cotton could be grown successfully in the San Joaquin Valley. For some reason—the lack of field laborers, perhaps—it was not cultivated here extensively until comparatively recent times.

The first crop of Kings County cotton was produced in the Corcoran area in 1923 and consisted of six hundred bales. The crop of the following year was more than ten times as great. Very soon other districts in the county were growing cotton in large quantities, and for several years the annual production has amounted to millions of dollars in value.

The introduction of cotton brought a source of wealth, but it brought also certain problems. The nature of the crop is such that large numbers of workers are needed during the picking season and a considerable number in the spring for chopping—thinning the plants. But there is not work for these people during the entire year. The result is that they must migrate to other localities or become dependent. Most of them leave at the end of the picking season.

Gins and other necessary plants have been constructed to process the cotton and cotton seed, and their operation forms an important part of the industrial activity of the county. Although other towns share this business, Corcoran is the cotton center.

The problem of housing the migrant labor has been met by constructing camps, consisting of numerous small houses, on the various large tracts. Growers have had to spend large sums of money to provide housing facilities. Some of these camps are well constructed and quite suitable for habitation. A few are far from satisfactory.

The county has been alert in providing schools for migratory children. Whether they are stationed at a certain place for a few days or for several weeks, children are able to attend school. Unfortunately, buildings and equipment cannot always be equal to the standard of the county.

This brief survey of the agricultural development of the county has little place for the diversified farming that is common practice on most farms. Relatively few Kings County farmers confine their efforts to one product. The accompanying table, furnished by the Kings County Agricultural Commissioner, indicates the diversity as well as the value of agricultural products. Some of the figures are estimates, but they were carefully compiled.

Value of Agricultural Products

Kings County, 1940

Fruits and Grapes

Apricots	$ 323,638.00	
Peaches, cling	28,340.00	
Peaches, freestone, dry	149,400.00	
Peaches, freestone, fresh	71,520.00	
Olives	47,430.00	
Persimmons	875.00	
Prunes	8,360.00	
Plums	9,200.00	
Thompson Seedless Grapes and Raisins	107,971.50	
Muscat Grapes and Raisins	477,859.20	
Other grapes	72,388.05	
Walnuts	30,000.00	
		$ 1,326,981.75

Field Crops

Cotton	$3,126,261.50	
Cotton Seed	658,447.55	
Sugar Beets	8,970.00	
Hay	814,686.00	
Wheat	723,505.65	
Barley	1,646,715.60	
Flax	292,607.12	
Milo Maize	120,000.00	
Alfalfa Seed	9,000.00	
		$ 7,400,193.42

Livestock Estimates		
Butterfat	$2,515,243.25	
Beef Cattle, including feed yard sales	2,395,470.00	
Sheep and Lambs	260,048.92	
Wool	84,740.00	
Hogs	135,911.50	
Turkeys	88,787.50	
Poultry and Eggs	200,000.00	
		$ 5,680,201.21
Miscellaneous Crops		
Watermelons	$ 86,190.00	
Honey and Wax	25,800.00	
Nursery Stock	5,024.50	
		$ 117,014.50
		$14,524,390.88

Throughout the years experiments have been made with various products. In some instances the success of the experiments was promising, and yet they were not followed up.

In 1888 Young Chow, a Hanford Chinese, harvested sixty tons of hops from seventy acres, employing over a hundred Chinese laborers as pickers. The crop was worth about $24,000, and the harvesting cost was $4,563. After other expenses were taken out, there must have been a good profit.

Experiments in silk culture were in progress during the early nineties. Probably the cost of labor prevented that industry from finding a permanent place here.

Tobacco as a crop has been tried with success, but has never been grown extensively. One Kings County pioneer, however, raised enough of the plant to acquire the nickname "Tobacco Wilson." He was Ozborn Lamar Wilson, a farmer of the Kings River District.

This agricultural development would not have been possible without irrigation. The early settlers soon saw the possibilities and began taking water out of Kings River. One of the earliest ditches—the Rhoads Ditch—was begun in

1863. The greatest diversion activity took place during the early seventies, and by 1880 claims had been filed to all the water of Kings River. Although the greater part of the water goes to Fresno County, a considerable portion of Kings County is well watered.

Kings River brings most of the water to the county; but Cross Creek supplies some, and Tule River pours part of its volume into the Tulare Lake basin.

The projected Pine Flat Dam on Kings River—which, according to present indications, is soon to be begun—will be of great value to the county. Not only will it prevent floods, but it will also make the supply of water last longer each season.

Although the greater portion of Kings County is entirely agricultural, the value of its mineral production now approaches that of its farms and ranches. This is the result of the enormous production of the Kettleman oil fields. The assessed valuation of mineral rights is several times as great as that of agricultural lands. The county has produced a little quicksilver, and long ago a little oil was found, but only since 1928 has it been recognized as the home of one of the world's greatest oil fields.

There is, not far from Avenal, cased in by redwood lumber, an old well, from which oil was first taken in 1862.[2] Some other shallow wells in Tar Canyon also produced a little oil long before the real discovery was made. Geologists long believed that the Kettleman Hills contained large deposits of oil, and many wells were attempted, but drilling methods were not capable of reaching the necessary depths.

The Bolsa Chica Oil Corporation took oil from its Downey No. 1 on the Middle Dome of Kettleman Hills in 1924. The quantity was not sufficient to cause any great excitement.

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[2] Ibid.

On October 5, 1928, the Milham Exploration Company's Elliott No. 1 blew out with such a force that the spray of gas and oil could not be brought under control until October 28. This was a signal to the world that a new and important oil field had been discovered.

Other wells were soon brought in; roads were constructed; pipelines laid; and all the activities of a booming oil field followed. Although production in the North Dome field is under control by voluntary agreement of the Kettleman North Dome Association (Kenda), and the Standard Oil Company, it is, nevertheless, tremendous.

The following figures, giving the value of Kings County's mineral production for 1940, were supplied by Mr. Walter W. Bradley, State Mineralogist:

Natural gas	$ 2,018,422
Petroleum	9,535,689
Quicksilver	3,827
Stone, miscellaneous	1,500
Total	$11,559,438

CHAPTER VII

THE RAILROADS AND THE MUSSEL SLOUGH TROUBLE

It cannot be denied that the railroads were one of the biggest factors in the development of the entire San Joaquin Valley. Their coming reduced to less than one-tenth the freight rates to San Francisco, and added dollars to the value of each fertile acre. Nevertheless, the time was when there was much bitterness toward the railroad companies, particularly toward the Southern Pacific, the first to build through the valley.

In January, 1863, work was begun at Sacramento on the first transcontinental railroad, the Central Pacific. Crews working from the west and crews working from the east brought the line to completion at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 13, 1869.

Before that date surveyors for the railroad had looked over this valley, and plans were being laid for building. In the spring of 1870 the Central Pacific Company started construction, from their main line at Lathrop, near Stockton, a road that was to pass through the valley, touch points in southern California, and then connect with the southern roads from the east. The valley portion was completed in 1872, and Goshen was Kings County's nearest station. From Goshen south, the road was called the Southern Pacific, and that name is now applied to the whole line. In 1876 the company began work on a western spur from Goshen. It was expected to pass through Grangeville, but failed to do so. Odd-numbered sections of land had been granted to the railroad company, but settlers on those sections believed that the company had forfeited its rights by not beginning work at a specified time. Shortly before this time the settlers had held a meeting at Grangeville and resolved to uphold what they believed to be their rights.

