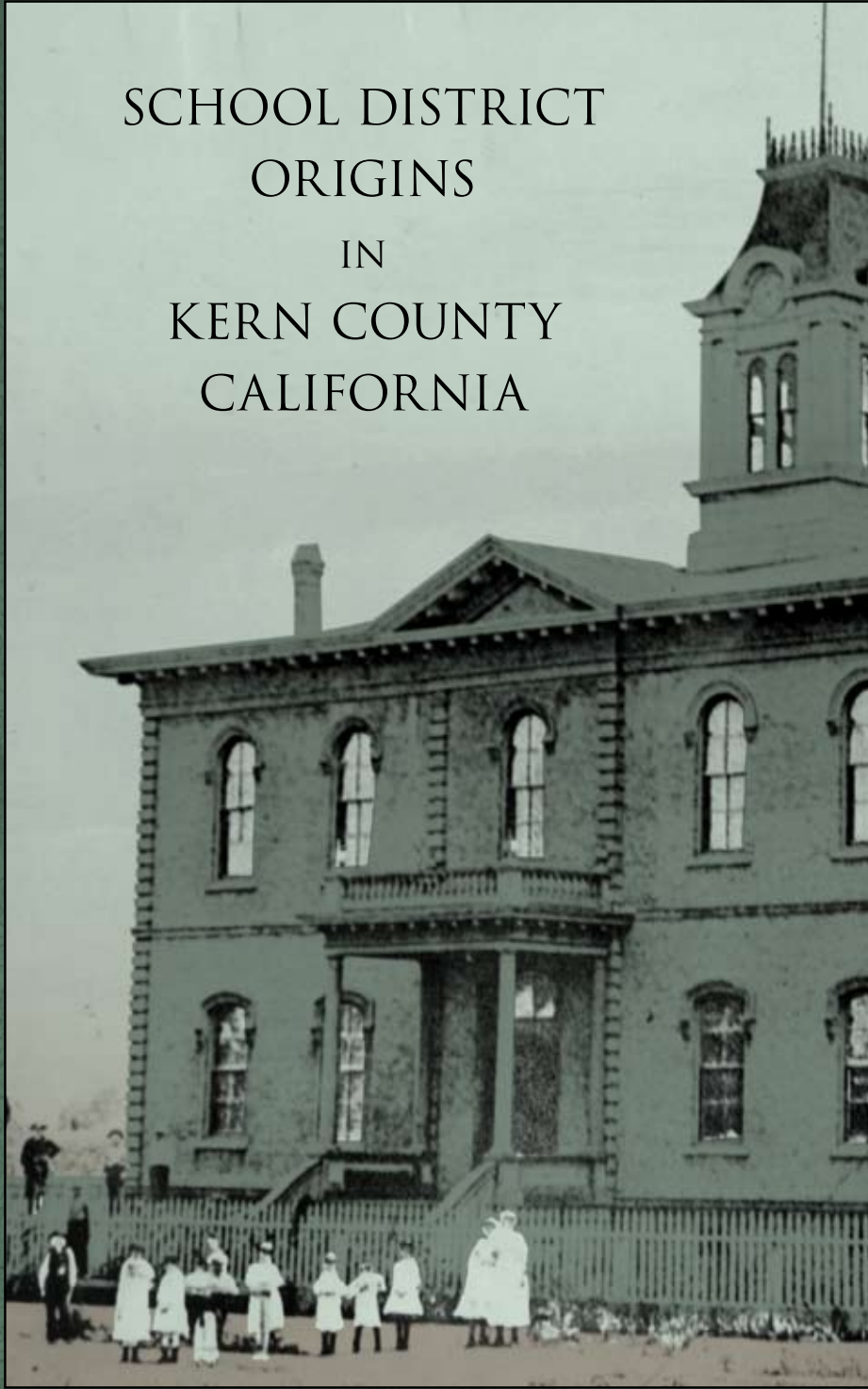


SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ORIGINS  
IN  
KERN COUNTY  
CALIFORNIA



BY JERRY KIRKLAND

**This Indenture,** Made the 11<sup>th</sup> day of

January, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and Seventy five.

Between James M. Glenn of Glenville Kern Co. Cal.  
and his Wife Sarah Glenn of the same place parties  
of the first part, and the Trustees of the Linns  
Valley School District of Kern Co. Cal.

the parties of the second part, **Witnesseth,** that the said parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of one hundred Dollars,

Coins of the United States of America, to them in hand paid, by the said parties of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have

granted, bargained, sold, conveyed, and confirmed, and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell, convey and confirm unto the said parties of the second part, and to their

heirs and assigns, forever successors in office, to hold in trust for the benefit of the abovesaid School District, forever,

All that lot of land situated in the northern part of Glenville Kern Co. Cal. and described as follows:

Commencing 10 chains North of the South West corner of the North East quarter of the North West quarter of Section twenty five of Township twenty five South of Range thirty East, and running North ten chains to the North line of the said Section twenty five; thence East eight chains to a stake; thence South 25° West one and one half chains to the center of a natural ravine, or water course; thence following down the center of said ravine in the general direction of South 25° West to the center of the county road running from Glenville to Mr Lavers; thence North 45° West to the place of beginning. Containing five and one half acres of land, be the same more or less

**Together** with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging, or in any wise appertaining, and the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders, rents, issues and profits thereof; and also all the estate, right, title, interest, right of heretofore property, possession, claim and demand whatsoever, as well in law as in equity, of the said parties of the first part, of, in or to the above described premises, and every part and parcel thereof, with the appurtenances.

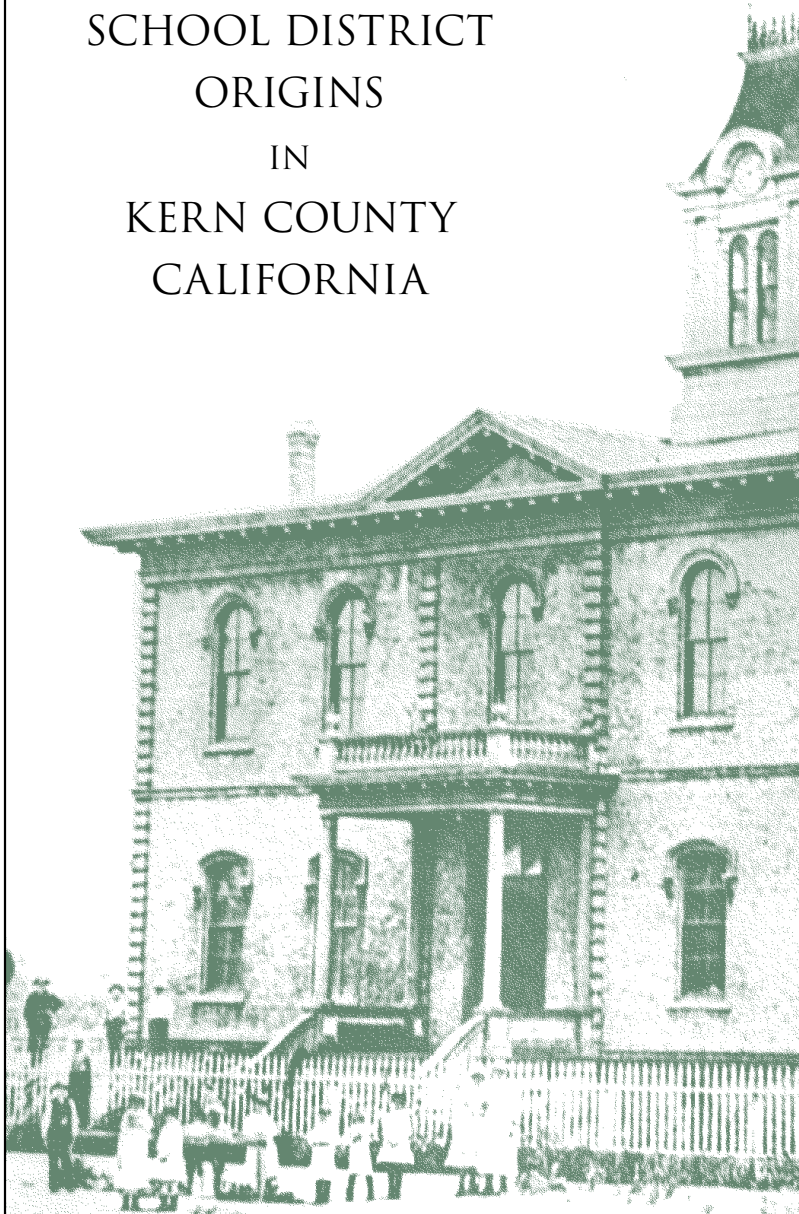
**To Have and to Hold,** all and singular the above mentioned and described premises, together with the appurtenances, unto the said parties of the second part, and to their heirs and assigns forever. And the said parties of the first part, and their heirs the said premises, in the quiet and peaceable possession of the said parties of the second part, their heirs and assigns, against the said parties of the first part, and their heirs, and against all and every person and persons whomsoever, lawfully claiming or to claim the same, shall and will **WARRANT**, and by these presents for ever **DEFEND**.

**In Witness Whereof,** the said parties of the first part have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in the Presence of  
A. J. Hulbert } A. M. Higley  
J. R. Joney } Sarah Glenn  
mark } mark

JAMES & SARAH GLENN SELL 5.5 ACRES OF LAND TO LINNS VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT, JANUARY 11, 1875. (NOTE THAT BOTH SIGNED WITH AN "X".)

SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ORIGINS  
IN  
KERN COUNTY  
CALIFORNIA



BY JERRY KIRKLAND

CREATED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF KERN COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, 2010



KERN COUNTY SCHOOL - SUMMER 1890

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	9
ARVIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	21
BAKERSFIELD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	25
BEARDSLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	31
BELRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	35
BLAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	39
BUTTONWILLOW UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	45
CALIENTE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	49
DELANO UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	53
DIGIORGIO SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	59
EDISON SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	63
ELK HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	65
FAIRFAX SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	69
FRUITVALE SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	77
GENERAL SHAFTER SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	81
GREENFIELD UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	83
KERNVILLE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	87
LAKESIDE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	91
LAMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	101
LINN'S VALLEY - POSO FLAT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	103
LOST HILLS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	111
MAPLE SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	119
MCKITTRICK SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	121
MIDWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	127
NORRIS SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	133
PANAMA-BUENA VISTA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	135



POND UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	145
RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	151
RIO BRAVO-GREELEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	155
ROSEDALE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	159
SEMITROPIC SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	163
SOUTH FORK UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	165
STANDARD SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	169
TAFT CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	175
VINELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	181
WASCO UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	185
EL TEJON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	191
MARICOPA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	193
MCFARLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	201
MOJAVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	209
MUROC JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	215
SIERRA SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	223
SOUTHERN KERN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	227
TEHACHAPI UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	231
DELANO JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	237
KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	241
TAFT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	251
WASCO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	257
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS.....	265
KERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT.....	267
WEST KERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT.....	273
ADDENDUM.....	277





# INTRODUCTION

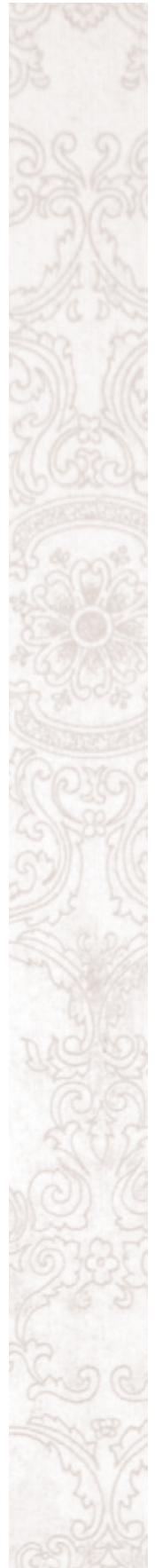
On April 2, 1866, the State Legislature approved *“an act to create the County of Kern, to define its boundaries and to provide for its organization.”* The new three-man Board of Supervisors met for the first time in August to begin organizing the essential county agencies and services. One of their first acts was to arrange for the construction of a new jail. The bid was awarded to Thomas Stuart for \$1,600. At about that same time the board awarded a contract to Col. Thomas Baker that would defray his costs for establishing a system of reclamation and irrigation.

It would be November before the board was able to turn its attention to the organization of school districts. On November 9, 1866, they ordered the formation of school districts in the established communities of Tejon, Havilah, Kelso Valley, and Lynn’s Valley. A school district was established in Tehachapi at about that same time.

Petitions requesting the formation of additional school districts were soon arriving from all corners of the county. By 1896, there were fifty-six districts in the county; by 1918, due largely to the oil boom on the west side, there were one hundred eight. With changing times and demographics, however, that number has been reduced by more than half.

But where did they disappear to? Early on there were scores of small districts in the county, most with just one school and that was usually a one-room wood frame building situated in a remote, isolated area. Still, regardless of the circumstances, districts were required to maintain an enrollment sufficient to justify their continued existence and that meant maintaining an average daily attendance of five or more students. Districts that were unable to do so were declared *“lapsed”* by the Board of Supervisors and ordered annexed to an adjacent district. The act was commonly referred to as consolidation and such would be the fate of scores of early Kern County school districts.

An article in the May 12, 1896, edition of *The Bakersfield Californian* reported that Kern County’s fifty-six school districts were, at that time, serving a combined enrollment of 2,644 students. Forty of those districts are no longer in existence, having either lapsed or had their territory acquired by, or combined with, other districts. Just sixteen districts entered the 21st century bearing the same name as they had more than a century ago; many of those, however, are now designated as *“union”* or *“unified”* school districts. Those sixteen districts are: Bakersfield (now



Bakersfield City), Beardsley, Caliente (now Caliente Union), Delano (now Delano Union), Fairfax, Fruitvale, Greenfield (now Greenfield Union), Kernville (now Kernville Union), Mojave (now Mojave Unified), Norris, Panama (now Panama-Buena Vista Union), Rosedale (now Rosedale Union), Semi-Tropic, Tejon (now El Tejon Unified), Tehachapi (now Tehachapi Unified), and Vineland. The three smallest districts, according to that 1896 article, were Erskine, Havilah, and Lakeview, each with just 12 students. The largest districts in terms of enrollment were Bakersfield, with 657 students, and Sumner, with 246 students.

In reviewing editions of *The Bakersfield Californian* for the years 1895 to 1898, it becomes obvious that school affairs at the turn of the century were of considerable public interest and thus merited a good deal of coverage.

Published annually, of course, was an accounting of public funds devoted to the support of our public schools, broken down by district. The apportionment formula, seemingly based on enrollment, appears to have been free of complex calculations. Apportionments for January 14, 1896 were as follows:

Bakersfield.....	\$2,640	Delano .....	\$720
Panama.....	\$480	Sumner .....	\$480
Kern .....	\$960		

As for the remaining districts, 10 received \$140 and 39 received \$240. A second apportionment was paid in May.

Additionally, the public was made aware of the stringent requirements faced by those wishing to teach in Kern County's public schools when the newspaper published the questions from the examination required of all prospective pedagogues. Indications are that one's pedagogical skills were a good deal less important than being intimately familiar with a host of seemingly unrelated facts from all areas of the curriculum.

The exam was given in the spring for interested applicants. In 1896, twenty five applicants took the examination, twenty of whom were female. A proficiency level of 60% was required and performing below that level in any area put a candidate out of the running.

It seems unlikely than more than a handful survived. Spelling was the first subject tested. There were 50 words on the test. Included on the list were:

aureole, Eucharist, bacchanal, denouement, oleaginous, and quiescence.

One problem on the geometry test was stated as follows:

*"An inscribed angle is measured by one-half the arc intercepted between its sides. Prove."*

The literature test included this question: *"Who is the present Poet Laureate of England? Whom did he succeed?"*

In physiology, the prospective teacher was asked: *"Describe the entire process by which food is changed into blood."* And then to respond to the query, *"What is the office of the lymphatics?"*

The physical geography section asked for definitions for *"spring and neap tides, trade winds, St. Elmo's Fire, dew point, atoll, isothermal lines, zone of the calms, and delta."*

The test also included questions on music, government, natural history, algebra, and physics.

One meeting of the Board of Education for the Bakersfield School District in the spring of 1898 was devoted to filling three vacant teaching positions from a number of applicants, then announcing the salaries for the coming year. Of the district's eleven teachers, eight would be paid \$70 per month, two were hired at \$75 per month, and one at \$80 per month. The principal, D. W. Nelson, later to serve as the county superintendent of schools, would receive \$120 per month.

While the areas of school finance and teacher preparation have changed dramatically from that day to this, dealing with the recalcitrant or disruptive student has changed not at all. It is clear that maintaining order in the classroom was critical issue, as much a problem and concern in those days as it is in our modern schools. Following is an excerpt from an editorial published in *The Bakersfield Californian* in July of 1897 that defines the problem and even suggests an alternative placement for children with poor behavior:

Authority and discipline are essential to the successful training of pupils. It is a painful fact that a few cases of insubordination and more severe offences have occurred during the term, causing serious concern. There is a question as to whether at times the 'quality of mercy' has not inclined toward the individual at the cost of injustice toward the many. While our schools are places of mental and moral training,

they should by no means be regarded as reformatories for the slovenly, the vicious, and the depraved. And when, through the indifference of parents or their inability properly to control their offspring, their children may become unfit associates for the well-behaved, the State institutions or other places of severity of discipline are the proper places for the offenders, and not the public schools.

No doubt many of today's teachers would welcome such a "solution".

By today's standards, all of Kern County's early school districts had very primitive beginnings and some measure of the conditions that existed in those early years can be found in the annual report of the superintendent of the Bakersfield School District, D.W. Nelson, for the year 1907. A portion of that report was published in *The Bakersfield Californian* and included a brief history of the schools of the city of Bakersfield, written by one of the pioneer teachers of the county, Miss Virginia Jameson. Her remarks follow:

The people of this community have always taken a deep interest in the education of their children. Immediately after the arrival of the first settlers in the vicinity of Bakersfield, steps were taken for the establishment of a school.

In 1863, five families lived within a radius of a mile from the center of the present town. The children of these pioneers were taught freely at her own home for a term of two months by Mrs. F.A. Tracy, then the wife of Colonel T.A. Baker.

The house stood on Nineteenth Street on the spot which was the home of the family for twenty-six years. There was but one room, the floor was of earth, the roof of tules, the walls of pickets.

Could we have looked into that humble home in the autumn of '63 we might have seen eight barefooted children, ranging in ages from four to twelve, seated on overturned boxes, one turning the leaves of a Bible, searching for the big A's, another scanning the pages of a newspaper - *The Sacramento Union* - in quest of the B's, two small urchins painfully copying digits on some brown wrapping paper with pencils scarcely an inch long, while the rest of the class, leaning forward, were studying intently something hanging on the wall. This something proves to be a chart of the alphabet, made by the slender little woman

who is standing before the children, pointing now to one letter, now to another. Books were few in Kern County in those days, slates fewer, so the ingenious teacher had made her own charts - letters and figures cut from newspapers and pasted on boards. Thus were the first lessons given in Bakersfield. In '66 a rude log school house was built on a ridge about two miles south of Bakersfield on what was known as the Keith Ranch, that seeming at the time the center of the settlement. The building was about twenty feet square with earth floor. There were no windows. A great fireplace filled one end of the room. The benches were rough hewn logs split in two, supported by sticks driven through holes bored in the curved under surface.

P.R. Hamilton, a teacher from Los Angeles, taught a three month term in this building, beginning in the spring of '65. There were twenty pupils, each paying a monthly fee of \$2.50. Eaton's Arithmetic, Cornell's Geography, Wilson's Readers and History were the text books used. There were no appliances - not even a map nor a globe.

In '66 Mr. Hamilton, rather than submit to an examination, resigned, and Mrs. Grace Ann Ranney, one of the pioneers of the place, took charge of the school. In '67 she was succeeded by Miss Lucy Jackson, an elderly lady so well qualified for the position that she held it for two years. The attendance during these years was about the same as under Mr. Hamilton, the school still being supported by contributions.

It was during Miss Jackson's last term that the class was thrown into violent excitement one day by a rattlesnake. He had crawled in under the logs and lay coiled up in the middle of the room when the children discovered him. Such a tumult! The youngsters rushed from the room in a panic - all but one of the biggest boys. He killed the snake and then the others were persuaded to come back. But for weeks after that the little ones sat with feet drawn up under them on the benches, fearful of another visitation, while the teacher never recovered from the nervous shock. Her health failed soon after and she gave up teaching.

The first appropriation of public money for the support of the Bakersfield school was made in '69. In March Colonel A. R. Jackson, brother of Miss Lucy, opened a four months' term in a little frame building on the farm of Mrs. Rebecca Tibbett, a mile southwest of



ALEXANDER MACPHERSON

town. This house was an improvement on the old log structure - it had a wooden floor and a window.

During the summer of '69 the brick school house on Twelfth and I streets was completed and in the fall Colonel Jackson opened school there.

The Mexicans living near the town had by this time learned that the tuition was free, and soon their children were enrolled. Two brothers - Ariyo by name - one living on this site of the Half-way House between Bakersfield and Kern; the other at the old adobe on Union Avenue near the cemetery, had each fifteen children. Not many such families were needed to swell the roll to ninety. In January of '70 there were that many in attendance and Callie Gilbert was chosen to assist Colonel Jackson. The next teacher was Mrs. Isabel Lennox. School opened in October, 1870, and continued for seven months with a smaller enrollment.