Construction progressed rapidly. Within less than a year the new town of Hanford had been founded, and the road had been built beyond Lemoore. Within a few years it was extended to Coalinga.

The Southern Pacific also built a line on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley. Extending from Tracy, it reached Armona in 1891, connecting there with the Goshen branch.

These two lines gave the Southern Pacific a practical monopoly upon the transportation of this area, and people demanded a competing road. On July 5, 1894, a meeting was held in the office of the Hanford *Sentinel* to arouse interest in the building of a new railroad. Many prominent men of the community went to work on the problem of organization and securing the cooperation of other communities. Some San Francisco capitalists promised aid, but were slow to act. Finally a letter to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce brought a favorable reply, and that in turn had the desired effect upon the San Francisco people. A new company was incorporated there with a capitalization of $6,000,000, and soon work was begun on what was called the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railroad.

In June, 1897, the first train came into Hanford over the new road, popularly known as the "Valley Road." The line is now a part of the Atcheson, Topeka, and Santa Fe system. It is the main line of the Santa Fe through the valley, and for that reason has been able to provide very good service. The fast, streamlined passenger trains are an example. Soon after the completion of the main line a branch line was laid through Visalia, connecting with the former at Corcoran.

Little other railroad building has been done in the county.

In 1907 the Southern Pacific laid the tracks to Stratford. A short time afterwards Mr. Charles King built his Summit Lake and Hanford Railroad as far as Hardwick, where it ended. It has become the property of the Southern Pacific.

The presence of a competing railroad in the valley had the immediate effect of lowering rates. In time people came to consider that the railroads treated them fairly, and most of the old bitterness has been forgotten.

The trouble between the people and the railroads was very widespread, but it came to a head in a tragic manner in this so-called Mussel Slough country. In this area only the Southern Pacific Railroad was involved, because that was the only railroad that then traversed the San Joaquin Valley. The historical importance of the controversy is so great that a brief examination of its causes and effects is necessary. It must be stated, however, that there are many controversial points in the whole story—that the testimony of witnesses and investigators is by no means in complete agreement.

Before the first line was built the company sought and received from the government a grant of twenty sections of land for each mile of track. The grant was based upon the agreement of the company to follow a certain route, to begin construction at a certain time, and to complete it at a certain time. None of these conditions was met.

Furthermore, the company encouraged settlers to locate upon the land, with the understanding that they would be allowed to purchase it at such low rates that the cost would be comparable to that of taking up the even-numbered sections of the government land. In 1876 the Southern Pacific Company sent out public notices setting forth these conditions.[1] The company was slow to offer definite terms of purchase, but when it finally did, the prices were much higher than the settlers had expected to pay, or thought the railroad was entitled to. They contended that they were being asked to pay for improvements which they had made upon the land.

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[1] M. S. Featherstone, Typescript.

Many of the settlers refused to pay such prices—averaging about twenty-five dollars per acre—and organized to fight the issue in the courts. The Settlers' Land League was formed, and there was some show of armed resistance. J. J. Doyle went to Washington, D. C., on behalf of the settlers and attempted to get action from Congress. Failing in this he appealed to Leland Stanford, president of the company, asking him to visit the area and confer with the settlers. Stanford came to Hanford in April, 1880, but no agreement was reached.

In the meantime the company had brought suit in a federal court to eject the settlers. In 1878 a decision favorable to the railroad was handed down. Since no reversal of the decision was obtained, the company undoubtedly had a legal right to the land. Its stand was supported by law in all particulars.

Officers came and undertook to dispossess individuals who refused to meet the company's demands. Their whereabouts were known, and when they appeared at a residence to serve papers, they found no one at home. Then they would remove the furniture from the house and set it in the road. After they had gone, a group of settlers would arrive and put it back into the house. Unsuccessful in this, the officers tried wrecking houses, but a crew of men would follow and reassemble the houses.[2]

The settlers themselves did a little dispossessing. In some instances, in which purchasers had bought land from which settlers had been removed, they were ejected by groups of citizens.

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[2] E. K. Ford, Interview.

A very tense situation existed on May 10, 1880, when a large crowd gathered in Hanford for a picnic and to hear an address by the famous—notorious—Judge Terry of San Francisco. He was the man who had fatally wounded United States Senator Broderick in a duel, who was later shot to death by a deputy United States marshal while attempting an assault upon Justice Field of the United States Supreme Court. Terry was an eloquent orator and a shrewd lawyer. The settlers thought he might help them to find a way out of their difficulty.

That morning United States Marshal Poole came to Hanford, and, with two deputies set out to remove the settlers from a piece of land south of Hanford and one three miles north of Grangeville. The deputies were M. D. Hartt, who had recently resigned as station agent at Goshen to buy land from the railroad company, and Walter J. Crow, a grain-buyer, who was also ready to buy land. With them also was William H. Clark, employed by the railroad as an appraiser of land.

They went first to the place south of Hanford, and, not finding any one at home, left a note. As they passed through Hanford on the way to the Brewer place, they must have been recognized, for word of their presence spread among the settlers. When the officers arrived at the land in question, they found one of the two partners at home. While they were talking with him, a large group of men arrived, some of whom were armed. Some of these men entered into the discussion, which continued for some moments. Hot words passed between Hartt and James Harris, a settler. One version of the affair[3] says that Hartt, "a small, self-conceited man, became offensive" and drew his revolver. Whereupon, Crow, "a cool, shrewd man and expert rifle-man," attempted to calm him. Hartt fired at Harris, missing him but killing Iver Knudson. Then Harris shot Hartt—according to this version, though some say Harris did not fire a shot. At any rate, Hartt was shot. Crow then began firing and emptied his revolver, the only weapon he had in his hands. His victims were James Harris, John Henderson, Dan Kelly, Archibald McGregor, and Ed Haymaker. All but the latter died, either on the spot or within a few days. Mr. Haymaker was only slightly wounded, and, although his death occurred about a month later, it is not believed to have been caused by the shooting.

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[3] M. S. Featherstone.

After emptying his revolver, Crow had reached for his rifle, which was in a wagon; but the horses had become frightened and started running away. Unarmed, he left the scene under the protection of the general confusion which had resulted. About a half-mile from the place he was shot and killed by an unknown person. One contempory wrote: "Several persons claimed the honor of killing Mr. Crow, but it is most likely that the shot was fired by a Mr. Lewellyn."[4]

Marshall Poole took no part in the shooting, nor had he made any threat of violence. He was not in the immediate group with Hartt and Crow when the trouble came to a head, and he was not armed at the time. Neither did William Clark have any part in the affray.

After the shooting was over, Major T. J. McQuiddy and a large group of men arrived. They handed Mr. Poole a written demand that he stop trying to dispossess settlers, and advised him to leave immediately. He and Clark were escorted to Kingsburg and left on the first train. Their swift departure may have prevented further bloodshed.