In October, 1871, Mr. A. B. McPherson took charge of the school. He held the position for two terms and was succeeded by the county superintendent of schools, Louis Beardsley, with Miss Ella Said as assistant.

Miss Rena Richards, a teacher from Stockton, followed Mr. Beardsley, opening school in September, 1875. The attendance increased during the winter and in December Miss Kitty Said was appointed to assist Miss Richards.

The single room, twenty by thirty feet, of the little brick school house had for some time been inadequate for the needs of the growing town, and in August of 1875 the sum of \$5,500 had been voted for a new building. After much discussion as to plans and location, the block on Truxtun Avenue where the Emerson school later stood was purchased and in March, 1876, work was begun there on a frame structure having two classrooms connected by folding doors on the first floor, with a hall above.

In October, 1876, James Prewett, now an eminent lawyer of Placer County, opened school in the old brick [school house] the new building not being ready for occupancy. In November, Miss Ella Said was appointed assistant, and the work of both teachers went on in the one room as often before. The pupils' seats all faced the platform where Mr. Prewett sat enthroned, but the little ones for recitation stole quietly to the back of the room and recited in hushed tones to Mrs. Said.

In the early part of December the new school house was occupied.

Mr. Prewett was in those days spending his hours out of school in mastering the subtleties of law, and the cases at court were of more interest to him than the school room work. He was particularly interested in the famous Jim Hayes murder case and morning after morning about 10 o'clock the folding doors would suddenly be thrown open and the assistant would hear, "*Miss Said, I'll be absent from the room a few moments - please take charge of the class.*" and off to the courthouse the principal would go, followed by the older boys, often not to return till the afternoon session began.

This interest in the law frequently caused Mr. Prewett to be oblivious to his surroundings. One morning he rode as usual to school, tied his horse in its accustomed place in front of the lot, and was ready to enter the building, when, lifting his eyes, he saw with astonishment that there was no house before him. It had burned to the ground the night before. This was on the 5th of June, 1877.

The next term, beginning in October, 1877, was held in the old brick school house on I street under J. H. Berry, assisted by Miss Ella Said.

During the summer of 1878 a two story brick building of four rooms was built on the Truxtun Avenue site, and in October J. G. Underwood, assisted by his wife, opened school there with an enrollment of 89. Mr. Underwood and his wife were retained for two years.

In 1880 there were about 90 pupils under two teachers. In 1895 the attendance required the employment of ten teachers. During this period the school was successively under E. Rousseau, 1880-82; Mr. Metcalf, 1883; Alfred Harrell, 1884-87; Mr. Ingram, 1888; Alfred Harrell, 1889; C. M. Mills, 1890-92; J. W. Evans, 1893-95.

In 1896 the school was given in charge of D. W. Nelson, the present incumbent, whose efficient management during the past ten years has placed the Bakersfield School among the foremost in the state.

Mr. Nelson was elected supervising principal with the corps of twelve assistants in 1899, and in 1906 the title of City Superintendent of Schools was added.

The Bryant building, costing \$22,206, was ready for occupancy in 1892, and in 1902 the Truxtun Avenue building was remodeled at the cost of \$31,256 and a manual training department established there. The Lowell School, costing \$13,373, was built during the same year. The



LEWIS BEARDSLEY



JAMES H. BERRY

steady progress of the Bakersfield schools from the humble beginning in 1863 to the present time is encouraging to the friends of education. In marked contrast with the first meager surroundings, the schools are now equipped with three commodious buildings, modern in every respect. The three important factors of heating, lighting, and ventilation are as nearly perfect as the most recent devices can make them; and the school rooms are well supplied with apparatus for teaching. The grounds are artistically laid out with trees, flowers and lawns. This school property has a valuation of \$100,000 and the department is maintained at an annual expenditure of \$25,000. At the opening of school in September, there will be a corps of twenty-four well trained teachers, and an enrollment of 1000 pupils. The manual training department will give courses in (unreadable), sewing, cooking, paper cutting, cardboard work and drawing

It's likely that the first directory for Kern County school districts, titled "*List of Districts, Clerks, and Teachers*", was published in 1911. There were eighty school districts in the county at that time and since most were single building, single teacher districts, all eighty are listed on just thirteen pages of this tiny 3" by 6" booklet. Information provided included the name of the clerk (principal or superintendent), the nearest post office, and a list of the teachers for each district. In some instances, teachers' addresses were also included. The great majority of the school districts listed in that directory, most with long forgotten names, were absorbed by other districts or in some other way subjects of the aforementioned consolidation process. Among them are: Agua Caliente, Annette, Aqueduct, Aztec, Brown, Browngold, Cameron, Cleveland, Conley (now Taft City), Cummings Valley, Granite, Hamlin, Havilah, Isabella, Johannesburg, Joiner, Keene, Kelso, Lebec, Lerdo, Lone Tree, Miller, Mountain View, New River, Olig (now McKittrick), Old River, Old Town, Ordena, Paleto (now Maricopa), Palm, Petroleum, Poso Flat, Quinn, Randsburg, Robertson, Rockpile (now DiGiorgio), Rosamond, Scodie, Soledad, Sun Flower, Toltec, Union Avenue, Vaughn, Walkers Basin, Weldon, Wible, Wicker, Wildwood, Willow Springs, and Woody.

It is reasonable to assume that this list is incomplete in that it is certain that some school districts were formed and abandoned without having ever built a schoolhouse or elected a board of trustees. There is



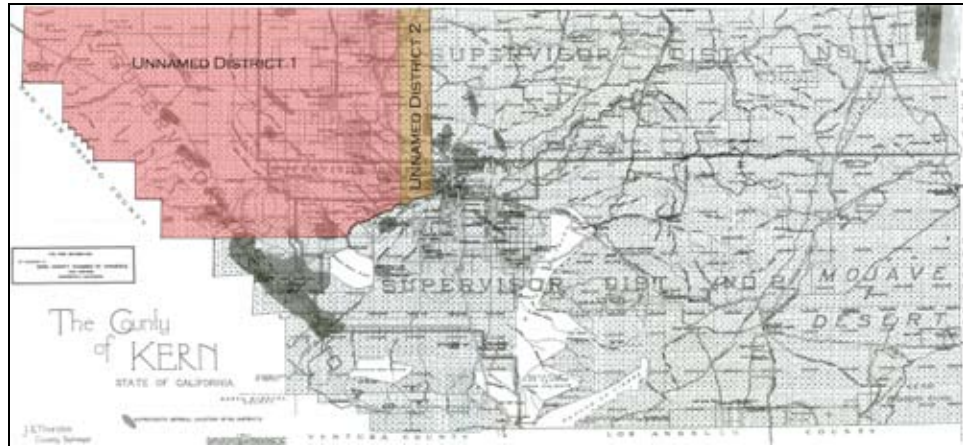
some evidence, too, that, in a few instances, schools were established for a brief time, then abandoned without ever being sanctioned by the Board of Supervisors.

A map on the following page shows the boundaries of two “unnamed” school districts that were identified by Harrington in his 1963 history of Kern County school districts. Both of these districts were formed on the same date, May 10, 1877. While it is not likely that being formed on the same day is mere coincidence, no records have been found to suggest otherwise. And while there was no doubt some good reason for forming these two huge districts at this time, that reason could not be determined.

The boundary description for Unnamed District No. 1 is as follows:  
Beginning at the point where the line between sections 2 and 3, T30S, R26E, intersects the center line of the bed of the New Kern River, down the river to the Buena Vista Slew (sic); southerly to its intersection with the line between T30 and 31S; west to the west line of Kern County; thence to the NW corner of the County; east along the north boundary of the County to the line between the second and third tier of sections in R26E, south to the point of the beginning.

Unnamed District #1 was obviously a huge school district in terms of territory, approximately 1,708 square miles but, of course, in 1877 that area was but sparsely populated.

On July 23, 1880, the New River School District was formed and its territory, 271 square miles, was cut from the southern portion of Unnamed District #1. The exact location of the New River schoolhouse could not be determined but we know from old county maps that it was situated on the north side of the Kern River and in the northwest quadrant of section 18, T30S, R26E, which would put it approximately 2-1/4 miles south of the present Stockdale Highway and about 1-1/4 miles east of Enos Lane or Highway 43. New River’s enrollment peaked at 15 students and census records reveal that most of those students came from families who lived and worked on Kern County Land Company’s large ranches that occupied much of that territory in the late 1800s. The little school won praise in 1898 from Alfred Harrell, the county superintendent of schools, who called it one of the best schools he had visited that year, adding that *“under teacher Margaret Gardett, the students are doing excellent*



*work in the several grades.” Miss Gardett was the sister of Millie Gardett Munsey, after whom a school in the Bakersfield City School District is named.*

By 1899, the New River School had fewer than five students enrolled and was absorbed the following year by the Buena Vista School District.

Unnamed District #2 had an odd configuration. Thirty one miles long from north to south, it was but five miles wide from east to west. A description of its boundaries follows:

Commencing at New River where the section line on the east of Section 21, T29S,R27E, intersects said river; north to county line; west 5 miles; south to where section 35 on West line intersects Kern River.

There is no evidence that this was ever a viable district with a board of trustees and a schoolhouse. Shortly after its formation, a number of smaller school districts, including Fruitvale, Rosedale, Norris, Beardsley, Lerdo, Richland, McFarland, and Delano, were formed within its boundaries.

In terms of enrollment, the largest districts in 1911 were, of course, the Bakersfield School District and the Kern County High School District. But because a huge oil boom was bringing hordes of people to the west side, the next two largest districts at that time were Paleta, (later to become Maricopa, then Maricopa Unified), and Conley, now Taft City School District.

By 1932, according to the *Directory of the Public Schools of Kern County* for that year, the number of school districts in the county had increased significantly and now totaled ninety-one. Seventy-six of those were designated “*common*” districts, nine were union districts, and six were

high school districts. No unified districts existed at that time. A seventh high school district, Antelope Valley Joint High School District, served a considerable number of students from the desert areas of Kern County but district operations were under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools.

Three districts, Ordena (later a part of Lakeside Union), Panama, and Shafter operated migratory schools, and *“special”* schools were available for the patients at the Preventorium (tuberculosis hospital) at Keene and also at Kern General Hospital.

When contemplating the evolution of our county’s schools over the past 70 plus years, the reader may find the following data, taken from that same document, of some interest:

- The combined Average Daily Attendance for the year ending June 30, 1932 was 13,073 for the *“primary and grammar grades”* and 4,994 for the high school. It is noted that ADA for the high schools included junior college enrollment, special day classes, and evening classes.
- The annual salary of the average female grammar school teacher in 1932 was \$1,654. The annual salary for male grammar school teachers was \$1,961. Male teaching principals of that day were paid \$2,273 per year while the average annual salary for females in the same position was \$1,993.
- Herbert Healy, the county superintendent of schools at the time, had an office staff of four women who handled, respectively: correspondence, certification, paying and district accounts, and reports. Although these women each bore the title *“Deputy Superintendent”*, none of them were, in fact, certificated employees. Additionally, there was a support staff of six supervisors who provided consultant services for teachers. Support was available in the areas of art, music, and physical education and there were also *“general”* supervisors, one for *“primary grades”* and one for *“upper grades.”*
- In 1932 the offices of the county superintendent of schools were open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday.



HERBERT L. HEALY

By 1963 the number of school districts in Kern County had been reduced once again to fifty-six, and those, of course, had been largely reconfigured. Five were now unified school districts, four were union high school districts, and there was one junior college district although another, West Kern Community College District, would begin operations the following year.

- Forty-seven years later, in 2010, the number of school district in the county, through annexation and consolidation, has been reduced to forty-nine. Thirty-five are elementary districts, eight are unified districts, four are high school districts, and there are two community college districts.

In order to gain a perspective on the operations of schools and school districts in Kern County, it is helpful to have an understanding of when and how each of those districts came into being, and also some sense of how they have changed since that time. The following pages present a reasonably complete developmental history of each of Kern County's forty-nine school districts and, hopefully, will provide the reader with that understanding. In most instances, and certainly in considering the history of districts in outlying communities such as Maricopa or Arvin, some details relative to the origin and development of the community itself have been included. Information was gathered from a variety of sources including personal interviews, newspaper articles (some current and some from the Kern County Library microfilm archives), material from the local history section of the Kern County Library, centennial publications, and books written and published by local historians and educators. No doubt the most revealing and rewarding cache of information, however, largely because it offered some insight into each district's uniqueness, came from a careful review of the minutes of the meetings of each district's board of trustees for the past forty years.

An earlier study of Kern County's school districts, in the form of a doctoral dissertation by Edmund Ross Harrington, was completed in 1963. The primary purpose of this current study is to update the work done by Dr. Harrington more than forty years ago and, consequently, the bulk of the details contained herein will relate to people and events that have changed and shaped our county's school districts from 1963 to the present. ■

# ARVIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

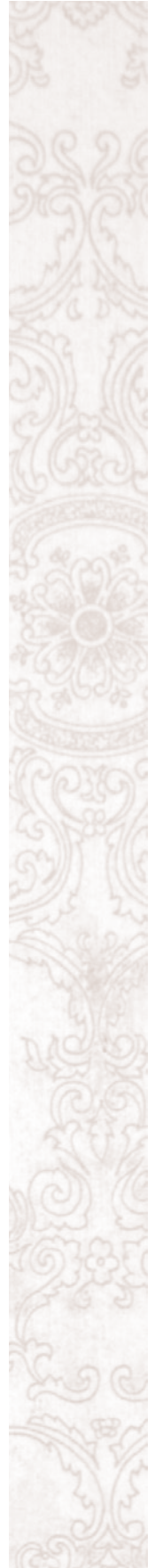
The first settlers in the windswept desert country near what is now the city of Arvin were the A.N. Habecker and Ralph Haven families, each settling on 440 acre plots of land in what was to become “*the colony.*” The year was 1908. The Habecker family, which included four children, was the first to move onto the land and were living in a tent when the Haven family arrived after having survived a two-day horse and buggy trip from San Bernardino.

During the winter, Ralph Haven built the first house in the new settlement and planted 10 acres of fruit trees, including Jonathan apples and Lovell peaches. When Haven’s savings ran out, he prevailed upon George Richardson and his family to move into the house and care for the orchard while he and his wife returned to San Bernardino where he had been the manager of a telephone company. The Richardsons and their son, Arvin, lived in the house for about eighteen months. When the well failed and water had to be hauled from a canal four miles away, Arvin Richardson drilled the area’s first irrigation well and, in recognition of his enterprising actions, the new settlement was named in his honor.

When the Haven family returned to Arvin in 1911, they found the J.D. Tucker family living nearby. Tucker was also from San Bernardino where he had operated a cabinet shop. His interest in raising nursery stock led to the development of the Franquette walnut and within three years, ninety acres of colony land was planted in walnut trees. At the hands of those early settlers, barren desert was gradually transformed into productive farm land and now, almost one hundred years later, little has changed in that regard. The fields that surround the city today produce a wide variety of food and fiber crops.

New families followed those original settlers and, by 1913, there were enough youngsters in the colony to warrant the establishment of a school district and the construction of a schoolhouse. The **Bear Mountain School District** was formed on February 8th of that year and the district’s first school, built at a cost of \$4,000, was completed shortly thereafter. Situated on Third Street between B and C Streets, the new Bear Mountain School was a two-room frame structure with two cloakrooms, a stage, a library, and also two summerhouses. Average daily attendance that first year was eleven students.

On March 8, 1917, for no reason that was readily discernable, the



district was renamed the **Arvin School District**.

Until 1920, only one of the two classrooms was used but the school was nonetheless fully utilized since it also served as the community center and meeting hall. Sliding walls between the two rooms were pushed open to accommodate large crowds and church services. For a number of years, the school was the only building of consequence in “*downtown*” Arvin.

During the next ten years, enrollment in the district grew from 16 students to 196 students and a new school was opened in 1928. It was a brick building and so much more substantial than the original school but because it, too, had only two rooms, in succeeding years additional rooms were built on to accommodate the growing student population.

By the late 1930s, the downtown area of Arvin was becoming congested and the district opted to build a new school on Haven Drive. Construction on the first six classrooms of the Haven Drive School began in 1938.

The Arvin district gained considerable territory in 1939 when annexations ordered by the county board of supervisors added over a hundred square miles to the district: 23 sections from Vineland School District, 17 sections from **Pershing School District**, and 56 sections from the lapsed Tejon School District. Such a large increase in territory triggered a corresponding increase in enrollment and between 1938-39 and 1948-49, average daily attendance in the district’s schools more than doubled, from 550 to 1,283.

---

**Note:** Although not in any way affiliated with the Arvin Union School District, the establishment of the Arvin Federal Emergency School bears mentioning here simply to draw a distinction between the two. During the years of the Great Depression, many Kern County school districts were heavily impacted by the arrival of thousands of migrant farm workers and their families from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas - the so-called “*Okies*”. The Arvin, Lamont, and Vineland districts were particularly affected by this heavy influx of poor, undernourished children, most having arrived with little general knowledge and few learning skills. Some districts made it painfully clear that these youngsters were not welcome in their schools and were thus delighted when, in 1940, County Superintendent of Schools Leo B. Hart was granted permission

to establish the Arvin Federal Emergency School, its specific mission being to provide an appropriate school setting for this population of “undesirables”. Hart was well aware of the unique educational needs of these children and was overwhelmingly successful in developing and implementing a unique curriculum to meet those needs.

---

The story of the development and success of what was generally referred to as the Weedpatch School is beautifully told in a book titled, *Children of the Dustbowl*, by Jerry Stanley.

**The Indian School District**, which served the few remaining Yokuts children living on the San Sebastian Indian Reservation, was annexed to the Arvin School District in 1949. Established in 1920, enrollment in the Indian School’s tiny one-room schoolhouse peaked at seventeen students in 1923 and just thirteen students were enrolled at the time of the annexation. Consolidation of the two districts resulted in the formation of the **Arvin Union School District** and increased the size of the district to 309 square miles, the great bulk of which is uninhabited farm or range land.

Average daily attendance at the time that Arvin became a union district was 1,428 students. A period of moderate decline followed and by 1961-62, the district enrollment had slipped to 1,301, a figure that remained reasonably steady for many years to follow.

In the past twenty years Arvin, not unlike other agricultural communities in the San Joaquin Valley, has experienced a significant increase in population due largely to a heavy influx of Hispanic farm worker families moving into the area. In 2006, Arvin had an enrollment of approximately 3,200 students and 96% of those youngsters were Hispanic.

The Arvin district operates four schools: Sierra Vista School, Bear Mountain School, and El Camino Real Elementary School all serve youngsters in grades K-6. Haven Drive School is a traditional 7th and 8th grade junior high. Sierra Vista opened in the 1960s and was exclusively an elementary school although Haven Drive continued to house some of the upper elementary grades. When Bear Mountain School opened in 1992, Haven Drive then became exclusively a middle school, serving students in grades 6-8. With the opening of El Camino Real School, all district elementary schools began serving students in grades K-6. At one



LEO B HART

time operated another elementary school, Meridian School, located at the south end of the district, but it was closed in 1974.

During the 1988-89 school year, some upgrading of classrooms was accomplished at all existing school sites using funds from the state modernization program.

Funds for construction of the El Camino Real School became available following a successful \$5,059,000 bond election held in March of 2004.

Since 1969 the district has also operated Arvin State Pre-School, a program designed to prepare pre-schoolers for the kindergarten experience. Eligibility for participation in this program, currently licensed to accommodate 138 children, is based on family income.

Just five superintendents have headed up operations in the Arvin Union School District since 1957: Walter Hill from 1957 to 1968, Dennis Butterfield from 1968 to 1972, John Davis from 1972-1992, Mike McGuire from 1992 to 2002, Kenneth Bergevin from 2002 to June of 2007 and Jerelle Kavanaugh, formerly the district's assistant superintendent, who served until June of 2010. ■



# BAKERSFIELD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

When it was established in 1867, what is now the **Bakersfield City School District** was known as the **Kern River Island School District**. During its first year of operation, average daily attendance in the Kern River Island district was seventeen students. The name of the district was shortened to **Kern Island School District** in 1868 and it retained that name until 1882 when it became the Bakersfield School District.

**Note:** A description of the very early development of Bakersfield's schools can be found in the introduction portion of this document. That description, contained in a statement by a pioneer Kern County teacher, Miss Virginia Jameson, was published in *The Bakersfield Californian* in 1907.

By 1900, the Bakersfield School District was serving 566 students in three schools: H Street School, Railroad Avenue School (later to be called Emerson Junior High), and the Lowell Tract School.

In 1910, the district annexed the **Sumner School District**, a two-school district in what is now East Bakersfield. The addition of the students from the Sumner district almost tripled the enrollment in the Bakersfield School District, raising it to 1,724.

The directory of Kern County Schools for the year 1911 listed six schools - referred to in that document as "*buildings*" - for the Bakersfield School District. They were:

- The Washington Building. This school was formerly in the Sumner district where it was known as the Baker Street School.
- The Lincoln Building. Also formerly in the Sumner district where it was known as the Beale Avenue School.
- The Bryant Building. The original Bryant schoolhouse was destroyed by fire in 1889 but rebuilt. Bryant School was located on 21st Street just west of H Street, on a site now occupied by the Bakersfield City Fire Department.
- The Lowell Building. Lowell,

RAILROAD AVENUE SCHOOL



sometimes called the 10th Street School, was torn down in 1954 after having sustained irreparable damage in the 1952 earthquake. The St. Francis Church now occupies that site.