Several citizens who had been prominent in the struggle of the settlers—though they had taken no part in shooting—

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[4] Ibid.

were arrested and charged with resisting a federal officer. They were convicted in the United States Circuit Court and sentenced to five months' imprisonment. Public sympathy for them was so great that, while they were serving the sentence in San Jose, they were subjected very little to the restrictions of prison life. Upon their return to Hanford, there was a joyous celebration in their honor. The men were J. J. Doyle, James N. Patterson, J. D. Purcell, W. L. Pryor, and William Braden.

For some years on the anniversary of the unhappy event of May 10, 1880, memorial services were conducted in honor of the settlers who had been killed in the fight. They were looked upon as martyrs who had given their lives for a cause.

The stark tragedy of the affair brought such a shock that people were sobered. They had lost their legal fight, and they saw that there was nothing to be gained by any other kind of fight. The railroad company made a small concession in their favor by a slight reduction in its price scale. In the end most of the settlers bought the land on which they had lived.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF TULARE LAKE[1]

The word Tulare comes to us from the Spanish, as does our word tule; but the Spanish in turn adapted both from certain words of a Mexican Indian dialect. The term *los tulares* was applied by the Spanish to the marshy regions of the San Joaquin Valley, where the tules grew. Time was when it might be used to designate almost any portion of the great valley that lay along the main river or around any of the lakes at the upper end. Gradually the term came to be localized in the southern portion, which was called Tulare Valley by those of English speech, and one of the chief features of that area was the great Tulare Lake.

Sometime in the past there was a well defined river channel extending from the Kern to Suisun Bay. Water from melting snow on Mount Whitney might then flow nearly a hundred miles southward and westward, make a leisurely bend toward the north, and, without stopping to stagnate the lakes, finally join the waters of the great bay.

A lusty tributary of that river, however, was busy carrying sediment from the Sierra slopes to build a dam across the valley and create a saucer-like basin, where the flow of several streams gathered. Thus the river now known as Kings formed Tulare Lake. A broad belt across the valley was raised to an elevation considerably higher than the land farther south, and into the low basin poured the flood waters of the Kern, White River, Tule River, the Kaweah, and the Kings, not to mention the several lesser streams. The resultant broad expanse of relatively shallow water was often called the largest fresh-water lake west of the Mississippi River.

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[1] Most of the material in this chapter appeared in a chapter which I contributed to a "History of Kings County," written mainly by Robert R. Brown and published by A. H. Cawston in 1940.—J.L.B.

It was one of a chain of lakes extending from Kern County to Fresno, and including Kern Lake, the most southerly, Buena Vista Lake, Goose Lake, and Summit Lake. The great Tulare Lake is the one which stirs the imagination. Its very bigness; its motley associations with Indians, bandits, wild hogs, boating excursions, fishing and hunting; its recurrent destruction of encroaching farming operations—all have served to keep alive in people's minds the vitality of the phantom lake.

During the ninety-seven years since 1844, the year of Fremont's famous report, Tulare Lake has been dry approximately nineteen years, almost one-fifth of the time. Yet many people, before its most recent reappearance, had come to think of it as a thing of past history only. It had been gone about fourteen years, having disappeared in 1923.

All of its periods of dryness have occurred during the latter half of its known history. Before 1880 it was full to overflowing the greater part of the time, and since that date its surface has never reached the two-hundred-foot level, which is six feet below the overflow stage.

It first went dry in 1898[2] and remained so for about a year. Again in 1905 it was dry, but it received a good supply of water the next year and for several years remained rather large. At the end of each of the years 1913 and 1914 there was practically no lake. In 1916 there was a good-sized lake, but it was dry land in 1918. Again it came back in 1921, and 1923 saw it dry, replenished slightly, and dry again. This time it was gone for fourteen years, nearly three times as long as it had been dry during all its earlier known history.

While people were speculating as to whether or not there would ever be a lake again, there was a threat in 1936. A small part of the Kings River run-off actually reached the lake bottom but was confined to the channels and borrow-pits.

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[2] Early statistics based on "Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of Engineering of the State of California".

More water reached there in 1937. The actual beginning of the present lake took place on February 7. Within two days water from Kings River covered eight sections of land. Water from the Kern River began flowing in on May 8, and there was a fairly steady rise of the surface level until April 9, when it stood at 186 feet above sea level.[3] The peak for the summer, occurring about June 15, was 192 feet. Then there was a steady decline, until by the middle of September the level was back again at 186 feet.

On December 10, 1937, a great rain storm struck the southern Sierras. In some places eight inches of water fell within twelve hours. As a result Kings River rose to an all-time high, measuring 80,000 second feet at Piedra at six P. M. on December 11. The significance of so tremendous an amount of water can be realized when one considers that a flow of 20,000 second feet is regarded as flood stage. Yet this flood, because it was so brief, had no such effect upon the lake as might have been expected. There was a sharp rise of about a foot and a half in the surface level.

Early in February, 1938, the lake began to rise again, but the rise during the spring was checked by the breaking of levees and the consequent spread of the water. By May 4 the peak elevation for the year—195 feet and four inches—was reached. Then there was a sharp decline of almost three feet by the middle of June.

The present lake was greatest in area during the summer of 1938. In February water stood on approximately forty-two sections. In September it covered about 223 square miles in Tulare Lake itself. South of the main lake was another large body of water, a portion of the flow from Kern

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[3] Figures on recent floods from graphs supplied by Roy L. May.

River, which had been prevented from finding its natural destination by levees thrown up for that purpose.

The lake's greatest width, from the south bank of the Tule River westward, was about seventeen and one-half miles. Its greatest length, from a point near the entrance of Kings River southeasterly toward the mouth of the Kern, was almost twenty-three miles.

Because the precipitation for the season of 1938-1939 was far below normal, the lake steadily decreased after the peak of 1938 until early in 1940. On January 3 of that year the surface level was almost exactly 187 feet, and the area covered was about 100 square miles. During that spring a considerable flow entered the lake. By May 20 the surface elevation was up to 190 feet.

However, 1940 brought no flood to the lake, but 1941 did. The heavy seasonal rainfall produced a strong, steady run-off in the rivers, which delivered into the lake a considerable flow over a period of several months. Levees gave way, and an area of about 133 square miles was covered. A portion of the highway west of Corcoran was flooded and out of use for a long time. The water came close to the Corcoran airport. The highest surface elevation, 196 feet and nine inches, was reached on June 27.

Years ago, before the levees were constructed, the shoreline of the lake shifted widely with the seasons. The extremely even contour of the basin is such that the rise or fall of the surface level by a few feet would move the shore-line several miles. Even a strong wind has been known to drive the water a great distance out upon the land.

There were also floods in the past, some of the more pronounced occurring in the years 1852, 1862, 1868, 1886, and 1906. Early settlers have stated that the flood of 1862 was far greater than anything experienced by the valley since that time, but there is plenty of testimony that the lake was as high in 1852 as it was ten years later.

Water was being discharged from the lake into the San Joaquin River during more than half of the years from 1850 to 1878, but there has been no discharge since the latter date. The lake surface must stand at 206 feet above sea level before any discharge can take place. Since 1880 it has never reached the 200-foot level, although it did go up to 198 feet in 1890, and a great deal of land then recently filed upon was flooded.

The highest actually known surface level was that of 1862, which was placed by State Engineer William H. Hall at 220 feet. This figure and related figures have been widely quoted, but modern engineers base their calculations on the datum of the United States Geological Survey, according to which the maximum elevation was 216 feet. The lowest land surface in the basin is almost exactly 179 feet above sea level. This shows that the greatest depth of water was 37 feet, although it has often been placed at 41 feet, since Hall's figures were used as a basis.

The area of the lake at its greatest dimensions during historical times was about 760 square miles.

The lowest surface elevation before 1892 was just below 189 feet, and that was noted in 1883. At that time the area was 195 square miles.

These few statistics show that since 1880 a definite change in the status of the lake has taken place. Before that date it was usually full; after that date it was never full; and all its periods of dryness have occurred since 1897. Rainfall records indicate that fluctuations from the normal have not been sufficient to have caused it to remain dry for any long period. Not nature but man is responsible. Diversion of water for irrigation has during recent years prevented any but a slight flow of water into the lake except during seasons of supernormal rainfall. Irrigation began to be a factor during the early seventies, and its influence steadily increased for many years. Its effect upon the lake is too obvious to require argument.

A feature of the diversion program which has had a strong bearing upon the lake—although it has had little published attention—is the turning northward into the San Joaquin, by artificial means, of water which normally followed the southern branches of Kings River into the lake basin. Engineers have produced evidence that nearly all of the water of Kings River flowed into the lake before man interefered. Dams were constructed, channels were opened, and the annual flow into the lake was greatly reduced.

The channel now known as the North Fork of Kings River carries most of the flow at times of high water and the entire stream when the water is low. In the past this was not true. There has been a very complicated history of dams and canals, beginning at least as early as 1865, which has resulted in a great loss of water. There was, for example, a canal known as the Zalda, which was enlarged by successive floods until it became the main stream.

The flow of this stream, the North Fork, is somewhat under control by means of the Crescent Weir, whose purpose is to divert water into the Crescent Canal for irrigation toward the west. It is said that there was originally some kind of agreement regarding the number of boards to be kept in the weir, but apparently everybody has forgotten just what the agreement was.

In 1926 there was organized the Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District, having as its object the storing of water in the lake bottom to be used for irrigation on surrounding lands. The general plan was to improve the south channel of lower Kings River, to construct a canal from the North Fork to the south channel, and to divert water from the North Fork above the Crescent Weir. Eighteen sections of land were reserved as a storage area, and a greater amount of adjacent land was leased to be used when needed.

The district did a considerable amount of work on the canal and constructed a headgate close to the south bank of the North Fork above the Crescent Weir. Then owners of water rights filed an injunction suit against the storage district and stopped the work before the river could be tapped.

The district contended that it sought to save water that was being lost by flowing into the San Joaquin River. That a surplus existed was not denied, but the riparian owners feared that their rights would be endangered. The case was tried in the Superior Court of Fresno County in December, 1927. On December 15 Judge Charles K. Barnard issued a temporary injunction forbidding the storage district from taking any water from Kings River, and since that time no further progress on that feature of the project has been made.

In 1935, under the direction of the Kings County Supervisors, a great deal of work was done in the way of removing obstructions to the flow of water in the old south channel leading to the lake. That was followed by high water, which further cleared the channel, and since that time a greater portion of Kings River water has found its way through it to contribute to the floods in the lake basin.

The idea of draining the lake in order that its rich soils might be utilized for farming was advocated first in the early eighteen-fifties and persisted for forty years at least. In 1857 an enterprising group of men secured the passage of an act of the legislature authorizing them to reclaim the land lying under the waters of the lakes Tulare, Buena Vista, and Kern by cutting a drainage canal from Tulare Lake to the San

Joaquin River and extending it to connect the three lakes. The state had obtained title from the United States to swamp and overflowed lands.

A survey showed that the maximum depth of the canal would be about thirty feet. That depth would involve a tremendous amount of work in the days when men and teams —with inadequate implements—formed the units of power for excavation, but as a recompense the company was to have every odd-numbered section thus reclaimed, aggregating several hundred thousand acres.

The grantees were furthermore given a right-of-way two hundred feet wide and the privilege of collecting toll for navigation on the canal for twenty years. The canal must be so constructed as to accommodate boats of eighty tons burden. Construction was to be begun within a year after the passage of the act, and was to be completed within five years.

Strong opposition to the grant was promptly raised, and the legislature repealed the act at its next session, but the repealing act was held to be unconstitutional. The company struggled for years, obtaining title to many sections of land, but the canal was never dug. Personnel changed several times. Finally W. Baker and associates, current owners of the company's rights, received 70,000 acres of overflowed land, and the project was abandoned.

As early as 1881 settlers began filing claims along the margin of the lake as the water receded. In some instances the filing actually preceded the recession of the water. Land could be possessed under very easy conditions. At first 640 acres, and later 320 acres, could be obtained at one dollar per acre by the payment of twenty per cent. The remainder could be deferred indefinitely. Upon showing proof of actual reclamation the claimant would be given title to the land and have his payment refunded. In some cases reclamation work consisted of plowing a furrow around the land. The borders of the lake above the two-hundred-foot level were reclaimed, or at least obtained through small payments and little work. It might be noted that this period marks the beginning of farming in that region.

Actual reclamation of the lower lake basin was accomplished in a very different manner. By the building of enormous levees the diminishing waters were impounded within smaller and smaller areas. Under the laws of the state, reclamation districts were formed, and title to the land was obtained by the payment of a small amount per acre and the building of the necessary levees.

This method of reclamation was begun by Miller and Lux in 1895. The period of the dredger lasted for almost twenty years, and at its close all the land below the two-hundred-foot level belonged to the many reclamation districts, large and small.

The area has become a network of parallel and crossing levees, and in times of flood each operator tries to keep the water off his own land, even though his success will force it upon the land of his neighbors. Little bad feeling is apparent among them, though each works in his own interest.

There are now some thirty-four or thirty-five reclamation districts, and many changes have been made in the original boundaries. An interesting feature of the situation is the existence of deep canals, called borrow-pits, formed by the removal of earth to build the levees. They have a considerable storage capacity and provide a means of drainage and of conducting surplus water to be pumped upon land where it may be needed.

Trappers, hunters, and stockmen were very early attracted to the lake. When actual settlement began in the Tulare Valley, the day of the professional trapper had practically gone, but for many years hunters continued to seek game on the lake-shores. There was a certain type of deer, called elk, which waded into the shallow water to browse. Hunters would sometimes conceal themselves among the tules far out from shore, and wait for their prey. After the animal had been shot, the huge carcass would be floated to the land.

Some of the islands of the lake were used for pasturing hogs. During periods of high water they were ideal ranges, because the animals could not escape; but when the water was low and the high spots were no longer islands, the swine would scatter, and many would be lost. They soon became wild and their progeny infested all the marshy lowlands.

They ate the tule roots and other vegetation, but they also probed in the mud for the mussels which abounded there. They sometimes ventured into water so deep that they literally had to stand on their heads in order to bring up the delectable prizes.

Hunters made a great sport of capturing wild hogs along the margin of the lake. Sometimes parties would camp on the shore, kill scores of the animals, and prepare the lard for shipment to market.