- The Emerson Building. Located at Truxtun Avenue and L Street, just east of the court house, Emerson was first known as Railroad Avenue School. Built in 1876, it was used continuously for 76 years.

---

**Note:** Kern County High School District was formed in 1893 but a separate high school facility had yet to be built. Classes were held in two upstairs rooms in the Railroad Avenue School until the high school building could be completed. Emerson was demolished after the 1952 earthquake and the site is now occupied by various county agencies.

---

- The Hawthorne Building. Located at 24th and O Streets.

The Sumner School District had been established by the board of supervisors in 1875 and during its first year of operation had an average daily attendance of 54 students. The district operated two schools - the Baker Street School, built in 1890, and the Beale Avenue School, built in 1902. At the time of its annexation to the Bakersfield School District, Sumner had an average daily attendance of 522 students.

As Bakersfield grew, so too did the Bakersfield School District. By 1917-18, average daily attendance had risen to 2,442 students.

By 1932, the district had grown to fourteen schools: two junior high schools and twelve elementary schools. They also operated a "special" school at Kern General Hospital on Flower Street. ADA for the 1932-33 school year was just over 4,100 students.

In 1939, the Bakersfield City School District added 218 more students to their rolls when they annexed the Union Avenue School District. Formed on April 1, 1901, the Union Avenue School was located on the west side of Union Avenue, a short distance south of Wilson Road. In 1939, faced with severe financial difficulties and



UNION AVENUE SCHOOL - 1931

unable to provide adequate housing for their students, the Union Avenue board of trustees was ordered by the Board of Supervisors to petition for annexation. A request for annexation was presented to the board of trustees of the Bakersfield City School District and, once accepted, the Union Avenue School District ceased to exist.

---

**Note:** The Union Avenue School was renamed Golden State School in 1949 and was subsequently relocated to Belle Terrace and P streets where it served for a number of years as Golden State Junior High School. In 1980 the site was purchased by the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools to serve as the new location for the Harry Blair Learning Center. In 1997, the former Golden State facility was sold back to the Bakersfield City School District. After undergoing extensive renovation, it was re-opened as Sequoia Middle School.

---

John Compton was appointed district superintendent in June of 1940 just as the district was entering a period of sustained growth, one that would last for more than twenty years. Mr. Compton was a strong leader with a steady hand and so perfectly suited for guiding district operations during these hectic times. When he took over as superintendent in 1940, the district had an enrollment of 5,928 students in its fourteen schools. By 1961-62, twenty-two years later, the student population had almost quadrupled. Closing enrollment for that year was 23,173 students. Enrollment climbed at a moderate rate for the next several years before peaking in 1967-68 at 24,447 students. At that time, growth leveled out, then began a downward spiral that would last for the next twelve years.

In the late 1960s, the Bakersfield area began to experience a dramatic demographic shift. Huge tracts of land in the southwest but outside the boundaries of the Bakersfield City School District, were suddenly being developed as residential properties and the city's population center began moving in that direction. Enrollment in the city schools continued to decline until 1980, finally bottoming out at just under 17,000 students. By then, however, the enrollment rollercoaster had forced the district to close four of its schools - Baker, Castro Lane, Golden State and Lincoln - and sell the sites.

For generations the student population in the city school district was predominantly white but the ethnic makeup has changed dramatically

over the past twenty years. Hispanic youngsters now account for 71% of the district's student population while 14% are white and 12% are of African American descent. This ethnic shift has resulted in a federal court consent decree that restricts the district's ability to make changes in attendance boundaries. All such changes may be made only with the permission of the court.

By 1985, substantial numbers of new homes were once again being built in the BCSD attendance area and ADA had climbed back to almost 20,000 students. Growth of 3-5% a year then continued into the late 1990s and enrollment reached 27,000 in 1997-98. It remained at that level through 2006 but declined slightly during the next three years. ADA for the 2008-09 school year was 25,786. Still, the Bakersfield City School District has the distinction of being the largest elementary school district in the state with thirty-one elementary schools and eight junior high schools.

In 1989, faced with a need to provide additional housing for the burgeoning student population, the district held a \$37 million bond election. The issue passed by a large margin and six new schools were built using those funds. It should also be noted that within that same time span the district committed an additional \$50 million in facility funds to complete twenty-three State Modernization Projects.

In 1997, Bakersfield City opened with three "new" schools. Two of those schools, Evergreen and Sequoia, are on sites that were sold during that period of declining enrollment and then reacquired. The third new school, situated in the heart of the city and appropriately called Downtown Elementary School, was built on that location to better serve youngsters of parents who work in the downtown area. The school was, in fact, built by the Office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools who, in turn, sold it to the Bakersfield City School District for \$2.2 million.

In November of 2006, another bond measure, also for \$37 million, was approved by district voters. A portion of those funds will be used to build two new schools - one elementary and one middle school - in the northeast section of the district. Some of the funds have also been earmarked for modernization of older facilities.

D.W. Nelson was the first true superintendent of Bakersfield's first elementary school district, a position he held from July 1, 1906 to July 1,

1918. His tenure as titular head of the district actually dates back to 1900 when he served as the district's supervisory principal. In 1904, he was appointed to serve as both superintendent and supervisory principal, a position he held until being appointed superintendent in 1906. Nelson was followed by Harry Shaffer, an interim superintendent who served just 23 days, then Charles Teach (1918-1928); Lawrence Chenoweth (1929-1941); John Compton (1940-1963); Herbert L. Blackburn (acting superintendent in 1963); Ernest Hunter (1963-1968); George Palmer (acting superintendent from April to July, 1968); Dr. Charles Carpenter (1968-1972); Dr. Walter Hauss (1972-1977); George Palmer (acting superintendent in March and April, 1977, then interim superintendent from April, 1977 to June, 1978); Dr. Herbert Cole (1978-1992); Paul Cato (Interim superintendent from May, 1992 to January, 1993); Dr. Al Mijares (1993-1994); Don Murfin (Interim superintendent from January to April, 1995); Dr. John Bernard (1995-1999); Don Murfin (Interim superintendent from January, 1999 to June, 1999), and Dr. Jean Fuller from July 1, 1999 to June, 2006, when she resigned to run for the state office. The current superintendent is Mike Lingo. ■



# BEARDSLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Beardsley School District** was established in 1882 from territory that had formerly been part of the **Kern Island School District**. The district was named for Lewis Beardsley, county superintendent of schools from 1874 to 1877 but also a prominent farmer in the Beardsley district.

Prior to developing his farming interests in Kern County, Beardsley had been something of an adventurer. He came to California from New York in 1853 to seek his fortune in the mines but, like most others, found little success in that endeavor. In 1861, the year that the Civil War began, he enlisted in the federal army and served three years in Company E, Second California Cavalry, a unit that saw duty in the Arizona Territory and perhaps as far south as Texas. His enlistment over, Beardsley was honorably discharged in October of 1864.

Following his military service, Beardsley took a teaching job in Tulare County. He left that position in 1869 and moved to Kern County where he had been hired to teach in the mountain community of Glennville. Convinced, however, that agriculture in Kern County held great promise, Beardsley acquired a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres some three miles north of Bakersfield and planted it in alfalfa. Needing a reliable source of irrigation water, he and two other men built a canal that linked their properties to the Kern River. The canal, which bears his name, is still in use today, its very existence a measure not only of Lewis Beardsley's ambition but also of his influence on the development of agriculture in this part of Kern County.

In 1882, an acre of the Beardsley homestead was set aside for a school and Lewis Beardsley, along with C.M. Chadwick, became its first teachers. Average daily attendance that first year was twenty-five pupils and, in terms of enrollment, the Beardsley School would remain relatively small for the next 30 years. In 1892 district enrollment was at thirty-five and a third staff member, Alexander B. MacPherson, was added the following year.

By 1902-1903, average daily attendance had dropped to just sixteen but then began to climb. By 1911, the ADA had jumped to sixty students and it was apparent that a single room schoolhouse would no longer suffice. In 1912, a successful bond election generated \$20,000 for construction of a new school. The two story structure, designed with four classrooms downstairs and an auditorium upstairs, was completed and opened in 1913.



---

**Note:** Prior to the construction of the new school, there were no facilities in the area for large group meetings and, as a consequence, many school functions, including P.T.A. meetings, were held at the Beardsley Dance Hall. The dance hall was owned by J.M. McIntosh, who was the operator of the Beardsley canal and who also served as clerk of the board of trustees for the district from 1906 to 1925.

---

With the opening of the new school, the Beardsley district initiated a hot lunch program. Lunches were prepared in the classroom and often included vegetables that had been grown in the school garden. The price of the lunch was five cents.

Beardsley acquired additional territory in 1922 with the annexation of the **Arroyo School District**, a small district to the north. Arroyo opened in 1918 and was declared lapsed in 1921.

In the 1920s, Beardsley was noted for their outstanding track and field program, winning the county track championships in 1921, 1922, 1923, and 1924. The district was also one of the first in the county to initiate industrial arts and home economics programs.

The decade from 1925 to 1935 was a period of rapid growth for Beardsley. The average daily attendance, spurred by the Dust Bowl migration, more than tripled during those years, going from 121 pupils to 384. Once again there was an obvious need for a larger facility. In 1927 district voters approved a \$120,000 bond issue, enough to build new classrooms, an auditorium and also a cafeteria.

In 1931, the Beardsley district was party to an unusual property transfer transaction. Beardsley gave ten largely uninhabited sections of its territory to the **Richland School District**, at that time badly in need of revenue. The level of funding, of course, was based on the assessed value of a district's real property so it was a huge benefit to Richland to add ten sections (6,400 acres) to their tax base.

Oddly enough, ten years later the situation had reversed itself with Beardsley now the district in need of revenue and the ten sections returned to their tax rolls. The returned territory, with an assessed valuation of \$531,000, generated considerable revenue and was especially helpful since just one student resided in the entire ten square mile area!



Lawrence Jacobson became district superintendent in 1936 and during his tenure of more than twenty years, Beardsley's average daily attendance more than quadrupled, increasing from 473 to 1,900.

In 1937, a new building was constructed that included classrooms, a music room, and a dining area.

In 1938, in response to the continued rapid growth, the district built a primary school comprised of eight classrooms and a kindergarten. Several more classrooms were added to the primary school following passage of a \$95,000 bond in 1940.

In 1947, with enrollment at almost 1,300 students, a badly needed junior high school was completed. It included eight classrooms, music and art rooms, and a library. The following year four more classrooms were added.

By 1951 average daily attendance had jumped to 1,555 pupils. With most of these students coming from the northwest portion of the district, a K-5 school, the North Beardsley School, was opened in 1952 to accommodate these youngsters. That facility was soon filled to capacity and eight more classrooms, a kindergarten, and a cafeteria/auditorium were added in 1954.

During the years between 1960 and 1970, Beardsley experienced very little growth. In 1961-62, the district had an average daily attendance of 1,804 pupils. By 1967, the ADA had reached 1,935 students and two more classroom wings were added to the North Beardsley campus. In 1969, five classrooms plus a modular unit with four classrooms were added to the primary school, now called Beardsley Intermediate. That same year a new multipurpose room was added to the junior high campus and facilities were built to house educational services as well as maintenance and operations.

Enrollment began to decline at a steady pace during the next decade, the ADA dropping from 1,760 students in 1970 to 1,557 in 1979.

A new library was added to the junior high campus in 1977 and a bus maintenance facility was built the following year.

The decline in enrollment reversed itself during the 1980's, the district experiencing an increase in ADA from 1,575 students in 1981 to 1,885 in 1989. Enrollment reached a high of 1,917 students in 1990, declined to 1,705 students in 1995 and has remained relatively stable since that time.

Utilizing the support of the Beardsley School Community Foundation, the Optimist Club, the Kern County Development Program, and the County Board of Supervisors, the district was able to add a new gymnasium to the junior high school campus in 1998, the first new permanent facilities built by the district in just over twenty years.

In 2001, the district converted the old intermediate cafeteria into a Family Resource Center. This facility now houses the district's Healthy Start and Head Start Pre-School programs.

An \$8 million general obligation bond was approved by district voters in 2000, those funds to be used to modernize existing facilities and for construction of a new school. In 2005, Beardsley opened San Lauren Elementary School, the district's first new school in over fifty years.

The Beardsley district currently operates a primary school, North Beardsley, for grades K through 3; an intermediate school, Beardsley Intermediate, for grades 4 through 6; an elementary school, San Lauren, for grades K-6; and a junior high, Beardsley Junior High, for grades 7 and 8. Average daily attendance is just over 1,700 students.

Ken Chapman served as district superintendent from 1991 until his retirement in 2006. Dean C. Bentley was named to replace Chapman and served until 2008. The current superintendent is Richard Stotler. ■

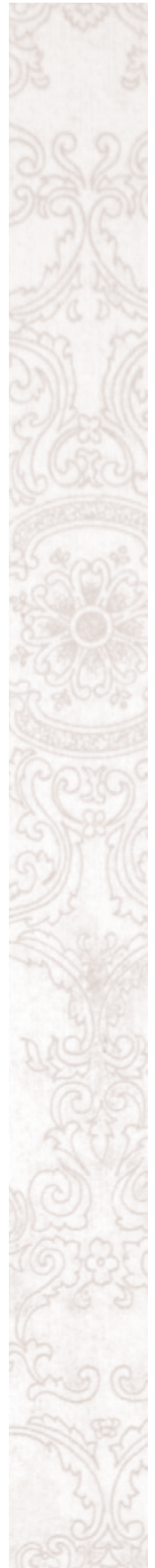
# BELRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The population of the Belridge area began to grow with the drilling of the first oil well in 1910 and in 1912 residents of the area petitioned the board of supervisors requesting that a school district be formed to serve their youngsters. The following year, in response to the petition, the **Belridge School District** was formed from territory that had been in the **Semitropic** and **Buttonwillow** school districts.

As originally configured, the Belridge district was huge in terms of area but that area has been reduced considerably over the years as territory was given up to form new districts or add to existing districts. In 1913, a portion of Belridge was taken to form the **Lost Hills School District**. In 1918, another large chunk of territory was taken to form the **Miller School District**, which, after seven years, was absorbed by the **Olig School District**. Then, in 1925, the **Barnes School District**, which had been formed in 1913 from territory formerly in **Buttonwillow**, **Semitropic**, and **Wildwood** school districts, lapsed and was annexed to Belridge. A final transfer of territory took place in 1927 when a portion of Belridge was given over to the Olig School District, later to become the **McKittrick School District**.

Following are enrollment figures for the Belridge district that span the forty-five year period between 1923-24 and 1968-69. It is not certain whether these enrollment figures represent average daily attendance, P-2 enrollment, or closing enrollment but all are from the same source and so illustrate, at least in a relative sense, the growth pattern of the district over an extended period. Included as well is the name of the person serving as head teacher, or perhaps teacher/principal, at the time:

1923-24	44 students	Elizabeth Frick
1925-26	32 students	Lucy Hole
1927-28	44 students	Emma Hanson
1928-29	49 students	Elinor Dall
1930-31	55 students	Mae Allen
1933-34	64 students	Emmy-Lou Hengst
1939-40	70 students	Emmy-Lou Hengst
1944-45	56 students	Emmy-Lou Hengst
1948-49	89 students	Emmy-Lou Barbe
1955-56	91 students	Emmy-Lou Barbe



1959-60	83 students	Jacqueline Appel
1962-63	75 students	Kenneth Wait
1963-64	73 students	Earl Stuker
1968-69	81 students	Sidney Gardner

Kenneth Wait was designated teacher/principal for the 1962-63 school year because Belridge was now employing six teachers and, by statute, such a position was required in districts with six or more teachers. Wait resigned in June of 1963 and his immediate successors were Earl Stuker, who served in that position from 1963 to 67; and Sidney Gardner, who served from 1967 to 1971.

It's interesting to note that during Gardner's tenure there was a review of the district's corporal punishment policy by the board of trustees. It appears that, while the board made no significant changes to the policy, they wanted it stated in a manner that clearly demonstrated their desire to temper justice with mercy. Such punishment, it said, would be limited to *"not more than 6 spansks with the palm of the hand on the buttocks of the pupil."*

The Belridge School has undergone some dramatic changes in recent years. The old school was located on a site in the midst of a producing oilfield owned and operated by Belridge Oil Company. In 1977, serious consideration was given to tearing down the old school and moving Belridge's 11 teachers and 80 students to McKittrick School, some eleven miles away. The school was not razed at that time but Belridge Oil Company relocated their camp to a site off Seventh Standard Road, some five miles west of Highway 33, and there they built 41 new homes for company employees and their families.

In 1980, Shell Oil Company purchased Belridge Oil Company for \$3.6 billion. Shortly thereafter, the Kernridge Division of Shell, looking to acquire additional drilling sites, offered to build and equip a new school on an alternate site in exchange for the property on which the old Belridge School was located. With their school now surrounded by drilling rigs, the district happily accepted the offer and the beautiful new facility was opened in September of 1982.

Although district enrollment had, by this time, fallen to fewer than 70 students, the new K-8 school design provided a classroom for each grade level, each fully equipped with the latest computer technology. There was

also a multipurpose room; a gymnasium with a full basketball court and three volleyball courts; a football field ringed by an all-weather track; and a bus facility.

The Belridge district had an average daily attendance in 1960-61 of 72 pupils. The number of student being served by the district grew by more than 30 percent in the next ten years and there was a closing enrollment of 109 students in June of 1970. Two new classrooms were added that year at a cost of just under \$50,000. A steady, then precipitous fall in enrollment would follow. ADA for 1976-77 was 82 students; for 1981-82, 67 students; for 1986-87, 69 students; for 1991-92, 55 students; for 1996-97, 43 students.

In 1999, at the urging of Superintendent Steve Wentland, the Belridge board approved the use of Christian oriented books in the classroom. The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit and the district was required to cease use of such books.

The district continued to be embroiled in controversy when the Kern County Grand Jury released a report alleging that Wentland and board members had engaged in improper and wasteful use of public monies as well as harassment and intimidation of parents and staff. Wentland resigned in August of 2001 and no one has run for the Belridge board since that time.

On August 5, 2004, an ad appeared in *The Bakersfield Californian* asking members of the community to run for the Belridge school board. The ad produced no results but since a governing board of some sort was required, the County Board of Education appointed two of its members, David Cowan and Ronald Froehlich to sit on the Belridge board.

The enrollment picture at Belridge was bleak for a number of years and there was talk of closing down the plant but the reopening of nearby housing for farm workers at Paramount Farms, has stabilized. ADA for 2004-05 was 25 students, for 2005-06 it remained about the same. But closing enrollment for 2006-07 was 34 students with 45 projected for the 2007-08 school year. Enrollment at mid-year for the 2009-10 school year was thirty students.

Tammy Reynolds has served in both teaching and administrative positions in the Belridge district for many years. She is the current superintendent, having been appointed to that position in 2003. ■



# BLAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Blake School is located just a few miles below Glennville in the small community of Woody, the district's only townsite. It is truly a one-room schoolhouse with all grades being taught by the teacher/principal.

With an ADA most years of about 10 students, Blake is the smallest school and school district in the county and among the smallest in the state. Average daily attendance for the 1993-94 school year was fifteen students, an aberration considering that the district's mean enrollment for the prior twenty-five years had been fewer than nine students. Average daily attendance for the 2008-09 year was once again nine students.

Commercial deposits of copper were found near Woody in 1891 by Joseph Weringer who, shortly thereafter, opened the Greenback Copper Mine and begin extracting the ore. The ore was carried by wagon to Lerdo where it was loaded on railcars for shipment to a processing plant.

Weringer laid out the Woody townsite, built a hotel, and is generally regarded as being responsible for the development of the little mountain community.

The town was originally called Weringdale but the name never caught on and, in time, it came to be called Woody after Dr. Sparrell Woody, an early homesteader and cattle rancher with substantial land holdings in the area. Dr. Woody, whose descendants still own and operate the Woody Ranch, was a medical doctor but appears to have had more interest in cattle and land acquisition than in the practice of medicine. (In the words of his grandson, Ward Woody, *"He didn't do a lot of doctorin'."*)

With the opening of Weringer's mine, mine workers and their families were attracted to the area and Woody experienced a substantial increase in population. As the town grew, members of the community felt a pressing need to provide schooling for their youngsters and addressed that need by forming the **Blake School District** and opening Blake School in 1899.

The new district, carved out of territory that had previously been held by the **Woody** and **Joiner** school districts, was named for a local miner, Frank Blake. Blake had been holding classes in his cabin and would continue to do so until the school house was built and ready for occupancy. The first Blake School was located some two miles west of the Woody townsite, a location chosen because it was closest to the greatest number of students. That original building was moved to its present location in 1917.



Although there are 117 square miles of territory within its boundaries, the area served by the Blake district is but sparsely populated and enrollment has always been quite small. In its first year in operation, 1899-1900, the district had an average daily attendance of fourteen students. ADA rose to a high of twenty-one students in 1916-17 but then, with the closing of the mine in 1918, there began a slow downward trend. The geography of the Woody area presents itself as ideal for grazing cattle but it does not allow for diversified use of the land and so it followed that the loss of the jobs provided by the mining operation would appreciably diminish Woody's population.

The tiny number of students being served each year has often put the Blake district in jeopardy of lapsing but strong community support has managed to keep the doors open. Records indicate that the district was actually suspended in August of 1921 and again in August of 1944 because of low enrollment but, in each instance, it was reestablished before the beginning of the school year. There was a threat of suspension in 1929 when it appeared that only four students would be enrolled, not enough for state funding, but the district was saved when the board hired a teacher on the condition that she bring her younger brother and sister with her from the bay area and enroll them in school, which she did! The Blake district faced lapsation again in 1967 with the passage of legislation affecting districts with fewer than 200 students. They managed to survive that crisis only to have the school building condemned for failing to meet the Field Act standards. That problem was solved with the purchase of a new portable classroom building which was set in place and opened in 1969.

Average daily attendance for the 2004-2005 school year was 12 students, the ADA then jumped to 17 students in 2005-2006. Closing enrollment for the 2006-2007 school year was 14 students. Average daily attendance fell to just nine students for the 2008-09 school year.

The territory making up the original Blake district grew with the annexation of the two small adjoining school districts from whom its original territory was drawn: the **Woody School District**, which was started in 1883 on the Woody Ranch and lapsed in 1945, and the **Joiner School District**, which had been formed in 1886 and lapsed in 1922.

The Woody School began operating in 1873 and was located in Rag



Gulch, some two miles from the Woody townsite. It was ten years later, in 1883, when the Woody School District was formed and, at that time, the school house was moved to Dr. Sparrell Woody's ranch, northeast of the townsite. Dr. Woody was named the district's first clerk, a position he held for the next twenty-one years.

Enrollment dropped steadily following formation of the Woody district and by 1898-99 just nineteen students were in attendance. By 1913, serving but a handful of students, the district faced the possibility of suspension but was saved in the eleventh hour with the enrollment of two youngsters, Gladys Moore and Ernest Seeley, she being barely 5 years old and he being but 4! That year the student body was made up of 3 Seeley children, 2 Moore children, and 3 Maltby children.

Enrollment was bolstered, at least temporarily, following World War I when the opening of the Blue Mountain Gold Mine prompted a number of new families to move into the area.

The Joiner School District was formed May 6, 1886 and was named for a family that lived in the Woody area.



WOODY SCHOOL

---

**Note:** An earlier history of Kern County school districts indicates that the school was located on a plateau about two or three miles southeast of Woody but Ward Woody, a grandson of Sparrell Woody, a long time school board member and a lifelong resident of the community, recalls that the Joiner School actually occupied three different sites and, after having been moved twice from its original location, was located on the Williams Ranch at the time the district was annexed to Blake in 1922.

---

In 1887-88, the year after the Joiner district was formed, the teacher of record was R.L. Stockton, later to become the county superintendent of schools. Since Stockton also served as the teacher for the Granite School that same year, it is presumed that the schools held sessions at different



ROBERT L. STOCKTON

times of the year allowing Stockton to teach at both schools. As in many small districts, the Joiner School was the social center for the ranching and farming people in the area and was termed “*Wigglefoot Hall*” by one old-timer because so many dances were held there.

The Joiner District had a recorded ADA of seven students in 1886-87, its first year in operation. The next two years would see an increase to thirteen students, but a steady decline followed and the district was declared lapsed and annexed to the Blake district in 1922.

It bears mentioning that two early county superintendents had been teachers in the Woody area: J.H. Berry, county superintendent of schools from 1884-1886, was a teacher in the Woody School District in 1891-92, as was the aforementioned R.L. Stockton, who served as county superintendent from 1903-1914.

Due perhaps to its remoteness and/or the fact that the person hired for that position must teach all grade levels, a host of individuals have served as teacher/principal in the Blake district in the past four decades. The district’s board minutes generally refer to these individuals as “*teacher/principal*”, which is the appropriate designation since the bulk of the administrative tasks for which a superintendent would be responsible are routed through the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

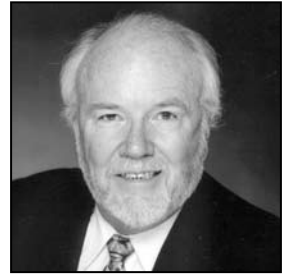
Blake’s teacher/principal for the 1961-62 school year was Eugenia Snyder. She was followed by: Beryl Goodrich (1962-65), Barbara Drake (1965-66), Barbara Peterson (1966-67), Carol Wilbur (1967-68), Ruth Howell and Tommye Ledbetter (1968-69), Nola Bilyeu ((1969-70), Patricia Meek Farrell (1971-74), Cheryl Wages (1974-75), Elaine Hopkins (1975-76), Rose Danner (1976-77), Cynthia Carver (1977-78), Dan Koskinen (1978-80), Julie Nelson (1980-84), Joel Hampton (1984-88), Robin Lindsey (1988-89), Amy Newton (1989-92), Jack McLaughlin (1992-94), Michael Coleman (1994-97), Charles Coleman (1997-2000), Kim Bell (2000 to 2005), and Sandra Halbrook (2005-2007). The current principal/teacher is Dawn Carver.

Blake is unique in that it is one of only a handful of school districts that still operates a teacherage, once considered a necessary accommodation for districts looking to attract teachers to schools in remote areas. The attractive house at the Blake School is located immediately adjacent to the old school building.

Ward Woody and his wife, Muriel, were active members of the Blake school community for many years, Ward was a member of the board of trustees and Muriel as secretary to the board for some 27 years. In 2001, the old Blake school was refurbished and is now a center for library and art activities. A dedication was held in September of that year honoring the Woodys by naming the “new” facility the Ward and Muriel Woody Library and Art Center.

Because it is so tiny, the Blake district has, over the years, been assigned a consultant from the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. More formally designated District Advisory Services, their function is to assist small school districts with fiscal procedures, the recruitment of staff, and other operational issues, which serves to free up the teacher/principal to focus on curriculum and instruction. District Advisory Staff may also serve as interim superintendents when an unexpected vacancy at that position occurs, remaining there until a replacement can be found.

The former county superintendent of schools, Kelly Blanton, was at one time a consultant for Blake, as was his successor, Larry Reider. ■



KELLY F. BLANTON



LARRY E. REIDER



## BUTTONWILLOW UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

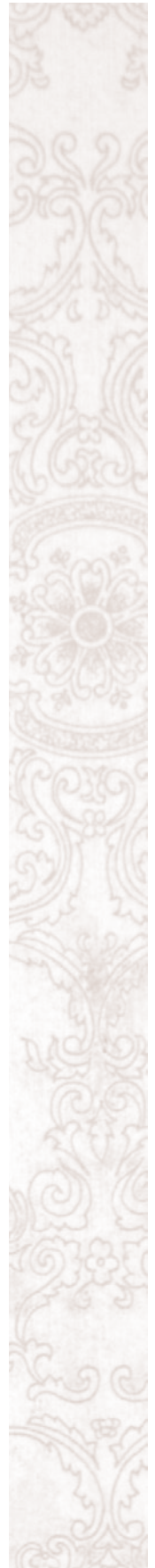
Toward the end of the nineteenth century, major oil deposits were discovered on Kern County's west side and oil towns such as Fellows and McKittrick sprang up as a result of those discoveries. As new producing wells were drilled and put on line, it became obvious that a railroad would have to be built from Bakersfield to the west side to move the oil to market. In March of 1892, construction began on a railroad that would run from Sumner (now East Bakersfield) to McKittrick. A branch of the Southern Pacific, this new line was initially called the Bakersfield and San Miguel Railroad but once completed, it was referred to simply as the McKittrick Railroad. At a point some twenty-five miles west of Bakersfield, on the huge Miller and Lux Buttonwillow Ranch property, plans called for the construction of a railroad siding. Because of its location on the ranch, it was called Miller's Siding.

At that time, the Buttonwillow Ranch headquarters was situated near the Buena Vista Slough which, as it turned out, proved to be a less than ideal location because of the potential for flooding of the Kern River and the hoards of mosquitoes that made life difficult for the employees. Looking to relocate, the company was attracted to the area where the new siding was being built and soon after its completion, moved their headquarters to a spot nearby. The siding eventually became an important shipping point for grain and livestock and was soon renamed Buttonwillow.

Buttonwillow, named for a native tree, would serve as a company town for the Miller and Lux operation for a number of years. The company built bunkhouses and warehouses and also operated a commissary, which served as a trading center for surrounding ranchers.

About 1900, Miller and Lux began to enlist Italians to farm the ranch properties and before long there was a substantial Italian colony in the Buttonwillow area. Families whose names are still very familiar in Kern County's farm community - Torrigiani, Romanini, and Pierucci - to name just a few, were among the first to become affiliated with Miller and Lux.

In 1927, Miller and Lux began to sell off their ranch property. A number of those early Italian tenant farmers purchased the land they had been working and later would become prosperous farmers and businessmen. Simultaneous with the sale of the ranch, survey crews began laying out a townsite around the company headquarters. Pioneer Realty Company of Bakersfield was offering lots for sale in the new



town of Buttonwillow and it's interesting to note that the person in charge of sales was Elmer Houchin.

As the community developed, families living in the Buttonwillow area recognized the need for a school in their little town and, in 1900, formed the **Buttonwillow School District**. The first schoolhouse and grounds were provided by Miller and Lux who charged a fee for their use. Most of the students in that first school were from the families of the Italian tenant farmers. The schoolhouse, a 16' by 24' wood structure, was located on Corn Camp Road, northwest of the present Buttonwillow town site. It burned to the ground in the early 1920s and was replaced in 1923 by one of sturdier construction. The new facility was named the Burnt School and perhaps that name had some prophetic significance since that school, too, was destroyed by fire just five years later. (Remnants of that building, its design bearing a resemblance to a Spanish mission, can still be found on the Corn Camp Road site). By January of 1929, architects were already busy designing a new school, this one to be located in Buttonwillow proper.

In that same year, 1929, the adjoining **Bowerbank School District**, with an ADA of 54 students, joined with the Buttonwillow district to form the **Buttonwillow Union School District**. Enrollment in the Buttonwillow School at that time was 34 students.

The Bowerbank School District had been formed on February 9, 1917, with the schoolhouse situated some three miles east of Buttonwillow on present day Highway 58. The vacated Bowerbank schoolhouse was moved to Buttonwillow in 1929 and, for some thirty years, was used for a variety of school needs. It was finally razed in 1961.

In 1964 the Buttonwillow district acquired additional territory and a few students when they absorbed the **Wildwood School District**. The Wildwood district had been formed on April 4, 1894, and in their first year of operation served ten students. The Wildwood schoolhouse was located on Wildwood Road, about four miles east of Buttonwillow. Some of the original buildings can still be found there.

For two years during World War II, due for the most part to the transportation problems created by the rationing of tires and gasoline, Wildwood students attended Maple School in the adjacent **Maple School District**. It was suggested that they remain and become a part of the Maple district but the Wildwood parents felt strongly about

maintaining their identity and reopened the school once conditions allowed them to do so.

Wildwood's ADA peaked at forty-four students in 1949-50 and then began to steadily decline. In September of 1960, the board of trustees of the Buttonwillow district agreed to annex Wildwood if requested to do so by the Wildwood voters. An election was held but the offer was rejected by a vote of 35 to 11. For the next four years, Wildwood residents tried to avoid dissolution of their little district but, finally, in September of 1964, they submitted a petition for annexation that was accepted by the Buttonwillow board of trustees and the two districts became one on January 1, 1965. For a number of years following its closure, the Wildwood facility was rented by the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools to house special education classes. That agreement ceased with the opening of the Greeley Learning Center and the relocation of the county classes to that site.

Following its formation in 1929, the Buttonwillow Union School District grew at a steady pace for the next twenty years. In 1940, to alleviate overcrowded classrooms, the district purchased three temporary classrooms and a cafeteria. District enrollment peaked at 632 students in 1949-50 and began then to slowly decline. In 1961-62, the district's recorded ADA was 500 students.

In something of an unusual move, the Buttonwillow district held a bond election in 1961 in an attempt to raise \$69,000 for the construction of a swimming pool. Most district residents voted in favor of the measure but it did not receive the 2/3 majority needed for passage.

In October of 1965 the board authorized another bond election, not to build a swimming pool this time but rather to raise \$112,000 for the construction of new kindergarten classrooms and an administration building. That measure did win the approval of district voters and the new facilities were completed and in use the following year.

Around 1980, the Buttonwillow district began experiencing financial difficulties. Reserves had all but disappeared and there was an obvious need to reduce operating costs. Lamont Skiby, who began his tenure as district superintendent in 1979, took a number of cost cutting steps, including the elimination of some non-essential personnel and the streamlining the district's transportation system. Because of these

measures, and others, the district was able to regain a sound fiscal position with a reasonably healthy reserve.

In 1989, it was discovered that the district's underground gasoline storage tank was leaking and had contaminated the soil. Cost of the cleanup, approximately \$1 million, was borne by the state and since a portion of the contaminated area was under the old bus building, the state also provided funding for construction of a new bus facility.

As the financial picture brightened, and programs such as music and art were restored, Buttonwillow's enrollment experienced a modest increase as parents who had moved their children to Maple or Rio Bravo began to return them to their home district.

In the years since 1990, enrollment in the Buttonwillow Union School District has been relatively stable. Closing enrollment for 1996-97 was 397 students but was up to 420 by late spring of the 1997-98 school year. The need for additional student housing prompted the district to purchase two portable buildings for use beginning with the 1998-99 school year,

In November of 2002, voters in the district gave their approval to a \$6.5 million bond issue. There was little resistance from the community. Funds generated by the sale of these bonds, along with \$1.5 million in state modernization funds, allowed the district to significantly upgrade its facilities including the addition of heating and air conditioning units where needed, revamping of restrooms to accommodate students with physical disabilities, and the addition of a kindergarten classroom. A portion of the funds were also used to continue development of a media/technology resource center for instruction in the use of computers and other electronic media.

In the past forty years, leadership of the Buttonwillow Union School District has been in the hands of seven superintendents: Kenneth Wait from 1960 to 1964, Dennie Butterfield from 1964 to 1968, Donald Clause from 1968 to 1971, Edward Peterson from 1971 to 1979, Lamont Skiby from 1979 to 1993, Wayne Diver from 1993 to 1999, Gary Glover from 1999 to 2003, and Dr. James Murphy from 2003 to the present. ■



# CALIENTE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

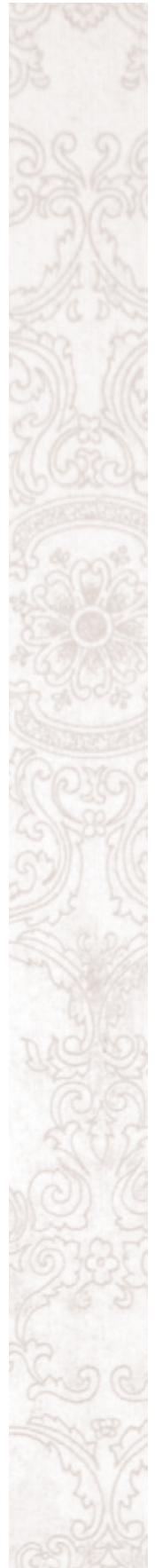
The town of Caliente was originally known as Allen's Camp, named for Gabriel Allen who ran sheep in the area as early as 1858. The name was changed to Caliente in 1875 when the little settlement was selected by the Southern Pacific Railroad as the site for a major train station and a terminal for freight and passengers coming and going by stage from the Kern River Valley. In the days and years following the arrival of that first train on April 26, 1875, people from the surrounding mountain areas were able to make connections in Caliente for Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Some of the local residents objected to the name change but it seemed appropriate to most since it was situated on Agua Caliente Creek. Perhaps the name change was also intended to reflect the extremely warm summer temperatures, *caliente* being "*hot*" in Spanish.

In the latter part of the 19th century the town of Caliente was a bustling community with a population of as many as 3,000 souls according to some sources. Many of those inhabitants were Chinese, having come to the area to work building roadbeds and laying track for Southern Pacific as it pushed its railroad east across the Tehachapi Mountains.

The railroad has been a major factor in the development of many, perhaps most of the communities in Kern County and Caliente is certainly no exception. Once the terminal was established, the population began to mushroom and new businesses seemed to spring up over night. Eventually there were twenty saloons, four general stores, three barber shops, blacksmith shops, and a variety of other businesses. On the east end of town could be found the sheds, corrals, and warehouses of the Cerro Gordo Freighting Company, principally occupied with hauling silver bullion from the Cerro Gordo Mine in Inyo County to Caliente from whence the bullion was shipped by rail to the mint in San Francisco.

Caliente's prosperity faded quickly, however. As the railroad began moving further up the mountain, most of the men and many of the businesses in Caliente moved along with it, this time to Keene where a new construction camp had been established. Still, some of the population and a few of the businesses stayed behind and Caliente would serve as an important freighting center for many years. Cattle were driven and hogs hauled by wagon from the Kern River Valley and Walker's Basin to be shipped out on freight cars. Flour from the A. Brown





VAUGHN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Flour Mill in Weldon was also shipped by rail from Caliente. Early in the twentieth century, when the Borel Powerhouse and, later on, the KR3 Powerhouse above Kernville were being built, supplies for those projects came in by rail to Caliente. Caliente was able to remain a viable community until 1926 when the completion of the highway from Bakersfield along the Kern River to the communities in Kern Valley provided travelers and freight haulers with a faster, more convenient route.

The **Caliente School District** was formed in 1875. The district's first school, completed in June of 1875, was swept away by a flood just a year later. According to some sources, a team of mules was hitched to the building to drag it back to its original location. The next school, built along Caliente Creek, was also moved off its location by a flood but was pulled to dry ground and would later serve as a teacherage.

The present day Caliente school district is a composite of several smaller neighboring districts that have, over the years, lapsed and combined territories.

The **Walker's Basin School District**, with territory between Caliente and Havilah, was formed in May of 1877. The little one-room schoolhouse was built on skids so it could be easily moved to be near the greatest concentration of students. The Walker Basin district lapsed in 1932 due to low enrollment and was annexed to the **Vaughn School District** in Bodfish.

The **Agua Caliente School District** was formed in 1894 but because the name was so similar to that of its neighbor, the Agua Caliente district changed its name to the **Twin Oaks School District** in 1936.

The Vaughn district was transferred to the Twin Oaks district in 1947, then two years later transferred again, this time to the Caliente School District.

On July 11, 1962, the Twin Oaks district joined with the Caliente district to form the **Caliente Union School District**.

At the time of the unionization, Caliente had an ADA of thirty-three students and Twin Oaks an ADA of eleven. Presently, the Caliente Union School District operates two schools - the Caliente School, located in Caliente proper, and the Piute Mountain School which is situated near Twin Oaks, some twenty-five miles to the east. The population of the Caliente townsite has declined steadily over the years and only a handful of students now attend the Caliente School.

In 1984, the district opened the Piute Mountain School near Twin Oaks. Piute Mountain is well situated to serve the majority of the district's families, who live in Walker Basin, Loraine, and Twin Oaks. Built with state funds on a donated 22 acre parcel, the cost for building and equipment was approximately \$1.75 million. The building is unique in that a portion of it is built into the side of a hill, a design intended to make it more energy efficient. The one open side faces south and large window areas in each room are designed to take full advantage of natural heat and light.

Caliente experienced very little growth during the twenty years prior to the opening of the new school in 1984. This is illustrated by the following sampling of enrollment figures from the early 1960s to the present.

ADA in 1963 was 22 students; 1968, ADA was 32 students; ADA for 1973 was 45 students; ADA for 1978 was 45 students; ADA for 1983 was 45 students; ADA following the opening of the new school in 1984 jumped to 90 students; ADA for 1990 was 93 students; ADA for 1994 was 115 students; and ADA for 1997 was 114 students. There has been little growth since that time. ADA for 2004-05 was 117 students; for 2005-06, the ADA was 100 students. Closing enrollment for the 2006-07 school year was 102 students.

Strong efforts have been made in recent years to develop the area around the Piute Mountain School for real estate. If that entices new families to the area, there is potential for a substantial increase in the district's student population. There is no indication that new development



TWIN OAKS SCHOOL

has had any significant impact on enrollment to this date (2007). Presently, only about one-fourth of the youngsters attending school in the district live on the surrounding ranches. Most are from families which have at least one member commuting to work outside the area, in Bakersfield or perhaps Tehachapi.

District superintendent from 1992-1997 was Carolyn McElroy. Robin Shive then served in that capacity from 1997-2005. She was followed by Marvin Baker (2005-2009). Kathleen Hansen began serving in that capacity in 2009. ■

# DELANO UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

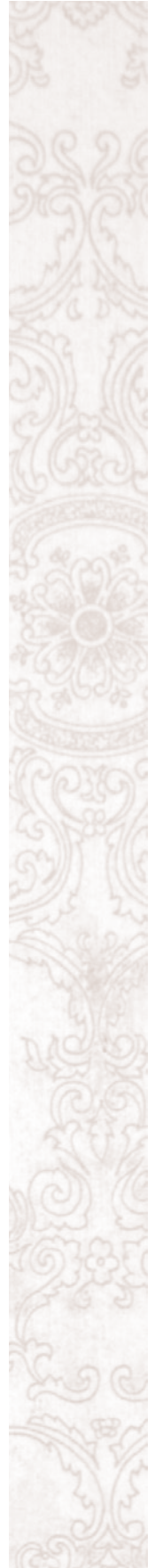
Long before permanent settlements were established in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley, the area was home to about 30,000 Yokuts Indians, separated into four distinct tribes. For 7,000 years the Yokuts had made their home near Tulare Lake, a huge expanse of water that, at that time, covered some 800 square miles of the valley floor and teemed with fish and waterfowl. North to south Tulare Lake ran for some fifty miles, its northern extreme almost due west of Visalia and its southern tip due west of McFarland.