Among other animals which inhabited the region were the giant grizzly bears, which made comfortable homes by burrowing into the soft earth. They subsisted upon about the same diet that pleased the wild hogs. It often happens that the most powerful and dangerous of the animals indigenous to a country are among the first to become extinct there. So it was with the grizzly bear of the San Joaquin Valley.

There were wolves, too, and, of course, the ever-present coyote, as well as foxes, wildcats, and smaller animals. Of all those mentioned, the coyote is the only one which is likely to be found there now. Those qualities of success, so skillfully attached to this wily animal in the Indians' folk-tales have persisted and enabled it to survive. Even now Kings County pays for the destruction of coyotes as a protection to livestock.

A species of amphibian, the terrapin, was formerly an important inhabitant of the marshy region of Tulare Lake and of the water itself. Terrapins were, it appears, very much in demand at the restaurants of San Francisco to be made into turtle soup. The method of catching them was by the use of seines, and it is said that two men sometimes brought in eighty or ninety at a haul. The largest specimens were about eight inches long and eight inches wide. Some of the larger boats used on the lake were placed there for use in connection with the traffic in terrapins.

Naturally fishing in the waters of the lake was engaged in for sport and for profit. Fish taken from the lake were commonly peddled in the towns of King County and in those of Tulare.

The most ambitious activity in this connection was carried on by a San Francisco firm. A crew of Chinese was hired to clean the fish and prepare them for shipment. The fishing was done by means of enormous seines, which were dropped into the water from boats and drawn to the land by horses. If early reports can be trusted, as many as 8,000 pounds were sometimes taken at one haul.

The Fish Commission of California planted black bass and white fish in the lake about 1879. Carp and catfish were also imported. Among other species were perch, lake trout, and the boney suckers. Salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon could sometimes be found.[4]

It was the feathered game, however, which was most attractive to the sportsmen. Ducks and geese were plentiful, sometimes innumerable, and for many years men went there to shoot them. Professional hunters did a thriving business, shipping thousands of the waterfowl to the markets of the cities. Residents of Lemoore used to walk out to the lakeshore on an afternoon, shoot all the ducks they wanted, and then walk back home in time for the evening meal.

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[4] F. F. Latta, "The Story of My People," in Hanford Sentinel.

The first navigation on Tulare Lake was by means of tule rafts made and used by the Indians.[5] They were simply bundles of tule reeds bound together in such quantities that they were capable of supporting heavy loads. Usually a hole was cut through the central portion, through which fish could be speared. Often a fire would be kept burning on a base made of mud. These rafts were propelled by poling, but sails made of tules were sometimes set up. The first hogs transported to Atwell's Island were carried by this means.

In 1862 Thomas Flaxman attempted to take a stern-wheel steamer, the *Alta,* from the San Joaquin River to the lake by way of Fresno Slough. During the flood of that year the plan was undoubtedly feasible, but the navigators were unable to follow the channel. Vaqueros from Kingston were called upon for aid because of their knowledge of the territory; but after night they lost their way, and the boat frequently ran aground. The men would carry the anchor ahead, drop it, and force the boat forward by pulling on the rope. Little progress could be made, and about midnight they gave up trying.

By morning the water had gone down so that it was impossible to move the boat, which soon was on dry land. It has been said that high water never again reached the spot where the *Alta* was stranded.

For many years parts of the old steamer lay incongruously on the dry plain four miles southwest of Burrel, but in time they were all carried away. The boiler, engine, and some other parts were used in the steamer *Mose Andross,* which was built near Waukena in 1875 for A. J. Atwell and I. Goldstein of Visalia. The old anchor may be seen in the Kings County Museum in Hanford.

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[5] The subject of boats on Tulare Lake is more fully treated in "Little Journeys in the San Joaquin," by F. F. Latta.

The *Mose Andross* was fifty feet long and fifteen feet wide, of flat-bottomed construction in order to draw little water. It was used for a year as a schooner before it was converted into a steamer with side-wheel propellers. It was in service for only a few years, being abandoned in 1879. Its principal function was carrying hogs and cattle between the mainland and Atwell's Island, but it carried passengers on an occasional excursion. People from the towns of the valley—notably those living in Visalia—displayed a lively interest in these merry adventures, which sometimes turned out to be anything but merry.

Excursionists sometimes found the water very rough. A strong wind might rise suddenly and become dangerous. The extreme roughness of the water was doubtless due, in part, to its comparative shallowness.

Many other boats were used on the old lake, mostly small craft which depended upon oars or sails for propulsion. One of the most famous was the *Water Witch,* constructed at Mare Island and, as a rowboat, used by the United States Government for several years on San Francisco Bay. In 1878 it was brought up the San Joaquin River as far as Fresno Slough, transported by wagon to Kingston, and there launched on Kings River. From that point there was no difficulty in taking it to the lake, where it was used for catching and transporting terrapins, and for fishing and hunting excursions. In 1882 it was used on a cruise for the purpose of sounding the depth of the water throughout the lake. This being a period of relatively low water, the greatest depth discovered was twenty-two feet.

During the course of this cruise a severe storm was encountered during the night. For a time the fate of the boat and crew was in doubt, but finally a place of safety was reached behind Gordon's Point, a short distance west of the mouth of Kings River.

Early in the present century the gasoline-powered launch made its appearance on the inland sea, and on the present lake many of them have been used. According to the Hanford *Sentinel* of February 18, 1937, "Sandy Crockett, grain grower, holds the distinction of being the first boatman on the new Tulare Lake. Several days ago he placed a motor boat in commission and used it in patrolling the levees as the water rose." Within the past few years several deaths from drowning have resulted from the use of boats on the lake.

In the past it was usually possible to land one of the larger boats at the mouth of any of the principal rivers. Landings were also constructed at other places, notably at Gordon's Point and on the western shore near Kettleman City. On the east bank of Kings River, northwest of Lemoore, was the landing of Daniel Rhoads.

The idea of developing navigation from San Francisco Bay to Kern County by way of the San Joaquin River and the lakes was very persistent. Even after the railroads were built, rates were often unsatisfactory. The need of waterways seemed to give validity to the plan for digging a canal. In 1890 the editor of a Hanford newspaper, after commenting with apparent satisfaction upon the report of progress toward the construction of a competing railroad, went on to say at great risk to his dignity: "Whoop! And why not build a canal from San Francisco Bay to Tulare Lake?"

There are stories of several cruises from Tulare Lake to the bay region, which took place in the early days. For example, Richard Smith took a scow from the lake by way of Summit Lake and Fresno Slough to San Francisco with a load of honey in 1868.

In 1938 F. F. Latta and several companions made a journey by motorboat from Kern County to Treasure Island, in San Francisco Bay. After leaving Tulare Lake, they went up one branch of Kings River and down another to reach the San Joaquin.

Every return of the lake destroys crops and other property, but there are compensations. Much of the water is ultimately used for irrigation, and if no flood waters ever went into the basin, irrigation water would be lacking. Furthermore, when the land lies under the water for a year or more, it not only has a rest from production but is cleaned of foul seed.

Unquestionably, an area of fertile farming land is worth more economically than an equal area of water, provided that necessary water for crops is available. In other words the lake basin is worth more than the lake; yet there is a romantic interest in the lake. People who are not directly affected by its return are, in general, glad when Tulare Lake comes back.