The first non-Indians to arrive in this part of the valley were Spanish missionaries who came here in the early 1800s. Accompanied by Spanish soldiers, the missionaries, whose party included Father Francisco Garces, had plans to build a string of missions in the San Joaquin Valley much as they had along the California coast. But the Spanish governor of California, Joaquin Arrillaga, could not decide on the best way to subdue the Indians: by military might or missionary zeal and so, in the end, the missionaries left without having built a single mission.

Prospectors, too, were among the early settlers in this region, thousands having come here to seek their fortunes when gold was discovered in 1853 in the Kernville/Greenhorn area.

But Delano's first settlers of consequence were men, along with their families, who came to help lay the tracks for the Southern Pacific Railroad as it wound its way down the valley from San Francisco. Having reached the Delano area, construction of the railroad had to be halted for a year as an economic downturn required Southern Pacific to seek additional funding. As a result of the delay, Delano became a railhead of some consequence with goods being freighted from there to points south and east. Although many workers moved on when construction resumed, a significant number found reason to stay and, in 1873, the city of Delano was founded. Columbus Delano was Secretary of the Interior at that time and the railroad company named the town in his honor. Delano was incorporated in 1915.

By 1883 there was an obvious need to provide schooling for the growing number of children in the new city and the **Delano School District** was formed. While awaiting construction of more suitable accommodations, class that first year was held in the railroad depot. Average daily attendance was 23 students. The following year a new one



room schoolhouse was opened at the corner of 11th and Clinton streets. Four years later that building was replaced by a more substantial four classroom brick structure on Clinton Street. Unfortunately this school was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1915 and had to be demolished. The site where that school stood is presently occupied by the Fremont School.

Delano became a “*union*” district in 1920 when it absorbed the **Midland School District**, a tiny district serving an area of only about three square miles. Such a small area generated too few students to warrant its continued existence and Midland lapsed after just one year without ever having built a schoolhouse.

Another small district, the **Jasmine School District**, had its schoolhouse some seven or eight miles east of Delano. Jasmine had been formed in 1916 from territory acquired from the **Delano, Quinn, Homestead**, and **Lone Tree** school districts but attendance remained so sparse that Jasmine closed its doors in 1932 and was annexed to the Delano district. (As an historical aside, it is worth noting here that the original and well-preserved Jasmine School building is open to the public at the Delano Heritage Center)

By 1935, having absorbed the students from the Midland and Jasmine districts and having experienced a mild increase in student population within its own original boundaries, the average daily attendance in the Delano district stood at 1025 students. Other consolidations were to follow.

The **Quinn School District**, its schoolhouse located some 10 miles east of Delano on the Delano-Woody road, had been formed in 1900. It was comprised of 70 square miles of territory acquired from the Blake and Delano school districts but declining enrollment forced the Quinn District to close its doors in 1919 and it was annexed to the **Homestead School District**. But the annexation failed to win the approval of the Board of Supervisors, who rescinded it in 1920 and assigned Quinn’s territory and students to the Jasmine district and so ultimately Quinn became a part of Delano Union. It’s interesting to note that the Delano district retained ownership of the Jasmine and Quinn school properties for some sixty years until finally, in 1980, both parcels, each approximately one acre in size, were sold at auction. The Quinn site sold for \$836 and the Jasmine site for \$850.

The **Lone Tree School District**, founded in 1889 and named for a solitary tree that grew between Delano and Bakersfield, existed under that name for twenty-eight years before becoming the **McFarland School District** in 1917. Additional information about the Lone Tree School District can be found in the section of this document dealing with the McFarland Unified School District. The Sunshine School, which at one time housed the district's special education program, bears mentioning. Although little information relative to the school's origin or even its location was found, board minutes from 1968 reveal that trustees devoted a considerable amount of time discussing the fate of the Sunshine facility which was apparently no longer in use. The board finally agreed to budget \$18,000 to refurbish it and to then offer it for sale. The refurbishing was accomplished, the building was offered for sale but then, for some reason, the offer was withdrawn. The Sunshine School was destroyed by fire in 1980.

A review of the minutes of meetings of the Delano district's board of trustees supports the notion that, historically, the citizens of the community have tended to elect very strong and assertive but still forward looking individuals to serve as trustees, men and women who closely monitor district operations and remain focused on their obligation to the school community. This was clearly demonstrated when Superintendent Norman Hefner, having served the district with great distinction for twenty years, opted to retire in May of 1974. A selection committee was formed to find a replacement for Hefner but the board of trustees made it known that they had little confidence in the ability of this committee to carry out their assigned task. The board took exception to the nature and substance of the letter that the selection committee had sent to candidates for the position and, as a consequence, dissolved the screening committee and conducted the screening procedure themselves. They chose Harold Hunt to replace Hefner as superintendent.

During Hunt's tenure, the community was advised that there was a pressing need to refurbish and modernize the district's aging schools. In 1975 two attempts were made to gain voter approval of measures that would have generated the funds necessary for the upgrades. In May voters were asked to approve the sale of bonds in the amount of \$1,285,000. That measure failed. Then, in November, a special election

was held in which the voters were asked to approve a tax of \$1.06 per \$100 of assessed valuation for the same purpose. That measure also failed.

Harold Hunt resigned in early 1978 and in May of that year Dave Yetter took over the reins as district superintendent. That same month, Dr. Frank Dyer, superintendent of the **Delano Joint Union High School District**, advised Yetter and his board that the high school district was going to actively seek to unify the Delano schools. It would appear that there was no strong public support for the formation of a K-12 district, however, so nothing came of it even though unification was an issue that remained alive for the next several years. Finally, in 1987, the elementary district board made it clear that they would no longer consider any unification proposals.

The resolve of the board was tested again in April of 1980 following the hiring of Dr. Rachel Madrigal as assistant superintendent for curriculum. It was an appointment that would ultimately lead to open hostility in the district. Dr. Madrigal was fired or asked to resign after just six months and Milton Woolsey, one of the district's middle school principals, was chosen as her successor. In the heated debate that followed, the appointment was characterized by members of the Hispanic community as illegal and in violation of the board's affirmative action policy in that the position was not given to another Hispanic. The appointment was sustained, however, and Dr. Woolsey, later to become district superintendent, would go on to provide valuable service to the district for the next 20 plus years.

The district, in an effort to rein in the cost of cafeteria services, opted, in 1984, to provide meals for their students through a centralized food preparation and distribution facility. Four classrooms at the Valle Vista School were converted to form a central kitchen with the capability of serving almost 9,000 meals, counting both breakfast and lunch. That facility served the district well for almost twenty years but by the year 2000 it was barely able to meet the demands created by increase enrollment. Since there was also a need to free up space for additional classrooms at Valle Vista School, the district began plans for a much larger and more modern central kitchen on a site near the district office. The new facility, costing just over \$3 million and capable now of serving 20,000 meals per day, became operational in 2003.



In 1961-62 the average daily attendance in the Delano Union School District was 2,708, making it the second largest elementary school district in the county at that time. Enrollment exceeded 3,200 in 1968 but fell off considerably over the next decade with just 2,644 students present on opening day of the 1979-80 school year.

Although the district was experiencing no dramatic increase in enrollment at this time, there was still a pressing need to upgrade and modernize existing facilities. In 1985 a parcel tax was approved by the voters and the funds thus generated were used to help address that need. Additional modernization funds became available that same year when the board approved a developer's fee of \$1.50 per square foot on new construction in the district.

The 1986-87 enrollment grew to just over 3,500 students and projections made it apparent that there was a need to plan for the construction of additional schools. With that in mind, the board, in the fall of 1987, approved the purchase of property on Princeton Street from the high school district. A successful bond election in 1992 made \$4.2 million available for new construction and the district opened the Princeton Street School the following year.

By 1990 the Delano district was experiencing much heavier annual enrollment increases and nearly 4,500 students were registered on opening day in 1991. By 1995 enrollment had topped 5,000, by 1998 it had climbed to almost 6,000 students. Growth has continued at a steady pace for the 2004-05 school year which show an ADA of just over 7,500 students. That figure has changed little since that time, the ADA for 2008-09 being listed at 7,371 students.

Demographics in the Delano area have changed dramatically in the past thirty or forty years and, like other agricultural communities in the valley, the city's population is now predominantly Hispanic. The ethnic makeup of the schools has changed accordingly, of course, and Delano's elementary school population is now 80% Hispanic, 15% Filipino, 3% Caucasian, and 1% African American. Approximately 36% of new enrollees speak little or no English and about 20% of those new enrollees are migrants.

Because a significant number of Delano's Hispanic families return to Mexico each holiday season, the district calendar is configured to

allow four weeks of vacation during the month of December. This maximizes the number of days of instruction for the youngsters in these families and minimizes the loss of revenue that the district would experience as a result of the reduced ADA. The Delano district currently operates seven K-5 schools and three middle schools. Almond Tree Middle School opened in 1998 and additional classrooms have since been added. Morningside School opened in 2000, the same year district voters approved a \$45 million bond issue. Harvest Elementary opened in 2004 and, along with La Vina Middle School, is situated on a 35 acre educational complex at Cecil Avenue and Browning Road. La Vina School opened in the fall of 2006.

At this time (March, 2006), Delano has three more schools on the drawing boards. Another educational complex, much like the Harvest/La Vina site except on 27 acres, will be built on the west side and will be home to both a K-5 school and a middle school. Completion date for this project is yet to be determined. The district is also looking to build another K-5 school on the east side that will accommodate up to 800 students on a 12 to 15 acre site. Property for this school has yet to be acquired.

In the last fifty plus years, the Delano Union School District has been served by just six superintendents: Norm Hefner (1953-1974), Harold Hunt (1974-1978), Dave Yetter (1978-1991), Dr. Milt Woolsey (1991-2002), Ron Garcia (2002 to 2008) and Dr. Robert Aguilar beginning in 2008. ■

# DIGIORGIO SCHOOL DISTRICT

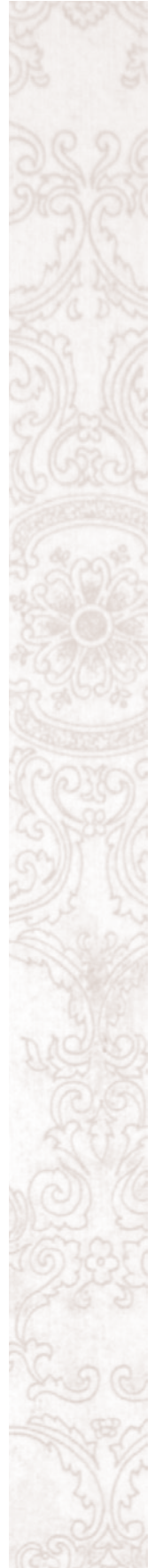
The **DiGiorgio School District** serves a large agricultural area at the base of the Tehachapi Mountains. The district is nestled between the Arvin Union School District to the south, the Lamont and Vineland districts to the west, Edison to the north, and the Caliente and Tehachapi Unified districts to the east.

The district, originally known as the **Rockpile School District**, was formed by order of the Board of Supervisors on February 6, 1897, and in its first year of operation had an average daily attendance of 22 pupils. The children who attended Rockpile in those early days were principally from families who had been lured to the area by the goldrush in the Greenhorn and Kernville mountains but, disappointed in that regard, acquired homesteads and began farming in the valley below.

Rockpile School District had been created from territory formerly held by the **Mountain View**, **Greenfield**, and **Plainview** school districts, then underwent a number of boundary changes between 1897 and 1936. Territory was added to Rockpile from the Lakeview district in 1898, territory was taken from Rockpile and given to the Edison School District in 1911, territory was taken from Rockpile and added to the Bear Mountain district in 1913, and, in 1936, territory was added to Rockpile from the Mountain View district.

The original Rockpile School was built on a one acre site donated by Americus Lancaster and, like other rural schools of the time, served as the social center of the community. Dances were held at the school on Saturday nights and church services on Sunday mornings. In later years the building was remodeled so that the principal-teacher could live on the second floor. Mr. I.E. Rollins lived in the building and served as district superintendent from 1924 to 1935. In May of 1928, the original school, a wooden structure, burned to the ground and was replaced by a two room brick building. While the new school was under construction, classes were held at one of the packing sheds west of the school.

It was difficult to hire teachers for schools in such remote areas in its early days and few stayed more than a year or two. Apparently no replacement could be found for C.R. Westerman, who taught at Rockpile during the 1903-1904 school year, since, with his departure, the school was closed from 1905 to 1908 (It should be noted, however, that another account indicates that the closure was due to a "*shortage of pupils.*").





ROCKPILE SCHOOL

Westerman, perhaps less than enamored with facilities, wrote to the county superintendent of schools that *“the windmill is in need of repair, the tank dirty, the water vile to use, the fence is a badly bundled piece of business, having no gate or stile. The library is good, the books well chosen and in fair repair, the organ is good.”*

On Christmas eve, 1945, Joseph DiGiorgio, a farmer and large land holder in the area, announced the donation of \$150,000 and forty acres of land to the

district, a donation that was gratefully accepted by John Moore, clerk of the board of trustees. Less than two months later, on February 11, 1946, and over objections by some of the pioneer families, the district’s name was officially changed from Rockpile to the **DiGiorgio School District**.

The number of students served by the DiGiorgio district remained quite small until 1937 when an influx of farm laborers nearly tripled the enrollment. The average daily attendance climbed from 71 pupils in 1936 to 204 pupils just a year later. This growth prompted the district to acquire additional property in 1938 and two new wings were added to the school. Three more acres were donated to the district in 1942.

The devastating earthquake of 1952 partially destroyed the DiGiorgio School. Funds generated by a successful bond election in 1955, along with monies donated to the district by Mr. DiGiorgio, allowed the district to build a new school directly across the street on the 40 acres donated by DiGiorgio in 1945.

DiGiorgio’s ADA has shown little change in the past 35 years. Enrollment records for the 1961-62 school year place the average daily attendance at 223 students whereas the enrollment for recent years has held steady at about 230 students. Opening of a mobile home park in the district has helped to maintain that steady level of enrollment.

While the district’s enrollment level has not changed significantly over the years, there has been a dramatic change in the demographics of the school community and today better than 90% of DiGiorgio’s students are of hispanic origin. As with many districts, the program to reduce class

sizes in the primary grades, initiated in 1996-97, forced DiGiorgio to seek additional classroom space and, to meet that need, the district recently purchased three portable buildings.

Although the DiGiorgio School District remains a small one-school district, it is able to offer a modern curriculum that includes instruction in computer technology. The district has purchased computers for all classrooms and installed the wiring necessary for internet access.

Between 1947 and 1998 the DiGiorgio district had just three superintendents: Kenneth Brantly was superintendent from 1947 to 1964; George Rule headed up the district from 1964 until his retirement in 1976; and Carl Delfino was the chief administrator from 1976 to 1998. Michael Coleman succeeded Delfino in 1998 and served just one year. Delfino then returned and served as interim superintendent for different intervals between 1999 and 2001. Paul Carlson was named to the position in the spring of 2000 but remained only until November of that year. In April of 2001, Robert Parsons was appointed superintendent/principal of the district. He was replaced in 2003 by Danny Whetton and Whetman was, in turn, replaced in 2007 by Lamar Boatman. ■



# EDISON SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Edison School District** was formed in 1911 from territory formerly in the **Fairfax** and **Rockpile** school districts. Edison took its name from Southern California Edison Company, which at the time was pursuing interests in power projects in the nearby mountain areas.

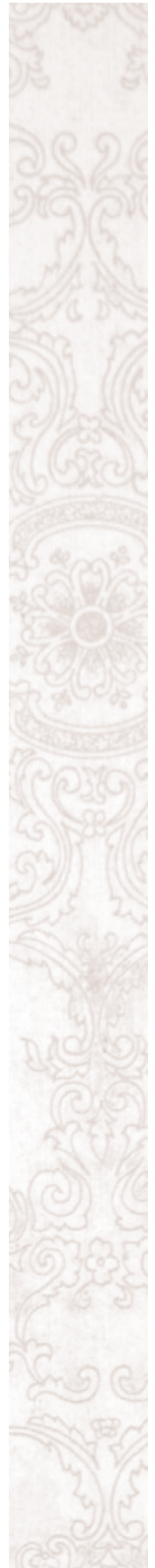
A district known as **Lakeview School District** had served the area beginning in 1896 but it lapsed in 1903 and few records are to be found of its existence.

Like neighboring districts, the **Edison School District** experienced significant growth during the depression years as farm workers migrated into Kern County's agricultural areas. The district's ADA of 79 in 1936-37 nearly doubled the following year, to 140. Another enrollment spurt followed in the 1950's as residential subdivisions began to extend into the Edison district boundaries. This increase in student population created a need for additional student housing and a second district school, Oranewood, was opened in 1955. Average daily attendance in 1961-62 was 676 students and for many years there was little reason for the district to grow in enrollment. That is demonstrated in this sampling of enrollment figures: 1963-64, ADA of 695; 1968-69, ADA of 653; 1973-74, ADA of 586; 1979-80, ADA of 435; 1983-84, ADA of 507; 1989-90, ADA of 705; 1993-94, ADA of 729; 1998-99, ADA of 765.

In recent years, however, there has been an influx of Hispanic farm worker families and the district's enrollment has shown appreciable growth. ADA for the 2004-05 school year was 960 students. It increased during the 2005-06 school year to 1,031 students where it has remained steady.

It is worth noting, too, that there has been a shift in the location of housing for students eligible to attend the Edison schools and now about 90% of the district's students are bused each day.

The Edison district, like most other school districts in Kern County, has experienced an appreciable change in demographics over the years. Farm workers who moved into the district in the 1930's were poor white families from the "*Dust Bowl*" areas of Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas. Today's farm workers in the Edison area are almost exclusively of Hispanic origin and, consequently, nearly half of Edison's student population is Hispanic. For the most part these children are not from migrant families, however, and so attend school for the entire



term each year. With the opening of Orangewood School in 1955, the original Edison School was converted to a modified middle school and today serves students in grades four through eight. Because of this configuration, it is sometimes referred to as Edison Senior Elementary School. Those students in grades 4-6 are in self-contained classrooms while the seventh and eighth grade program is departmentalized.

The Orangewood School is exclusively a primary school and so serves all the district's K-3 students. The district also owns a ten acre parcel adjacent to Orangewood that is a potential future school site.

In the summer of 1993, using funds from the state modernization program, Edison upgraded eight classrooms at the Orangewood School and four classrooms at the Edison Middle School.

Edison is experiencing a mild increase in enrollment which currently stands at 1,100 students.

Tom Lindquist was the superintendent of the Edison school district from 1946 to 1975. His successors have been: Orval Cauthon (1975-1984), Bill Evans (1984-1985), Mike Woessner (1985-1987), Bud Burrow (1987-1988), Gary Bray (1988-1993), Barbara Clark (1993-2006), Cheri Sanders (2006-2008) and Stephen Ventura from 2008 to the present. ■



# ELK HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Elk Hills School District** is a small, one- school district, its schoolhouse located in the tiny community of Tupman, about half way between Bakersfield and Taft and adjacent to the California Aqueduct.

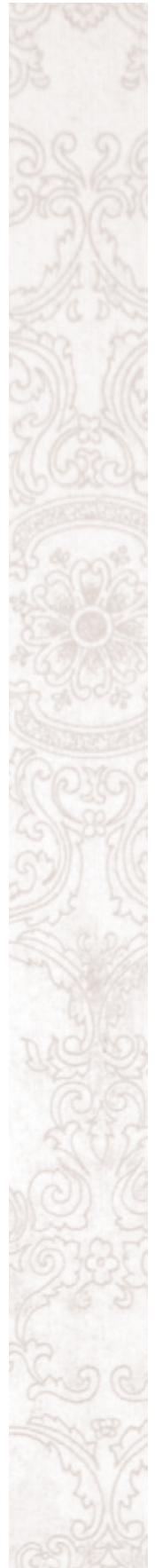
Although a post office was established there in 1921, the Tupman townsite itself was not officially opened until January 31, 1925, when real estate developers began offering lots for sale. Seventeen lots were sold before they were even on the market and 25 new homes were completed and ready for occupancy within a month of the opening. The area was especially appealing to oilfield workers from Taft who moved there to avoid having to make the 35 mile round trip drive each day to work in the Elk Hills fields.

Tupman was named for Hamer I. Tupman, a prominent member of the Bakersfield business community who owned oil leases in the area. Tupman and his wife had been members of a party of Kentucky colonists who came to California in 1892 with plans to settle in the Fresno area. After visiting with some friends in Rosedale, however, they decided to make their home there. Tupman began his career as a water clerk for the Kern County Land Company but left there in 1898 having been prevailed upon to take over as head of the Kern County Abstract Company. He remained in that position until 1923 at which time he sold the company to Title Insurance and Trust Company. Always an active member of the community, Mr. Tupman also served two terms as a member of the Kern County Board of Supervisors.