CHAPTER IX

CULTURAL FORCES

Of all the institutions and forces which work together to build the culture of an American community none is more important than the public schools. California is among the most progressive of the states in education, and Kings County has kept abreast of other counties in the state.

The first school attended by children living within the present limits of the county, it appears, was near Kingston but on the north side of the river and, therefore, not within those boundaries. It was established by Fresno County in 1860.

The first school to stand on soil which, long afterwards, became a part of Kings County was the Rhoads School, later called Lake, about two miles northwest of Lemoore. It, too, was in Fresno County. It was started in 1866 with seven pupils in attendance. The teacher was Miss Nannie Ellis, who later, as Mrs. N. S. Davidson, became County Superintendent of Schools.

As in the case of most early schools, the building and furnishings were crude. The first structure, an adobe, gave place to one of rough lumber, and as material progress made them possible, improvements were installed.

The Grangeville community was the next to erect a schoolhouse—in 1870. The district was called Pioneer, and school was conducted under about the same primitive condition as existed in the earlier school.

Only brief mention of some of the early schools can be made. One of them was started at Lemoore on land donated by a Mr. Armstrong. The location was about two blocks north of the present high school building, and school was being held there in 1873. The next year the Mussel Slough School, some four miles to the southeast, was opened.

At about the same time the Lakeside community started its first school in a shack, which was soon replaced by the first plastered schoolhouse in the county.

Eureka is one of the pioneer districts, having had a school as early as 1874. Kings River, under the name of Red Banks, and Excelsior are among the older schools.

The Giddings School, started in 1880, was the forerunner of the Armona School.

Several schools have existed at various times which no longer are in operation. In some cases this has been due to the shifting of population, but in other instances it is the result of consolidation. In line with modern educational trends, the school authorities of the county have sought to eliminate the one-teacher school wherever it has seemed desirable to do so and to organize districts with larger schools and better equipment.

Long ago the Lake District joined the Lemoore schools. The Mercedes District was consolidated with Stratford. Then little more was done until recent times.

The Reefe-Sunset District, embracing the Kettleman City and the Avenal areas, is the only example of one district maintaining widely separated regular elementary schools.

A fine example of the consolidation movement is the new Central Union District, composed of the former Mussel Slough, Empire, and Jacobs Districts.

The Paddock District has recently joined Armona, and Lucerne has merged with Grangeville, which has taken again its original name, Pioneer. Other unions are being planned.

The map of Kings County on Page 61 shows the locations of schoolhouses which are now being used.

There are now four high schools, though only three high school districts, in the county. The Hanford Joint Union High School is the oldest and the largest. It was organized in the fall of 1892, the first term of school beginning on November 7 in an office building on Irwin Street near Sixth, with W. S. Cranmer as the only teacher.

A year later classes were held in a dwelling house on Elm Street near Irwin. A new building, erected on the ground that is now Lacey Park, was dedicated on February 22, 1896. With additions, it served until the present plant was occupied in 1921. People were reluctant to vote bonds for so large a building as the main unit of the present plant, but since that time several new buildings have had to be added to meet the demands of an ever-increasing number of students, now more than a thousand.

The first high school classes in Lemoore were conducted in Heinlen Hall on Front Street in 1900. A union district was formed, and the first high school building erected on Fox Street in 1902. That location was in use until the occupation of the present fine plant in 1925, a second building having been erected on Fox Street in 1910.

The district, which includes the oil fields of Kettleman Hills, is very large and very wealthy. For a few years high school pupils were transported by bus from the oil fields to Lemoore; but in 1937 and 1938 several units of an excellent plant were erected for the Avenal High School, which is still a part of the Lemoore district.

The Corcoran Joint Union High School began in 1912. It has grown steadily from the beginning and moved into an attractive new building in the fall of 1939.

For many years the high school districts of Hanford and Lemoore have maintained evening schools for adults. Both schools have been pioneers in that work, Lemoore enjoying the distinction of being the first school in the state to employ a full-time director of Americanization—Miss Dorothy Lewis.

The work of the Hanford Evening High School was ably directed for many years by the late Mrs. Clara Coldwell. Both schools have exerted a strong cultural influence upon the community through a widely varied program. Forums conducted by highly gifted speakers have been an important feature.

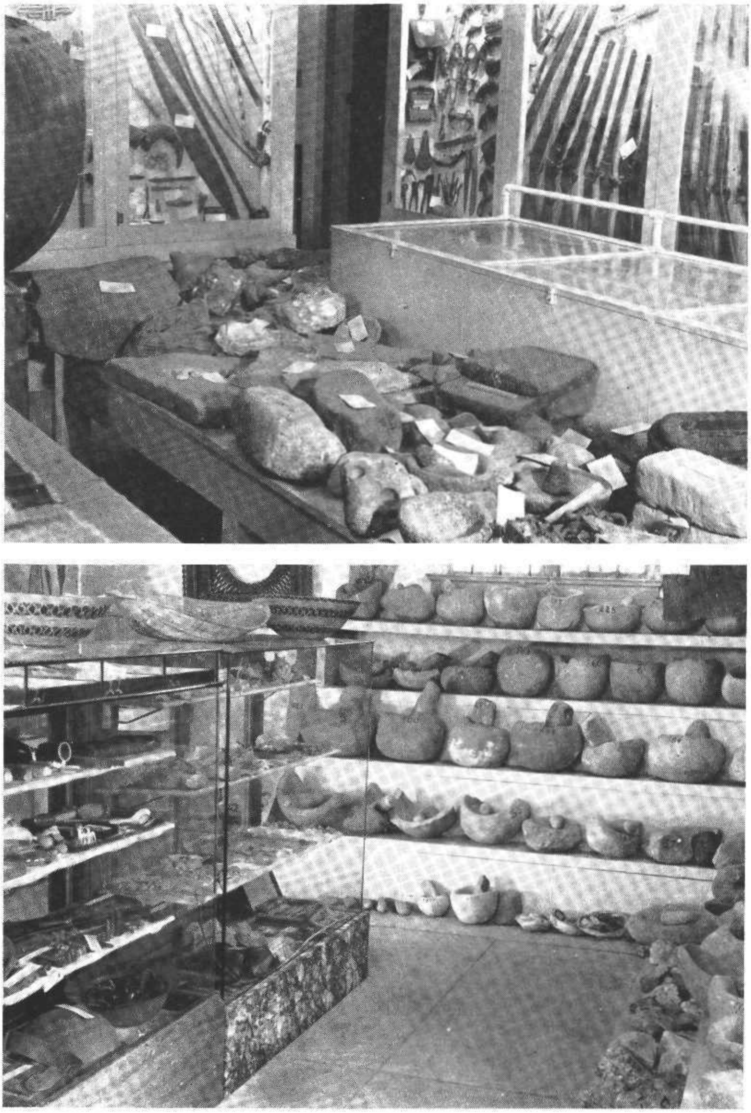
The Catholics maintain an elementary school in Hanford, and the Seventh Day Adventists have a school in Armona which conducts classes in secondary as well as in the elementary grades.

For a long time Kings County communities have been well supplied with churches. As each center of population developed, religious organizations were quick to provide facilities for public worship. Only a brief sketch of some of the pioneering work can be included here.

At first people gathered for services with little regard for denomination. What appears to have been the first group to organize was a Christian Church, which held meetings in the Eureka schoolhouse in 1874, and later in Grangeville. After about four years Hanford was chosen as the location for the church, and its existence in that city has been continuous ever since.

The Methodists of Grangeville began holding meetings in the early seventies and built their church in 1876 under the guidance of the Reverend Mr. J. M. McKelvey. The continuous existence of this institution down to the present time seems to entitle it to the distinction of being the oldest church in the county.

The Presbyterian Church of Hanford, beginning as a Cumberland Presbyterian, is a pioneer of the community. The Reverend N. W. Motheral came to the church as pastor in



Views in Kings County Museum

1880, but occasional services had been conducted for some years before that time. A new church was completed in 1881. It stood at the southeast corner of the present court house grounds.

The Episcopalians started the Church of the Saviour in 1880, the first building being in the south part of Hanford. The present brick structure, reminiscent of English church architecture, was erected in 1910.

The first Catholic building in Hanford was a mission church located in the northeast corner of Seventh and Redington Streets, placed there in 1882. The expansion of that denomination has brought about the fine structure of the St. Brigid's Church on Douty and Florinda Streets and the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the south part of town.

The Afro-Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, organized in Hanford in 1890, may also be considered a pioneer institution.

Lemoore was the site of some of the earliest churches of the county. The congregation of the Methodist Episcopal South, after some years of existence moved into a new building erected in 1878 by Daniel Rhoads. The Baptists were holding services in 1879. The Methodist Episcopal and the Presbyterian groups appeared in the late eighties. The Catholics were later in organizing.

The Seventh Day Adventist denomination did pioneering work in the county, particularly in the Grangeville, the Lemoore, and the Armona sections.

The history of public libraries in Kings County begins with the formation of the Hanford Reading Room Association in 1890. In May of the next year the association opened a reading room and established a circulating library in a building on Seventh Street between Douty and Irwin, with Miss Nellie Henderson as librarian.

In 1902 an application was made for a gift of $15,000 from Andrew Carnegie for the erection of a building. That amount was not forthcoming, but $10,000 was offered and refused. Finally a compromise was reached in the sum of $12,500. The new building was dedicated in 1906, and is still in use, having undergone some reconstruction a few years ago.

Miss Bessie Herrman, who was librarian in 1912, was instrumental in starting the County Library. By virtue of her efforts the Board of Supervisors became interested and, in November, 1812, adopted a resolution forming a county library. For several years after that the Hanford Public Library and the Kings County Free Library were operated jointly.

During that time branches were established in several communities, the first being at Armona, where a nucleus already existed. Corcoran, Grangeville, Hardwick, Lemoore—which already had a library—and Startford soon followed in joining the county system. In Grangeville, Hardwick, and Stratford county buildings were erected for the purpose. Kettleman City and Avenal established branches in 1930. At some isolated places branches have been established in private homes.

The Paddock School, in 1914, was the first school to become affiliated with the County Library; but within the following two years most of the schools, ultimately all elementary schools, came in, but Reefe-Sunset and Hanford have amicably withdrawn. The library distributes to the schools many supplementary texts, general reading books, pictures, and other materials.

For some years after the development of the county system the County Librarian was also the Hanford City Librarian, but since 1930 the two positions have been separate. Mrs.

Harriet S. Davids, County Librarian, and Mrs. Tempie Robinson, at the head of the Hanford Public Library, have both enlarged the scope of the work. They provide, among other services, book reviews for adults and story-telling for children.

The County Library is under the authority of the County Board of Supervisors, while the Hanford Public Library is controlled by a board of directors.

Only a brief summary of the interesting story of Kings County journalism can be given. There are now seven active newspapers in the county, but several others, started at various times, have been discontinued.

A paper called the Hanford *Journal* was started in Hanford in 1881, but it was soon removed to Visalia. The *Sentinel* was begun in 1886 as a weekly and has had a continuous existence down to the present time. It became a daily in 1896. The present Hanford *Journal* "made its bow" on April 14, 1891. It was purchased in 1934 by J. E. Richmond, and since that time the two papers have been issued from the same office.

For a short time during the eighties the Visalia *Delta* published in Hanford a subsidiary called the Mussel Slough *Delta*. A religious paper, the *Alliance Messenger*, was issued in Hanford in 1886.

As early as 1881 Lemoore had a newspaper called the *Advertiser*. Later it took the name *Real Estate Advertiser and Medical Adviser,* and was issued for the benefit of the City Drug Store and the real estate agency of Lovelace and Lamberson.

The Lemoore *Leader,* published by W. M. Gill and Son, "a very creditably conducted weekly," was begun before 1890. It was purchased by W. T. Dewey and conducted by him for many years. For a short time it ran as a daily, was changed to a twice-weekly paper, and finally became a weekly again.

In the meantime Minor Doss started the *Republican,* and the two rival papers engaged in many verbal battles.

The present *Advance,* published by Percy M. Whiteside, is successor to the two.

Corcoran has two weekly newspapers. The pioneer there is the *Journal,* which was started in 1908. It is published by M. L. Coultrap. The Corcoran *News,* published by Malcolm F. Calkins, has been appearing since 1934.

In 1925 J. Larry Smith left the employ of the Hanford *Journal* and started publishing the Kings County *News,* a weekly paper, and has been conducting it ever since.

The Avenal *Rotary* was established in 1933 by M. A. Dillingham, and is now published by W. L. Piguet. On June 20, 1940, a special magazine edition was brought out called "The Story of Avenal."

The Hanford *Daily Sentinel,* now published by Stanley Beaubaire and Keith Topping, who also publish the *Morning Journal,* has had a particularly interesting history. The names of two men who helped to make that history must be mentioned. Mr. J. E. Richmond, who recently retired from the proprietorship, established during his many years of service, an enviable reputation as a newspaper man and a citizen. Mr. Fred A. Dodge, editor during the nineties, was a fine example of the old-time small-town editor who was a real community leader.

The Kings County Museum is an institution which has not received as much attention as it deserves and is destined to attract. Even in the crowded quarters in the basement of the Hanford Civic Auditorium it is impressive. Carefully catalogued and as well arranged as space permits, it is a testimony to the good work of Curator Rupert Kendall, whose interest in local history and the things which represent it impelled him to make the collection.

Several thousand items, representing on the one hand the life of the Indians and on the other that of the American pioneers, constitute the exhibits.

The many fraternal organizations, professional and service groups, women's clubs, and other institutions, all of which contribute much to the county's cultural life, cannot even be mentioned individually by name.

As a pioneering enterprise, the emergency schools, conducted to serve the needs of migratory children deserve mention. Through them hundreds of children, so situated that they are unable to attend the permanent schools, are given the advantages of education.

CHAPTER X

RACIAL ELEMENTS IN KINGS COUNTY'S POPULATION

Certain leaders in the world to-day are using racial prejudice as a means of building up strong military power, in order that they may bend others to their own wills. People are being taught that there are superior races and inferior races, and that different racial groups cannot live in harmony together. Kings County furnishes strong proof of the falsity of that doctrine, for here several different nationalities and several different racial strains may be found in large numbers, and it would be hard to find a place where more harmony and good will exist.