---

**Note:** During World War I, the federal government encouraged citizens to participate in the financing of the war through a program called Liberty Loans. The people of Kern County consistently oversubscribed during the Liberty Loan campaigns and to recognize their enthusiastic support, the U.S. Shipping Board named a freighter the S.S. Bakersfield. It was launched from San Pedro in July, 1919, and one of the attendees at the launching ceremony was Hamer I. Tupman, then chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

In 1928, Tupman was appointed a trustee on the Kern County Levee District which had been established by the Board of Supervisors to monitor construction and maintenance of levees along the Kern River. The Bakersfield and Oildale areas had often experienced severe flooding dur-



ing wet years and some levee construction had been done as far back as 1889. It was not enough, however, and levees would remain a vital concern in terms of public safety and the protection of property until the building of the dam that resulted in the formation of Lake Isabella in the early 1950s.

---

After retiring from community service, Mr. Tupman devoted several years to raising cattle and died in 1952.

The Elk Hills School District was formed in February of 1921 from territory formerly in the **Buena Vista**, **Midway**, and **Paloma** school districts. The district includes a portion of the huge Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve, the bulk of which was purchased from the federal government in 1997 by Occidental Petroleum. Also within the confines of the district can be found a state elk reserve, a protected area for a good-sized herd of Tule elk.

In its first year of operation, Elk Hills School had an average daily attendance of 31 students. In 1928, with the ADA up to 93 students, the district opened a larger facility on a knoll above town. By the next year, average daily attendance had risen to 120 students.

Early district superintendents were: Hope Wheeler (1923-25), Stella Green (1925-27), Nellie Neal (1927-28), Mark Linscott (1928-34), and Eugene Lindblom (1934-60). Lindblom was replaced by Ray Pennington.

The school that opened in 1928 remained in use until 1952 at which time it was damaged by that year's major earthquake and deemed no longer safe for occupancy. In 1953, Tupman voters approved a \$550,000 bond issue which allowed the district to build and open a new school in 1954. That facility is still in use today.

Enrollment in the Elk Hills district peaked in 1955-56 at 176 students. There were eight teachers on the staff at that time. By 1961-62, the ADA had fallen to 115 students, then to just over 100 students in 1968-69 after the homes on two streets were leveled to allow for construction of the California Aqueduct.

The steady drop in enrollment was predictable since Tupman, not unlike Maricopa, Fellows, McKittrick, and other small towns born during oil boom years, depended on the oilfields to provide jobs for the residents. As those jobs disappeared, so too did the townspeople and Tupman is

now simply a shadow of what it was in 1925.

In 2006 there were about 80 students enrolled in the Elk Hills School but that number has been hard to sustain. ADA for the 2008-09 school year was 57 students. A significant number of students who attend the Elk Hills school do so on interdistrict permits.

The Elk Hills School District has been plagued by internal strife in recent years. In November 2005, a recall election was held and a board member replaced. Then, in March 2006, Superintendent Deborah Goble was placed on administrative leave with no reason given according to an article in the March 22, 2006, edition of *The Bakersfield Californian*.

Administration of the district was then provided through a contract with the Taft City School District with Julie Graves, an employee of the Taft City School District serving as principal of the school and Dr. Michael Harris, superintendent of the Taft district, providing administrative oversight for the Elk Hills district on a part-time basis. That arrangement was abandoned in 2009 with the employment of Dr. Scott Meier as superintendent. ■



# FAIRFAX SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Fairfax School District** was formed on May 6, 1891, to serve a sparsely populated area on Bakersfield's eastern fringe. One can only speculate as to how it was determined just where to build that first Fairfax schoolhouse since, unlike almost all other school districts, there was no center of population as such, the area being made up almost exclusively of small family farms.

During its first year of operation, 1891-92, the district's average daily attendance was eight students. The teacher that year was Viola LeBlanc and the district's first clerk was W. H. Walker. Indications are that enrollment remained relatively small for the next twenty years. No attendance records were found for those years but we know from a 1911 directory of Kern County's public schools, titled, "*List of Districts, Clerks, and Teachers*", that all grades at the Fairfax School for that year were still being taught by a single teacher, in this instance, Margaret Frazer.

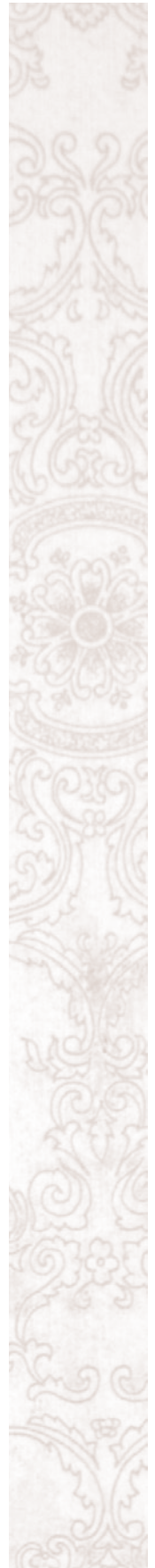
The Fairfax district experienced moderate growth during the next twenty years, recording an average daily attendance for the 1932-33 school year of 101 students and a staff of three teachers: Mrs. Hester Wilhite, who was also the part time principal; Mrs. Florence Goodall; and Mrs. Minnie Hocking.

Food service was first offered to Fairfax students in 1928 and was initiated by Mrs. Rench, a founding member of the Fairfax PTA. Mrs. Rench cooked the meals at home and transported the food to school in kettles.

Bus transportation was first made available to Fairfax students in 1935 following purchase by the district of a used Reo bus from Kern County High School District. As originally configured, the Fairfax district encompassed an area of some fifty-seven square miles and bore little resemblance to the Fairfax district of today. The original boundary lines formed a large rectangle, the sides being four miles long from north to south and fifteen miles long from west to east. The western terminus ran on a line one mile east of, and parallel to, present day Union Avenue. The district's eastern boundary, fifteen miles distant, was approximately two miles beyond Bena, or Bena Station, on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

---

**Note:** Creating a new school district of such proportions for a handful of students seems to defy logic but it was not at all uncommon at the time



Fairfax was formed and the boundaries for many of Kern County's early school districts were drawn in a similar fashion.

---

While most school districts are named for the community they serve, e.g. Delano, Buttonwillow, and Arvin, Fairfax is unique in that it was named after a small town in Virginia. In about 1880, Henry W. Klipstein came to California from Virginia hoping that the warmer, drier climate here would prove beneficial to his failing health. Klipstein and his wife settled for a while in Kern County and he soon concluded that it was an area with bright economic prospects. Returning to Virginia, he reported his observations to his Virginia neighbors and encouraged them to follow him back to California.

In January of 1889, shortly after his return to Kern County, Klipstein purchased what was described as "*an outside block of land at east Bakersfield*" from the Kern County Land Company. Several of his Virginia neighbors soon joined him and, in the fall of 1889, the newcomers banded together to form what would come to be called "*the Virginia Colony*".

By January of 1890, three hundred acres of land had been purchased by twenty different colony residents, an average of fifteen acres each. The transplanted Virginians reportedly wasted no time and began immediately clearing the land of sagebrush and preparing it for the planting of trees, vines, and alfalfa.

Although the Virginia colony has long since disappeared, we are reminded of its existence and the origins of those first settlers when we visit Fairfax School, or drive on Fairfax Road, or Virginia Avenue, or Quantico Street.

The Virginia Colony, about four miles long from west to east, butted up against the south side of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, placing it in the **Sumner School District**. When the Fairfax School opened in 1891, however, it was the closest school to the Virginia Colony and colony youngsters attended Fairfax for some years with little apparent concern on the part of Sumner officials. But colony residents wanted to be able to vote in Fairfax trustee elections and have more of a voice in district operations and in March of 1900 submitted a "*Petition for a Change in School District Boundaries*" to the board of supervisors. The petition,

asking that the Virginia Colony area be transferred from the Sumner district to the Fairfax School District, was granted a month later. A copy of that petition is included as an addendum to this document.

---

**Note:** Henry Klipstein's name does not appear on the petition and from that we can assume that he did not linger long in the Virginia Colony. He would, however, go on to become an important figure in our county's history. Having purchased a dairy operation from the Kern County Land Company, it was said of Klipstein that "*he prospered at the undertaking*". He was soon buying land and cattle and before long owned 15,000 acres near Maricopa and leased another 75,000 acres from the government. He and his sons at one time raised 3,000 head of cattle on those properties. Klipstein also owned a considerable amount of improved and unimproved property in Bakersfield.

---

A host of new school districts were formed in Kern County between 1900 and 1930, many as a result of the oil boom that began shortly after 1900. Typically, territory for a new district was taken from an existing district or, in some instances, from more than one district. Between 1911 and 1921, a considerable portion of the territory originally allotted to Fairfax was given up for the formation or expansion of the **Edison**, **Mountain View** and **Bakersfield** districts. There were also occasions, of course, when territory was transferred to Fairfax from an adjacent district. Records indicate, for example, that a half section parcel (320 acres) was ceded to Fairfax from the **Edison School District** in 1921.

Those exchanges of territory, which continued until about 1960, resulted in a significant reduction in the size of the Fairfax district - from fifty-seven to sixteen square miles. As presently configured, the district is bounded on the north by Edison Highway, on the east by Vineland Road and Weedpatch Highway, on the south by Hermosa Road and on the west by Quantico Street.

The original Fairfax School was destroyed by a fire that broke out on the first day that school resumed after the Christmas break in 1929. One hundred students and three teachers were present at the time but all were escorted safely out of the building by the principal, Ernest Hunter. Old

photographs reveal that it was an elegant two story wood frame structure with open porches along at least two sides. The design, featuring a prominent bell tower, was typical of the day and so not unlike a host of other early Kern County schoolhouses.

The second Fairfax School, built on the same site as the original school, had the appearance and features found in schools built in the 1930s and 1940s. A beautiful brick structure, it had long corridors and a Spanish tile roof. Classrooms featured high windows to take advantage of the natural light. Unfortunately, this school was severely damaged and rendered unsafe for occupancy by the earthquake of 1952. The buildings were subsequently razed and replaced by the present facility, completed in 1953. Large tents were set up and used as classrooms while a new school was being built. Anticipating that there would soon be a need to provide additional classrooms for their growing student population, the district built a second school, the Virginia Avenue School, which opened in January of 1954. Initially, the Virginia Avenue campus included just eight classrooms and a cafeteria. Additions have been made over the years and today Virginia Avenue has twenty regular classrooms and a special day class.

Fairfax remained a small, rural school district for the first forty years of its existence but, like many of its neighboring districts, it was witness to dramatic changes in the 1930s when thousands of refugees from the Dust Bowl states arrived in California looking for work as farm laborers. Many of those families ended their journey in Kern County, settling in the rich agricultural areas, including Fairfax, situated along the valley's eastern fringe. Between 1934 and 1938, enrollment in the Fairfax district more than tripled, from 102 students to 312 students.

In 1961-62 the Fairfax district had an average daily attendance of 814 pupils. Enrollment figures for the next twenty years, taken at five year intervals, indicate a stable student population for that time period (ADA is shown in parentheses): 1963-64 (876); 1968-69 (978); 1973-74 (895); 1978-79 (845); and 1983-84 (914). More significant increases in ADA began in the late 1980s and that pattern continues to the present time. This has been prompted to a large extent by a huge increase in the number of new homes being built in the district - homes that are being purchased by young families with children. The average daily attendance for 2004-



05 was 1,620 students, for 2005-06, 1,705 students, and for 2007-08, 2,084 students. Enrollment as of November, 2008 was just over 2,100.

This growth pattern is not unique to Fairfax. It is, in fact, the norm for most schools and school districts in the central valley due to a general population increase in the state and also to an ever increasing number of Hispanic youngsters entering our educational system. As a result of this combination of factors, many districts, Fairfax included, are now serving twice as many students as they did ten years ago. A review of the Fairfax district's annual CBEDS (California Basic Educational Data System) summaries for the past few years clearly illustrates that demographic shift. In 1995, Hispanic youngsters represented just over 60% of the student population. By 2000, Hispanics made up 64% of the district's total enrollment - by 2005, that number had risen to 83%. The most recent CBEDS report, taken in October of 2007, indicates that almost 85% of Fairfax students are of Hispanic origin.

The Fairfax district has held a number of successful bond elections over the years and, with the exception of the bond election in 2000, it would appear from the size of those earlier bond issues that the funds thus generated were used for capital improvements. Successful elections were held in May of 1926 for \$7,000; March of 1929 for \$15,000; January of 1947 for \$50,000; March of 1951 for \$67,000; March of 1955 for \$61,000; and July of 1990 for \$180,000.

The district realized \$4,260,000 from their May, 2000 bond election, a measure that was overwhelming approved by district voters. Funds from the sale of those bonds, supplemented by hardship funds, were used to build the Shirley Lane School, which opened its doors in 2005. Six classrooms were added in 2006 and the Shirley Lane campus now has 31 classrooms, including two portables.

A fourth school is on the drawing boards. It will be built on a twenty acre plot just north of the Fairfax School and on the west side of Fairfax Road. It is anticipated that at least a portion of that school will also be paid for with hardship funds.

Schools in the Fairfax School District were reconfigured in 1996 to reduce the number of grade levels served on any one campus. Virginia Avenue School is now a primary school, serving youngsters in grades K through 2, Shirley Lane School serves students in grades 3 through 5,

and Fairfax School is the district's middle school, serving youngsters in grades 6 through 8.

Superintendents who have served the Fairfax district for the past thirty years have included: Victor Meyers (July, 1972 - June, 1980); Dr. Bill Gibson (July, 1980 - June, 1991); Carol Hatcher (July, 1991-January, 1993). Hatcher was followed by two interim superintendents, Clyde Johnston and Christine Frazier, who served from January 1993 to May, 1994. They were followed by George Blek (May, 1994 - June, 1996) and Adolph Wirth (June, 1996 - June, 2003). Desiree Von Flue has been the district's superintendent since 2003.

---

**A footnote to the district's history:** Comments on the contributions to the district and the school community by Robert Stotler, long time Fairfax trustee. There is little doubt that the strongest and most esteemed supporter of the Fairfax School District is Robert Stotler. Mr. Stotler, who at age 84 just completed his 29th year as a trustee for the district, is revered by all district employees because of his genuine concern for students, staff members, and the quality of the district's educational programs. Mr. Stotler was a recent honoree at a Veteran's Day celebration at which time he was recognized for having served with valor and distinction in the U.S. Army during World War II. He was assigned to outfits that saw perilous duty in both the European and Pacific theaters and it's likely that he would have been involved in the invasion of the Japanese mainland had the war not ended abruptly following the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Bob Stotler has for many years been an active contributor to the success of the Fairfax 4-H and the Kern County Fair, where the swine exhibition area is named in his honor. He is a longtime member of the Masonic Lodge and through the auspices of that organization, has been successful in promoting a child identification program for Fairfax youngsters. Additionally, he has arranged for assistance for many children with disabilities through his association with the Shriner organization. Looking always for ways to provide wholesome activities for Fairfax students, Mr. Stotler was instrumental in organizing and developing a baseball program for district students. It is well known that he rarely misses a school function at any of the Fairfax schools, just one more

reason why he is loved and admired by all district employees and generally characterized as "*a wonderful, loving, caring man.*" ■

---



# FRUITVALE SCHOOL DISTRICT

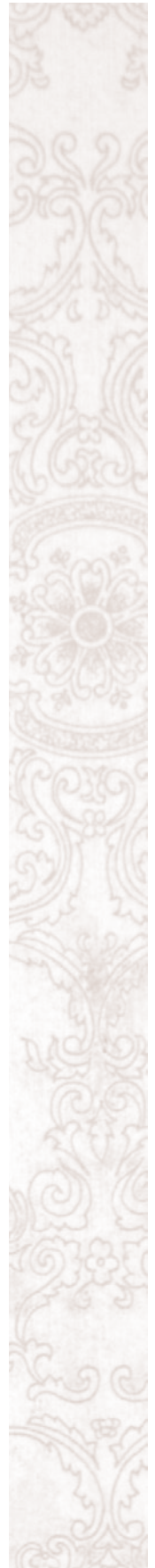
The **Fruitvale School District** was formed in 1895 and that year had an average daily attendance of 18 pupils. The district experienced slight enrollment increases for the next ten years and had a recorded ADA of 35 in 1905-1906. For many years to follow, Fruitvale would remain a small one-school rural school district.

The original school house, located west of Calloway Canal and north of Rosedale Highway, near what is now Coffee Road, burned to the ground in 1906. It was replaced the following year with a building that was identical to the original in all respects save one - wood stoves had been added. In 1916, district residents deemed the school site untenable due to its swampy, mosquito infested location so the building was sawn in half and moved to a new location at 7115 Rosedale Highway.

In 1923, now with a staff of three teachers, the district added two new stucco classroom units and a new cafeteria building to the campus. In June of 1934, on the last day of school, a fire destroyed all three structures. A new school was opened in March of 1935 and, while it was being built, students attended classes either in nearby homes or in a garage at the back of the school grounds. Once completed, the new Fruitvale School included four classrooms, an auditorium, administrative offices, a music room, a book room, and two rooms under the stage. A fourth teacher was added to the staff when the new school opened.

Like many other rural Kern County school districts, Fruitvale experienced an increase in enrollment during the depression years when migrant farm workers and their families began moving into the area. The district increased its teaching staff to six in 1940, then added another in 1941. Their first principal/superintendent, Les DeHart, was appointed that same year. Prior to DeHart's appointment, the Fruitvale district had been administered by the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

District enrollment continued to grow at a steady pace during WWII and two new classrooms were added to the campus in 1943. By 1945 the average daily attendance had reached 200 students. In 1948 four more classrooms were added along with a kindergarten room, a homemaking room, a woodshop, and a bus barn. By 1951 enrollment had reached 400 and eight more classrooms were added to the Fruitvale School campus.



In 1954 the district purchased ten acres of property on Callaway Road in Greenacres and began planning for a second school. The new Greenacres School opened in 1960 and was home to all K-6 students in the district. The old Fruitvale School site on Rosedale Highway became Fruitvale Junior High School and continued in that role until the 1980-81 school year when the district's junior high students were moved onto an expanded Greenacres School site.

Most of the property on Rosedale Highway was first leased and then sold to Kern High School District where it currently serves as a continuation school. That portion of the old site retained by the Fruitvale district was used for maintenance, transportation, and warehouse facilities.

Faced with continuing growth, the district built and opened the Quailwood School in 1981. It is located near the district's southern boundary. Several classrooms were added to the Quailwood campus in the years immediately following its opening.

District enrollment reached 713 students in 1986 and, that same year, Greenacres/Fruitvale School was named the first school in Kern County to receive the California Distinguished School award. Quailwood School received the same honor the following year. The district continued to grow and their students continued to excel.

In 1990 the district ADA soared to 1,100 students and Fruitvale Junior High received the California Distinguished School Award. The following year they would be the first junior high in Kern County to win a National Blue Ribbon Award from the U.S. Department of Education, a feat duplicated by Quailwood School the following year.

Between the 1990-91 and 1997-98 school years, average daily attendance in the Fruitvale School District more than doubled, from 1,100 pupils to 2,563 pupils, but an aggressive building program has kept pace with the rapid growth. Discovery School was opened in 1992 and a successful \$14.5 million bond election in 1994 then provided funding for the construction of two more schools. Columbia School opened in the fall of 1995 and Endeavor School in February of 1996.

Since 1941 operation of the Fruitvale School District has been under the direction of just six superintendents. Les DeHart served in that position for 29 years, from 1941-1970. He was followed by Jim Harman (1970-1972),

August Dobson (1972-1975), Otis Mallory (1975-1979), Dr. Russell Bigler (1979-1987), and Dr. Carl Olsen, who has served from 1987 to the present. ■





# GENERAL SHAFTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

**General Shafter School District** was formed in 1904 from territory acquired from the Panama and Greenfield school districts. It was originally called the **Shafter School District** but in 1958 the name was changed to avoid confusion with the city of Shafter, located some 30 miles to the northwest.

Both the school district and the city were named for General Rufus Shafter, commander of U.S. forces in the Spanish-American war. General Shafter, after leaving military service, developed a large ranch south of Bakersfield. Need for a school facility grew out of that development.

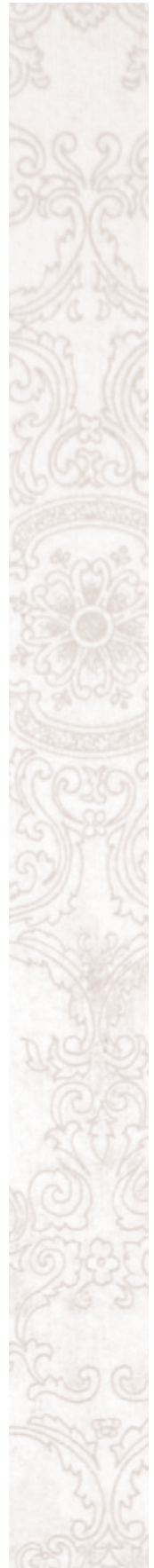
When General Shafter School opened its doors in 1904 the average daily attendance was 13. Slow but steady growth followed and by 1931-32 the average daily attendance had risen to 117 pupils.