The Spanish element came very early, but came then in very small numbers. There was no general Spanish settlement which preceded the American, though a few families came to the West Side. During the era of the cattle ranches many of the vaqueros were of Spanish descent, belonging to the people who have often been called the Californians. That strain still remains in the county, and several present-day families have descended from it.

In more recent years rather large numbers of Mexican laborers have come in. Some have become permanent residents, but many are transient. Among the latter in particular there are a good many citizens of Mexico.

One distinct impression left by the early Californians was produced by the one Mexican land grant which touched present Kings County, the Laguna de Tache Grant along Kings River. It was made by Pio Pico to Manuel Castro in 1846, shortly before California became American territory. When the United States took over Alta California, assurances were given the Mexican government that titles to land granted by Mexico would be honored. There was so much confusion regarding land ownership that a board of commissioners was appointed to hear all claims and pass judgment upon them. Castro's claim to the Laguna de Tache was denied by the commission in 1854. He appealed to the courts, and in 1866 his claim was validated, and a patent to more than 48,000 acres of land lying on both sides of Kings River was granted to him.

Even before that he had borrowed money on the land. He borrowed several sums from American money lenders, paying as high as three percent per month, compounded monthly! His debt became so great that he was unable to repay it. The history of litigation over the property is highly involved, but the fact is that the Castro family finally sold their interest in the great body of fertile soil for the pitiful sum of $1500.

The Chinese first came as laborers. They helped build the railroads, and they worked in the fields. During the rise of the fruit industry much of the labor in the orchards and vineyards was done by them. Through rental or crop-purchase many crops were entirely within their hands. A few worked as cooks; some had restaurants, laundries, or stores. The Chinese vegetable man—though reviled by some—is remembered with kindly feelings by most pioneers. In recent years more of them have become merchants.

The Chinese population in Kings County was much greater forty or forty-five years ago than it is now. Particularly during the summer hundreds of transient Chinese laborers would come. At present there are probably something more than three hundred people of Chinese origin in the county, most of them being American-born. Hanford, Armona, and

Lemoore have been their chief centers. Now more than fifty percent live in Hanford. A few are still on farms.

They have their own organizations, including a Chinese-Language school, but they participate in general community affairs. They are well thought of in the community.

Among the nationalities which took part prominently in the early development of the county were the English immigrants. It was a little before 1880 when they began coming. A few individuals came at first, but the reports sent back to England must have been favorable, for larger numbers came until Hanford was the center of an English settlement. Most of the English came to farm, but some soon turned to various types of business. They had much to do with the development of Hanford and vicinity, erecting a number of the business buildings of the county seat. The cultural life of the community was greatly furthered by them.

The Portuguese people constitute the most numerous immigrant group in the county. They began coming before 1890, but very few had come by that time. The first individuals came as sheep-herders, but usually they left that employment as soon as they had earned enough money to start a flock of their own. Later the dairy industry attracted them, and the latest arrivals would engage themselves as milkers until they could go into the business for themselves. Although dairying remains their chief occupation, they may be found in almost every type of business and in almost every profession.

People of Portuguese birth or descent number several thousand in the county and are scattered throughout the agricultural sections. The greater part of them are from the Azores Islands rather than from Portugal itself. Both the men and the women usually seek American citizenship, even though in some cases they have to work hard to attain

Ancient Palm Trees near Old Kingston

El Adobe de los Robles Rancho
Pioneer Home of Daniel Rhoads

it because of the lack of educational opportunities in the old country. They have social and civic organizations of their own but take part in all the general activities of the communities in which they live.

Japanese immigrants began coming to this vicinity only a little before 1900, but they came in greatest numbers soon after that date. Few have come from Japan since 1908. As a result sixty percent of the Japanese residents of the county are American-born. Altogether the Japanese number about four hundred and fifty.

The first ones came to work in orchards and vineyards. Many have since become established as farmers or as merchants. Those on the farm usually confine themselves to the growing of fruits and vegetables. The first Japanese to engage in the mercantile business in the county was the late George Omata, who opened a store in Hanford in 1900.

The Japanese element is very energetic. In Hanford they have active civic and cultural organizations, their own churches, and a Japanese-Language School. The Japanese-American Citizen's League points the way toward good American citizenship. Both the Japanese and the Chinese of the so-called second generation—that is, the American-born—appreciate the rights and duties of American citizenship, of which their fathers and mothers are, unfortunately, deprived.

An excellent example of how people become Americans, whose ancestry is from various countries, is shown in a selection from the pen of a young Hanford Japanese-American, Yori Wada, as he writes of his experiences in the United States army. The following paragraph is taken from the first of a series of articles he is contributing to the Hanford newspapers:

"Back in our tents of six occupants, we introduced ourselves. A farm laborer from San Jose (Italian), a cannery worker from Hollister (Irish), a longshoreman from San Francisco (German-Irish), a carpenter from Merced (German), a Dutchman from San Luis Obispo, and me (Japanese). What an American group!"

There are now in Kings County several hundred people—five or six hundred, perhaps—who came from Holland or whose parents or grandparents did. Most of them are American citizens by birth or by naturalization. The majority of them are grouped around Hanford, but some are scattered throughout most of the county. In the main, they are engaged in agricultural pursuits, chiefly fruit-raising and dairying.

Most of the Dutch immigrants came between 1900 and 1917. They are a prosperous group, and their place in community life is important. Ever since 1913 they have maintained in Hanford the Christian Reformed Church, one of the best-attended churches in the county. Many of them, however, are not connected with that church.

An outstanding representative of the Dutch group is Cornelius Warmerdam, a teacher, who is without question the world's greatest pole vaulter. The only man who has ever valuted over fifteen feet in competition, he has a record of fifteen feet, five and three-fourths inches. For many years to come Kings County will take pride in his marvelous achievement.

Many other nationalities and many races are represented in the 35,168 people of Kings County. A considerable sprinkling of Italians may be found, especially in and near Hanford. Irishmen, Scots, Germans, Scandanavians, a few Slavs, and others blend with the general population. People of Jewish origin are fewer in proportion to the whole population than they were long ago. The Negro race has been represented for a long time, but has never been numerous. The Indians have been treated in another chapter.

Below is a table containing a few statistics taken from the report of 1940 census. They give one an idea of the distribution of population throughout the county.

POPULATION OF INCORPORATED CITIES

Corcoran	2,092
Hanford	8,234
Lemoore	1,711

POPULATION OF TOWNSHIPS

Avenal Township	4,098
Corcoran Township	4,870
Hanford Township	19,340
Lemoore Township	6,860
County Total	35,168

According to the highest American ideal, too great stress is not placed upon race or national origin, yet they need not be forgotten. Each national group can bring something from the culture of the mother country to enrich the culture of America. As all turn to the high principles which this nation represent, they can build upon the best in their own national background.

The coming of many peoples has added vitality to America, and it is a well known fact that, in many instances, the naturalized citizen has more fully appreciated the benefits of being an American than the majority of those who have never experienced anything else.

(THE END)

THE STORY OF KINGS COUNTY

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