The district held a successful \$55,000 bond election in 1957 to build a new cafeteria/multipurpose room complex. That facility was completed and accepted by the board in December of 1958.

By 1961, enrollment had declined slightly to 106 but then remained close to that level for the next thirty years. Since the early 1990s, the district has experienced a slow but steady increase in enrollment as the area has been flooded with migrant children. Average Daily Attendance for the 2008-09 school year was 190 students.

With the original General Shafter School buildings sorely in need of upgrading and too small to properly house a growing student population, timing couldn't have been better for the arrival of a benefactor. In 2004, Peter Delis and the Delis family donated a 30 acre parcel of farmland to the district for use as a school site. The property, located on the south side of Shafter Road and about a half mile west of the old school was a valuable acquisition but now the district had to find a way to pay for construction of a new plant.

With \$5 million in funds recently awarded by the state, the district was still far short of the \$9-10 million needed to build a modern elementary and junior high school. Nonetheless, in 2006, General Shafter School opened the school year on their new site where classes are held in modular buildings until funds become available for construction of a new permanent facility. The old campus may be eventually be sold but for now the office and the cafeteria are still in use.



Like many rural districts, General Shafter School serves as a community center and is used for weddings, funeral lunches, and meetings of various groups such as the Girl Scouts and the 4-H Club.

Projections indicate that the district will continue to grow as development in the Bakersfield area continues southward. While a significant number of students attend General Shafter School on interdistrict permits, still the district has resisted moves toward unionization or annexation in hopes of maintaining its identity as a small rural school district.

Leona Creasy was for many years the superintendent of the General Shafter district. She began there in 1960 and was succeeded briefly by Jeff Rice in 1991. Larry Wilkins was superintendent from 1992 until his death in 2004. Deborah Rodrigues became superintendent in 2004. ■

# GREENFIELD UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The original **Greenfield School District** was formed in 1896 from territory taken from the southeastern portion of the Panama School District. The year after it was formed, a portion of Greenfield's territory was taken to form the Rockpile School District (now the DiGiorgio School District). Additional territory was taken from Greenfield in 1904 to form the General Shafter School District.

Greenfield became a "*union*" district in November of 1939 as a result of an agreement to combine Greenfield's territory with that of two small adjacent districts - the Brundage School District and the Fairview School District. At the time of the unionization, Greenfield had an average daily attendance of 108 pupils.

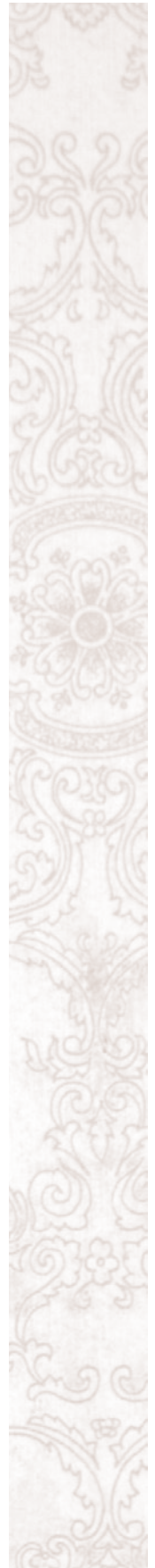
The **Fairview School District** was formed in May of 1878 and during its first full year of operation had an average daily attendance of 7.2 pupils. The district grew at a slow pace in the ensuing years and had risen to an enrollment of just under 100 students at the time of the unionization in 1939.

The **Brundage School District** was formed in 1912 from territory formerly in the Fairview School District. During its first year of operation it had an average daily attendance of 8 pupils and it remained small throughout its existence. The Brundage district reached its peak ADA of fifty-two students in 1938-39, a year prior to being annexed to the Greenfield district.

In its first year as a union district, 1940-41, Greenfield had an average daily attendance of 252 students. For the next twenty years, large sections within its boundaries were subdivided for the construction of homes with selling prices that proved attractive to a host of young families with school aged children. As a consequence, by 1961-62, the Greenfield's average daily attendance had increased sixfold, to 1,876 students.

That growth trend continues as demonstrated by this sampling of enrollment figures for the next forty plus years: 1963-64, an ADA of 2,475; 1968-69, an ADA of 3,188; 1973-74, an ADA of 2,881; 1978-79, an ADA of 2,726; 1983-84, an ADA of 2,950; 1988-89, an ADA of 4,196; 1993-94, an ADA of 5,174, and 1998-99, an ADA of 5,876. Average daily attendance for the 2004-05 school year was 7,671 students; for the 2005-06 school year, 7,799 students and for the 2006-07 school year, 8,200 students.

It had been anticipated that enrollment would continue to increase at



the rate of 4% to 5% each year and that 2,000 new homes would be built in the district with enrollment eventually passing the 10,000 student mark. The troubled financial and housing markets may require a reassessment of those figures.

Not unlike other school districts in the Central Valley, Greenfield has experienced a significant increase in the number of Hispanic students presently enrolled in the district. The annual CBEDS survey for October, 2006, indicates that, at that time, 73% of the district's student population was of Hispanic origin.

Greenfield School District presently operates eleven schools, eight K-5 schools and three middle schools. The site of the original Greenfield School is now home to the McKee Elementary School and the McKee Middle School.

The district enjoys strong support in the school community as evidenced by the passage of bond elections to generate funds for the construction of new schools. A bond election in 1991 raised \$10 million, those funds used to build the Raffaello Palla Elementary School and the Leon H. Ollivier Middle School, plus renovation and modernization of the Fairview Elementary School.

Another bond measure, this one for a \$5 million was approved by the voters in March of 2002. The funds generated by the sale of those bonds, coupled with \$8 million being held in a special reserve fund, went towards construction of the new Valle Verde Elementary School, the modernization of Planz and Plantation schools, and the building of a family and community center. A portion of those funds were also used for asbestos removal, the updating of electrical systems, new roofs, and better security.

On November 7, 2006, the district once again won voter approval for the sale of \$40 million in general obligation bonds, those proceeds to be used primarily for the construction of two new elementary schools and a middle school. Funds generated by the sale of these bonds will also be used for the renovation and upgrade of some schools; for the addition of new classrooms at some sites; and for technology upgrades.

Superintendents who served the Greenfield district early on were: Eleanor Rosenbaum (1922-23), Ethyl Voorhies (1923-25), Mary Ashe (1925-27), Estella Dixon (1927-40), Harry Wiser (1940-44), Wesley Visel (1944-48), and C.P. Minor (1948-59).

William Kendrick replaced Minor and would serve as the Greenfield superintendent for 24 years, from 1959 to 1983. He was followed by Don Williams (1985-1996), James Goodgame (1996-2001), and Gary Rice (2001-2009). The present superintendent is Chris Crawford. ■



# KERNVILLE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Kernville Union School District**, which includes most of Lake Isabella and the Kern River Valley, covers an area of about 295 square miles. Much of that area is mountainous and includes the summits of three of Kern County's highest peaks: Greenhorn Mountain, Breckenridge Mountain, and Piute Peak.

The lure of gold was responsible for the early settlement of the Kernville area. There was a gold strike in Keyesville in 1853 that attracted many fortune seekers and Havilah, the first county seat, was also a gold mining town. By the 1870s, hard work was producing very little gold and mining activity was on the wane.

The raising of cattle gained a foothold in the area when Alexander McCray brought a breed of shorthorn cattle, called Durhams, from the Midwest into the South Fork Valley in the 1860s. This breed was far superior to the long-horned, scrawny, and fierce Mexican cattle that were raised primarily for their hides and tallow; American cattlemen wanted their animals to also provide good meat. The Durham and other short-horned varieties filled the bill and cattle raising has long since been a major enterprise in the areas surrounding Kernville.

But the face of the Kernville/Bodfish area changed dramatically with the damming of the Kern River and the creation of Lake Isabella in the 1950s. No longer a rustic cow town, Kernville has become a popular tourist destination and the economy of the region is supported largely by tourist dollars.

The Kernville School District was established on May 5, 1868. The district was formed from territory taken from the northern portion of the **Havilah School District**. Census records indicate that just 26 children resided within its boundaries at the time the district was formed. Additional territory was acquired from Havilah in 1870 and by 1880-81 Kernville's average daily attendance had grown to fifty-nine students.

The **Kernville School District** and **North Fork School District** were joined to form the Kernville Union School District in 1932 and, at that time, the average daily attendance of the newly formed district had slipped to forty-one students.

---

**Note:** Caroline Payne (Harris) was the last teacher to serve in the Kernville School District. She went on to a long and distinguished



career in education and a school in the Bakersfield City School District is named in her honor.

---

During the next decade, Kernville Union School District experienced very mild growth and an ADA of 56 pupils was recorded for the 1945-46 school year.

The founder of Whiskey Flats (Kernville's original name) was a Mr. Adam Hamilton. Hamilton had established a school in the area as early as 1863 but it was not a free, tax supported school and did not last. Hamilton did, however, become the first district clerk of the Kernville School District.

The North Fork School District was formed on February 9, 1921, from five northern sections of the Kernville School District. The North Fork School sat on the Tulare County line near the present Camp Erwin Owen juvenile detention facility. The state fish hatchery now occupies the site where the old schoolhouse stood. The North Fork district was established to serve the children of employees of the Edison power plant that was under construction in the vicinity. Before the North Fork School was built, these youngsters had to travel from three to six miles by burro each day to reach the Kernville School. The North Fork School was maintained by popular subscription although books and supplies were provided by the county schools office. The North Fork School District lasted just eleven years before being united with the Kernville School District in 1932.

Soon after the establishment of Kern County in April of 1866, the brand new Board of Supervisors ordered the establishment of school districts at Tejon, Kelso Valley, Lynn's Valley and Havilah. All four districts were formed on November 9, 1866 and thus the Havilah School was among the first public schools to open its doors in Kern County.

At the time, Havilah was a bustling mining community and the seat of county government but after Bakersfield became the county seat in 1873, it was quite difficult for the Havilah community to support a school. Enrollment slowly declined until finally the district was declared lapsed in 1913. Nonetheless, the school continued to operate until September 2, 1919, at which time it was suspended and its territory annexed to the Vaughn School District.

The **Vaughn School District** was formed on April 3, 1905, with its



schoolhouse located in Bodfish. The Vaughn district began with ten students and remained quite small even after having acquired the students from Havilah. Vaughn lapsed and was annexed to the Kernville Union School District in 1950.

The **Palmer School District** was established in May of 1883, but changed its name in 1905 to the **Isabella School District**. The Isabella school was located about 3 miles north of Bodfish, near the southwest corner of present day Lake Isabella. The Isabella district discontinued operations in 1945 when enrollment dropped to ten students and was annexed by the Kernville Union School District in 1948. Most of what made up this district's territory is now under the waters of Lake Isabella.

The **Erskine School District** was formed on March 2, 1896, from territory taken from the **Palmer, Havilah, Walker Basin, and Weldon** school districts. Classes were held for just three years but the district was not declared lapsed until 1903. At that time, the Kernville district acquired 32 square miles of Erskine's territory and the remaining 77 square miles was annexed to the South Fork district.

In the years following World War II there was a considerable increase in the number of young families moving into the Kern River Valley and school enrollment began to grow. By 1963-64, the average daily attendance was 330 students; 1968-69, ADA of 517 students; 1973-74, ADA of 613 students; 1978-79, ADA of 730 students; 1983-84, ADA of 880 students; 1988-89, ADA of 980 students; 1993-94, ADA of 1178 students; and 1998-99, ADA of 1045 students. Average daily attendance in 2004-05 was 904 students; in 2005-06, 877 students, in 2008-09, 828 students.

As demonstrated by the figures above, the district began to experience declining enrollment in the late 1990s and that trend has continued. New housing developments have recently been approved for construction so district officials are hopeful that enrollment will stabilize and perhaps return to a growth mode.

The Kernville district operates two elementary schools and a middle school. Woodrow Wallace School was dedicated on November 21, 1953, as Kernville Elementary School but the name was changed in 1966 to honor Mr. Wallace and also to allow a new school, opened in 1968 and located in Kernville, to be called Kernville Elementary School. The original Woodrow Wallace School was a K-8 facility but was changed to

a K-6 school in 1985 after a separate middle school was created on the same campus.

Woodrow Wallace served as superintendent of the Kernville district for twenty-eight years, from 1946 to 1974. During that time, he saw the district grow from an ADA of 56 students in 1946 to an ADA of 625 in 1974. Wallace was followed as superintendent by Dr. Robert Kibby, who served in that position from 1974 to 1983. Kibby's successors have been: Douglas Halloran (1983-1992), Christine Frazier (1992-1996), George Bury (1996-1998), Dr. Steve Merta (1998-2003). Merta was replaced by Mary C. Barlow who was in turn replaced by Robin Shive in 2008. ■

# LAKESIDE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Like Linn's Valley-Poso and Panama-Buena Vista, the **Lakeside Union School District** was formed through mutual agreement. The circumstances surrounding its formation, however, were unique. Such agreements usually involve two adjacent districts and the newly formed district customarily retains the name of one or perhaps both of the districts. The two districts named above – Linn's Valley-Poso and Panama-Buena Vista – are good examples of name retention.

Lakeside Union School District was formed in January of 1941 through the consolidation of three adjacent districts – **Old River, Ordena and Paloma** - and retained no portion of the names of any of those districts.

Taken together, the territories of the three districts cover an area of better than two hundred square miles, but that is a somewhat misleading figure in that the Paloma district included more than half of Buena Vista Lake, the terminus of the Kern River and a lake of considerable size at the time.

Each of these districts served youngsters in the rich agricultural areas that were adjacent to Kern and Buena Vista lakes, but there was a considerable difference in the amount of revenue they were able to generate due to a significant difference in tax bases.

In 1940-41, the Old River district had an assessed valuation of \$668,000 and an average daily attendance of 53 students; Ordena had an assessed valuation of \$1,033,000 and an average daily attendance of 148 students; and Paloma, because of oil revenue, had an assessed valuation of \$7,937,000 and an average daily attendance of 40 students.

When the proposal for unionization of the three districts was put to a vote in 1941, it received overwhelming support, district residents voting 96 to 2 in favor of the measure. As noted earlier, because of the considerable disparity among the three districts in terms of wealth and the number of students that they served, consolidation proved to be beneficial to all involved.

Following are some brief historical notes that help define the Old River, Ordena and Paloma districts:

## OLD RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Old River School District had been established in 1875 and that year had an average daily attendance of thirteen pupils. The first teacher was Miss Kitty Said, described as being both beautiful and musically talented.





EARLY STINE SCHOOL

The Old River schoolhouse was located on the east side of Old River Road and just south of the present Taft Highway in the tiny crossroads community of Old River. That first schoolhouse was a crude wooden structure that had to be built on stilts to avoid being flooded during the rainy season. The students sat on benches made of split logs and did their lessons using chalk on slate boards. This school was replaced by a more substantial structure in 1889.

A question lingers as to the exact location of that first Old River schoolhouse. Some old maps have it situated on the north side of Taft Highway and directly across from where Old River Road and Taft Highway intersect. An old and long abandoned service station occupies that site today. Regardless of its location, we do know that that first Old River schoolhouse was eventually loaded on a wagon, hitched to a team of sixteen mules, and moved to a site on Stine Road near its intersection with Wilson Road. There is served for a number of years as the first schoolhouse in the Stine School District.

At the time of the unionization, the Old River School was a two-room brick structure that had been built in 1924. It was located south of Taft Highway on Old River Road as described above.

Old River reached its peak enrollment of seventy-six students in 1937-38 but average daily attendance had fallen to just 53 students at the time of the consolidation in 1941.

## ORDENA SCHOOL DISTRICT

A petition to form the **Ordena School District** was approved by the Board of Supervisors in February of 1910. Ordena's territory was taken from the southern portion of the Old River district and its schoolhouse was located on Gosford Road, approximately two miles south and a mile and a half east of the Old River School. The first schoolhouse was a 12 foot by 14 foot frame building. Later, the date uncertain but probably 1912 or 1913, a more permanent structure was built on North Lane Road.

There were times when the Ordena trustees had to struggle to keep the little school open but it appears that they received strong support from members of the school community. A Special School Tax election was held in August of 1910 to raise \$500 to be used, according to the board's written appeal, simply "*to maintain school*". The increase was approved by the nine voters who went to the polls. Another such election, calling for a one-time assessment of \$900 "*to supply deficiency in the general fund to maintain school to the close of the year*", was held in February of 1915 and it, too, won voter approval.

Yet another successful tax election was held in August of 1916, asking for \$500 to "*maintain school*", and still another in September of 1917 requesting \$900 "*to maintain school and furnish additional facilities.*" Most of the Ordena district was on land that had been purchased by a development company called Seventh Home Extension Company. The company advertised heavily in eastern newspapers and sold five, ten, or twenty acre farm parcels in what they called the Mountain View Colony. Settlers, many of whom bought property sight unseen, were no doubt surprised to discover that much of "*the Colony*" was covered by sloughs and that the water table was just two feet below the surface.

In 1925, the Ordena Migratory School was opened on Kern Lake Ranch to serve the children from families that "*followed the crops.*" To accommodate these youngsters, two teachers were employed from the beginning of the school year until the end of the cotton season in January or February. One teacher was then retained to keep school for the children of the permanent farm employees. School was held in an old bunkhouse that had served as housing for farm workers and there was a small two-room teacherage.

In addition to the migratory school, there was a period when the Ordena district also operated a second "*common*" school. Called the Progress School, it served students in the primary grades. Early accounts describe the Progress School as being located at the intersection of Progress Road and McKittrick Road (now Bear Mountain Boulevard) and just east of the railroad tracks.

---

**Note:** McKittrick Road was so called because it ran through the 2,500+ acre ranch owned by Captain William McKittrick, the man after whom

the little oil town on the westside was named. Captain McKittrick was the son-in-law of General William Rufus Shafter, who owned a 10,000 acre ranch nearby. General Shafter School, Shafter Road, and the city of Shafter are all named for the general, a veteran of the Civil War and the commanding general of the U.S. Army in Cuba during the Spanish American War.

---

Nothing remains of the old Progress School and the site is being used today as a hay storage area. At some point, the year uncertain but probably in the late 1930s, the Progress and Ordena schools were combined on the Gosford Road campus.

One of Ordena's early teachers was Karl Clemens, who would later have a long and distinguished career as the superintendent of the Wasco Elementary School District. Clemens also served for more than thirty years on the county board of education, most of those years as the board president.

For the first twenty plus years of its existence, Ordena was quite small and the students who attended there were almost exclusively from black and Mexican families. In the late 1930s, however, the families from the Dust Bowl states began to arrive in California and, Ordena, like many other districts in Kern County, experienced a huge influx of students from these farm worker families. Records indicate that the district had an ADA of 157 pupils in 1937-38, four years before the unionization.

## PALOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Paloma School District** was formed on January 4, 1917 from territory formerly in the Buena Vista, Old River, and Ordena school districts.

While the record is not clear as to how the matter was disposed of, the proposed boundary changes prompted letters of protest from the Old River and Ordena boards of trustees. Submitted to the board of supervisors on January 20, 1917, the letters stated their objection to any action that would result in the transfer of a portion of their district's territory to form the Paloma district. The Ordena board justified their objection by stating that, "*Ordena has a debt of \$6,500 and has to support two schools.*" Presumably, that second school was the Progress School.

As originally configured, the Paloma district occupied an area of about

146 square miles that included more than half of Buena Vista Lake. A portion of that territory on the district's western fringe was given up in November of 1919 when the Board of Supervisors approved the formation of the **Signa School District**. A number of parents from the Paloma district presented a petition to the Board of Supervisors protesting the formation of the Signa district but the protest was later withdrawn and formal establishment of the district proceeded.

Some questioned the formation of the Signa district and suggested it was a ploy by the Conley district in Taft to acquire the territory. Signa remained open for less than a year before it lapsed and, indeed, its territory was not returned to Paloma but annexed to the Conley district, later to become **Taft City School District**. Paloma gave up additional territory in 1928 when the Board of Supervisors authorized the transfer of seven sections, the equivalent of seven square miles, in the district's northeastern corner to the Old River district.

The original Paloma schoolhouse was located at the intersection of Hill and Millux roads. There is nothing there today to indicate that Hill Road ever existed, however. Early maps show the schoolhouse situated just off Millux Road on the south side of the railroad tracks and four miles west of Old River Road. That would have placed it, at the time, on the fringe of Buena Vista Lake. Both Miller and Lux and the Houchin family had large ranches nearby and another early settler in the area was John Fanucchi. That first Paloma schoolhouse burned to the ground in 1922.

In its first year of operation, the Paloma district served just twenty students and it remained small throughout its existence. Enrollment peaked at 40 students in 1940-41, Paloma's last year as an independent district.

Another school district, with its territory largely within the boundaries of what would later become the Lakeside Union School District, was called the **Lake School District**. Formation of the Lake district had been approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1875, the same year that the Old River district was established, but because of lack of enrollment, the Lake School was only able to keep its doors open for a few years. It was large in terms of territory, 144 square miles, but never served more than a handful of students.

---

**Note:** The Stockton Ranch was within the Lake School District boundaries

and Robert L. Stockton, who would later serve as county superintendent of schools, was one of the district's more illustrious pupils.

---

In its first year, 1875-76, the Lake district had an ADA of nine students but by 1881-82 that number had dropped to five. There is no record of the Lake district having been officially declared lapsed but it could not have been in operation later than 1883 since there is an official record indicating that the Board of Supervisors advertised the schoolhouse for sale in 1884.

Although the exact location of the Lake schoolhouse is not known, the notice of sale placed it in section 28, T31S, R27E which would be immediately south of Bear Mountain Boulevard and a mile to a mile and a half east of Old River Road. The territory that made up the Lake School District was eventually absorbed by the Paloma, Old River, Panama, General Shafter, and Vineland districts.

In its first year, 1941-42, the newly formed Lakeside Union School District had an assessed valuation of \$9,639,000, and an ADA of 340 students. That amounted to approximately \$28,000 of assessed valuation per child, making Lakeside one of the county's wealthiest districts.

Once unionization was accomplished, five members of the community were selected to serve as a temporary board of trustees until an official board election could be held in June. In April, Alfred Glanz was appointed district superintendent. By June 13, an elected board of trustees was in place, the district had passed a bond election, and agreement had been reached to purchase a twenty acre school site on the southwest corner of Shafter Road and Old River Road. The land was bought from the Kern County Land Company for \$100 per acre.

Lakeside's first elected board of trustees was comprised of George Hill, Laz Simoni, Raymond Copus, Grover Fugitt, and Baptiste Suburu. Knowing that the growing threat of war could make building materials difficult or impossible to come by, the new board quickly hired an architect and moved just as quickly to approve plans and begin construction of a new school. The new facility was completed and ready for occupancy in just fourteen months and classes began on September 21, 1942.

The board disposed of two of the old school sites and buildings in January of 1943. The Ordena schoolhouse and ten acre site was sold for



\$2,200, the Old River School and its property for \$2,253. The Paloma schoolhouse was sold for \$10.

Lakeside's average daily attendance for 1943-45 was 316 students, followed the next year by a slight increase, to 354 students. In March of 1946, a host of migratory workers descended on the Maricopa flats to pick peas and suddenly Lakeside had more students than they could accommodate. The problem was solved by renting three rooms at Buena Vista School to provide, at least temporarily, for the 125 children of the pea pickers.

In November of 1946, the district purchased an additional ten acres from Kern County Land Company for \$150 per acre.

A second successful bond election, for the amount of \$325,000, was held in June of 1947. The funds were used for construction of the swimming pool, the shop, and the community building - all completed by May of 1949. Construction of the gymnasium began the following August.

The earthquake of 1952 caused only mild damage to the Lakeside School but considerable damage to many buildings in town. Bakersfield College, at that time still on the campus of Bakersfield High School, found itself without facilities for its basketball team and so moved their practice sessions and games to the Lakeside gym. Maricopa High School did as well.

In the early 1970's the Lakeside district experienced a devastating reduction in revenue as a result of the passage of the California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act. The Williamson Act modified the tax assessment of farmland for those farmers who agreed to use their land exclusively for agriculture for a specified number of years. As a consequence, Lakeside lost over \$7 million in assessed valuation, a blow which forced them to reduce staff and cut back significantly on revenues earmarked for plant maintenance.

There appears to have been little growth in enrollment in the twenty years following unionization and ADA was still about 340 in 1961-62. A period of declining enrollment followed and by 1970-71, ADA had fallen to just 102 students. There was moderate growth for the next ten years and ADA had climbed back to 186 by 1980-81. It would level off there for the next ten years but then begin to show significant growth with the opening of Silver Creek, a residential development on the north end of

the district. ADA jumped to 303 students in 1990-91 and five years later, was at 519. At this juncture, the district began planning for a new school in Silver Creek.

The Suburu School, named for a long-time member of the board of trustees, was opened in April of 1998. And none too soon. By 2000, the district's average daily attendance had risen to 863 and continued to climb. The recorded ADA for 2005 was 1,362 students. Presently (2009), district enrollment stands at about 1,360 students.

Lakeside qualified for \$1.2 million in modernization funds in 2003. Those funds were used to upgrade the flooring, windows, plumbing, and electrical components in Lakeside's aging classrooms. It was a good beginning.

A \$22,500,000 bond election was held in November of 2008 and won the approval of 77% of the district voters. Some of the funds generated by the sale of these bonds will be used to retire current lease obligations and also to dissolve the existing Mello-Roos Community Facilities District and eliminate the related Special Tax. Some will be earmarked, too, for the phase-one planning of additional facilities to accommodate projected growth. Two future school sites have been purchased near the corner of McCutcheon and Old River Roads. They are just south of Independence High School and within a quarter mile of each other. The largest of the two sites covers 27 acres and will be home to a junior high school for students in grades 6 through 8. The other site, covering 14 acres, will one day be home to an elementary school for students in grades K-5. The properties were purchased for \$140,000 per acre.

The bulk of the funds, however, will be used for capital improvements at both district schools. The Lakeside campus will be subject to further upgrading and modernization and receive a sorely needed facelift after sixty plus years of wear and tear. A representative list of items from the district's project list would include the following: modernization of the Lakeside library and multipurpose room and the upgrading of roofs, plumbing, restrooms, lighting, and electrical in the other buildings on that campus; replacement or upgrading of the playground equipment on both campuses; improving and upgrading the educational technology used in the classrooms and the libraries; and making whatever improvements are necessary to remain in compliance with the building codes, the Field Act,

and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In the past sixty-four years, the Lakeside district has been under the direction of six superintendents. Bob Elliott, who began teaching in the district in 1945, was named superintendent in August of 1948 and served until 1975. His successors have been: Ron Friday (1975-1979); Ken Thomas (1979-1987); Roberta Rous (1987-1991); and Harold Kahn (1991-December of 1999). Nick Kouklis has been the district's chief administrator since January of 2000. ■



LAKESIDE ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL



# LAMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT

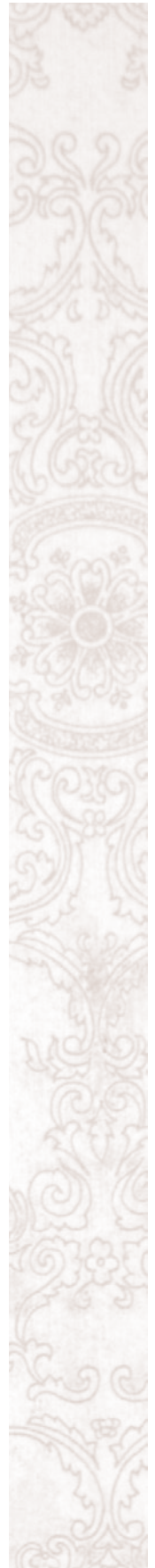
In March, 1894, many years before the founding of the little Weed Patch area town of Lamont, the **Mountain View School District** had been formed in the vicinity with May Stork as the first teacher. During its first year of operation, the Mountain View School District had an average daily attendance was 17 students.

A post office, named Shafter, was opened nearby in October, 1898, but it was discontinued in November, 1905. While construction of a Southern Pacific branch connecting Magunden to Arvin was underway in May, 1923, Arthur J. McFadden, of Orange County, California, engaged a civil engineer to lay out a town he named Lamont, after the Scottish clan to which his family belonged. The surveying was completed in July, 1923. Those who purchased lots in Lamont became members of a mutual water association. By August, the drilling of a water well was underway and soon water mains were being laid.

Many of the early settlers of the Lamont area became familiar names in Kern County agricultural circles. They include Thornburgh, Cattani, and Ernest Buerkle. Most of them were dairymen, some farmers, some land developers. The new little town of Lamont grew slowly until the late 1930s but a few businesses became well-established in the 1920s, soon after the townsite was in place. Safeway opened a grocery store in Arthur McFadden's store building. There was also a butcher shop, a repair shop and service station, a combination pool hall and barber shop, a dining room, a packing shed for grapes, and a cotton gin. Lamont had their own post office beginning in 1947 and even their own newspaper, the Lamont Reporter, which began publishing in 1949.

Many new residents came to Lamont in 1939, enough to nearly double the population, according to *The Bakersfield Californian*. Some came from nearby area, including the DiGiorgio farms, which was closing its labor camps. Others migrated from the Dust Bowl states. The increased population prompted new businesses to open including a drug store, more grocery stores, a variety store, and a general merchandise store. Lamont also had its own bank, a branch of the Buttonwillow National Bank, a branch library, and two medical doctors.

There is no indication that any effort was made to incorporate the new little town and it remains unincorporated to the present day. In 1960, a petition was submitted to the board of supervisors requesting that the





LAMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

name of the district be changed to the **Lamont School District** and the request was granted. The Lamont district serves a twenty-four square mile tract of largely agricultural land southeast of Bakersfield.

By 1934-35 district enrollment had grown to 154 students and the next twenty years saw rapid growth due largely to the influx of agricultural workers into the area. ADA in 1944-45 was 552 pupils, and by the 1954-55 school year that figure had more than doubled, to 1,273. Average daily attendance in 1959-60, the last year that the district was known as the Mountain View School

District, was 1,386.

The Lamont district operates four schools and enrollment has declined slightly in the past few years. The ADA for 2008-09 was 2,525.

Lamont Elementary School is a primary school for grades K through 3; Alicante Avenue School is a K-6 school; Myrtle Avenue School is an intermediate school for grades 4 through 6; and Mountain View Middle School serves those students in grades seven and eight.

The current superintendent is Cheryl McConaughey. ■

## LINN'S VALLEY - POSO FLAT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Linn's Valley-Poso Flat School District** is located in the rugged mountain country northeast of Bakersfield. It is a large district in terms of area but is sparsely populated. The school and the district office are located on the same site in Glennville, at the southern end of Linn's Valley.

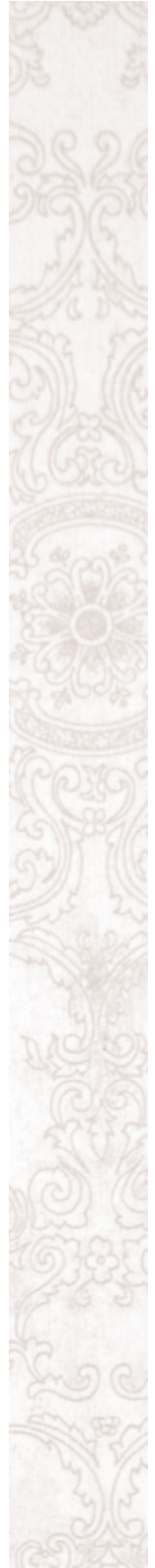
The area's first settlers arrived in Linn's Valley in 1853, most of them lured by news of a gold strike in the Greenhorn Mountains and along the Kern River. William Lynn was among those early settlers and it is he after whom the valley is named (although an altered spelling of his name has long been used and accepted). Lynn and his partner, George Ely, were drawn to the area by gold but upon seeing the rich soil and noting the fine climate opted instead to take up farming. In 1854, the partners settled in the north end of the valley, about five miles above Glennville, and began farming and raising stock. David Lavers joined them in their venture for a time but left in 1858, the same year that Lynn built a flour mill on the upper end of Poso Creek and also the year that George Ely died. Lynn left the valley in 1862 shortly after his flour mill was destroyed in a flood.

Lavers acquired a plot of ground near where the road from Visalia crossed Poso Creek. Thinking that it would be an ideal stopping point for weary travelers, he built a hotel there.

The McFarlane Road, which crossed over Greenhorn Mountain before winding its way down into Kernville, was completed in 1864. Lavers' hotel was well situated to accommodate the travelers and freighters who used that road. When Joseph Meyers opened a store near the hotel, what then came to be called Lavers Crossing was regarded as the trading center for Linn's Valley.

---

**Note:** In addition to Lynn and Lavers and Meyers, many of those early settlers would prove to be influential in the shaping of Kern County's early history and a number of them have descendants still living in and around Linn's Valley. A list would include: John Dunlap, Corbin Wicker, Andrew McFarlane, Shelby Pepper, William Standifer, Jephtha Pascoe, Radford Ellis, Alfred Hight, Matt Glenn, J. Perry Wilkes, James Rhymes, Joel Carver, Hiram Allen, Thomas Early, Joseph Likely, Samuel Reed, William Fugitt, Dr. Joseph Lively, James Carr, Joel Cross, Phineas



Maddux, Hiram Hughes, John McKamy, John Berry, the Rev. Joseph Morrison and Thomas Fitzgerald.

---

Fitzgerald, an old mountain man who came into the Kern River Valley with Joseph Walker, built an adobe trading post and fort in what is now Glennville. Built before the Civil War, it stands today as the oldest existing residence in Kern County.

The distinction held by Lavers Crossing as the trading center for Linn's Valley was short lived. James Madison (Matt) Glenn filed on and acquired a nearby townsite which he named Glennville. From the beginning Glennville proved attractive to new settlers and was soon a thriving community. Thirty new dwellings were built and occupied and Matt Glenn opened a hotel, he and his wife, Sarah, serving as proprietors. Glennville soon had two blacksmith shops, a drugstore, a butcher shop, two churches, three saloons and, of course, a schoolhouse. A post office was established in 1872 with Matt Glenn serving as the first postmaster. By 1875, Linn's Valley was considered the largest settlement in Kern County.

The first school in Linn's Valley opened in 1854 in a somewhat unconventional setting. Having yet to build a proper schoolhouse, class was conducted under a large oak tree on a site now occupied by the barn on the Lavers ranch. Since there was no county government in place at the time, the school was likely funded through some form of subscription.

The first Linn's Valley schoolhouse, located across the street from the present school, was built and opened in 1865.

The **Linn's Valley School District** was one of four school districts formed in November, 1866. The County of Kern had been established earlier that year and the new Board of Supervisors, well aware of the need for an organized school system, ordered that districts be formed in Havilah, Kelso, and Tejon, as well as Linn's Valley. The Linn's Valley School that opened in 1868 was considerably larger than the original schoolhouse across the street. It had two rooms in the shape of an "L" and was more than adequate for the twenty-six pupils who were enrolled that first year.

Linn's Valley was the largest school district in Kern County from 1868 to 1873 and the county's first teacher institute was held there in 1873.



Once the Glennville community became well-established, Matt Glenn deeded five and a half acres of land to the school district for use as a school site. The original deed still exists. Dated January 11, 1875, the agreement called for Glenn to receive \$100 *"in coin"* for the property. *(See inside front cover.)*

---

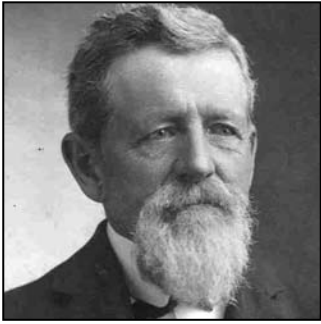
**Note:** Matt Glenn achieved considerable success as an entrepreneur and businessman even though he may have been illiterate. He signed the deed to this school site property with an "X", as did his wife, Sarah.

---

By the early 1880s, the Linn's Valley School had two teachers and an enrollment of over a hundred students. Some of the school's early teachers were Rachel Morrison, Nell and Josephine Gurnette, Nettie Collins, Jennie and Fannie McCamy, Will Morrison, Lou Carver and Sarah Campbell. Other early teachers, all of whom would later be elected to the position of county superintendent of schools were L.A. Beardsley, F.S. Wallace, Robert Stockton, Alexander McPherson and J.H. Berry.

Petitions and other records indicate that on several occasions the Linn's Valley board of trustees made strong attempts to expand the district's territory. A petition submitted to the Board of Supervisors on February 5, 1900, asked that Linn's Valley be allowed to annex several sections of land from surrounding districts. The reason given was to *"gain more Property Whereby said School District may Levy a Tax on said School District Sufficient to build a new Schoolhouse and improve the School grounds."* Two of the districts slated to lose territory should this request be granted - the Joiner and Poso Flats districts - sent letters of protest to the Board of Supervisors, both dated February 10, 1900, and both strongly opposing any change in boundaries. Initially, the request from Linn's Valley was granted, but then rejected with no explanation offered.

In November, 1914, a petition for a change in school district boundaries was once again submitted to the Board of Supervisors, this one asking that a portion of the **Joiner School District** be annexed to Linn's Valley. The petitioners stated that, while they did indeed live in the Joiner district, their places of residence were closer to Glennville and approval of the requested boundary change would make it easier for their children to get to school. That request was granted.



FRANK S. WALLACE

In January, 1917, a petition was submitted to the Board of Supervisors asking that portions of the **Wicker, Kernville** and **Joiner** districts be annexed to Linn's Valley. Again there were letters of protest from residents of the Wicker and Joiner districts but this time to no avail.

Enrollment in these small districts was closely monitored by the county superintendent of schools and should a district's average daily attendance fall to five or fewer students, that fact was reported to the Board of Supervisors. The district was usually ordered to close its doors and give its territory and remaining students over to an adjacent district. Several small districts, including Wicker and Joiner, had been under such scrutiny and all were eventually declared lapsed and annexed to the Linn's Valley district.

---

**Note:** Prior to 1971, requests that resulted in changes in district boundaries had to be approved by the Board of Supervisors. Such matters now require the approval of the Kern County Committee for School District Organization.

---

The **Wicker School District** had been formed in 1872 from territory formerly in the Linn's Valley School District. The Wicker schoolhouse was located in an isolated area some three miles north of Glennville. An 1896 roster of Kern County teachers lists Henrietta Laver as the teacher at Wicker which, at the time, had an enrollment of twenty-two students. Enrollment had obviously declined and reached a critical level when the letters of protest were filed in response to Linn's Valley's petition of 1917. In 1919, the district was declared lapsed and its territory returned to Linn's Valley.

The **Rural School District**, formed in 1887, had an average daily attendance of fourteen students during its first year of operation. The Rural schoolhouse was located about halfway between Glennville and White River. The teacher at Rural School in 1896 was Mattie Laver and the enrollment at that time was sixteen students. The Rural district lapsed and was annexed to Linn's Valley in 1904.

The **Glennville School District** was established in 1880 but never became operational. It was a huge district, covering some 509 square miles, and included not only all the territory of the present day Linn's

Valley-Poso Flat district but portions of a number of districts as far away as Delano and Bakersfield.

The **Greenhorn School District** had been formed in 1917 from territory formerly in the Poso Flats School District. Greenhorn, first called Petersburg after Peter Gardett who owned and operated a store there, began as a mining camp. The schoolhouse, along with a teacherage, was located on Rancheria Road approximately halfway between the point where that road leaves Highway 178 and the summit of Greenhorn Mountain. Due no doubt to its remoteness and the difficult road one had to traverse to get there, teachers were not drawn to that assignment and consistently remained only a year before moving on. From its opening in 1917 to its closure in 1945, the Greenhorn School began each year with a different teacher. The Greenhorn district was suspended in July of 1943 but not declared lapsed until August 6, 1945. At that time it was annexed to Linn's Valley.

The **Granite Station School District** was formed in July of 1880, shortly after the formation of the Glennville School District. Oddly enough, the prescribed boundaries of the two districts included some territory held in common. The details surrounding the formation of these two districts remain murky. Neither ever built a schoolhouse or elected a board of trustees.

The **Granite School District** was formed in 1876 and lapsed in 1949. The school was located at Granite Station in the foothills below Linn's Valley. Average daily attendance peaked at twenty pupils in 1883-84 but declining enrollment prompted suspension of operations in 1944. The district was declared lapsed five years later. Robert Stockton, who was to serve as county superintendent of schools from 1903 to 1914, taught at the Granite School for 22 years, from 1881 to 1903.

The **Lower Kern River School District** was formed in February, 1867, from that portion of the Linn's Valley School District "*comprising Township*



POSO FLAT SCHOOL



GREENHORN EMERGENCY  
SCHOOL

No. 5", but there is no further mention of the district in the minutes of the Board of Supervisors or the records of the county superintendent of schools so it seems unlikely that the district ever became operational.

**The Poso Flat School District**, formed in May, 1885, had an average daily attendance of nine pupils during its first year of operation. Enrollment peaked at 24 in 1939-40. In 1955, an agreement was reached between the Linn's Valley and Poso Flat school districts to consolidate their territories, a move that led to the formation

of the Linn's Valley-Poso Flat Union School District. That same year, the old Linn's Valley schoolhouse was abandoned and a set of modern new classrooms built in its place.

The Linn's Valley-Poso Flat School of today offers a modern curriculum with strong emphasis on language arts. The district has recently developed a new multi-media center that includes a new library and access to the internet at seven new computer stations. The school is presently (2009) staffed by one teacher and three aides. Essential services such as speech, special education, and the resource specialist program are provided as needed by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

In 2002, a \$340,000 bond election, the first bond election ever held in the district, won the approval of the voters. The bulk of the revenue from the sale of the bonds was used to remodel the kitchen facility, refurbish classrooms, and upgrade doors to meet current safety and disability standards. The remainder was used for the purchase and installation of playground equipment.

Linn's Valley's enrollment history is characterized by well-defined peaks and valleys, as illustrated below.

1963-64 - 59 students	1973-74 - 45 students
1982-83 - 82 students	1985-86 - 95 students
1986-87 - 98 students	1988-89 - 113 students.

1994-95 - 104 students

1998-99 - 66 students

2003-04 - 46 students

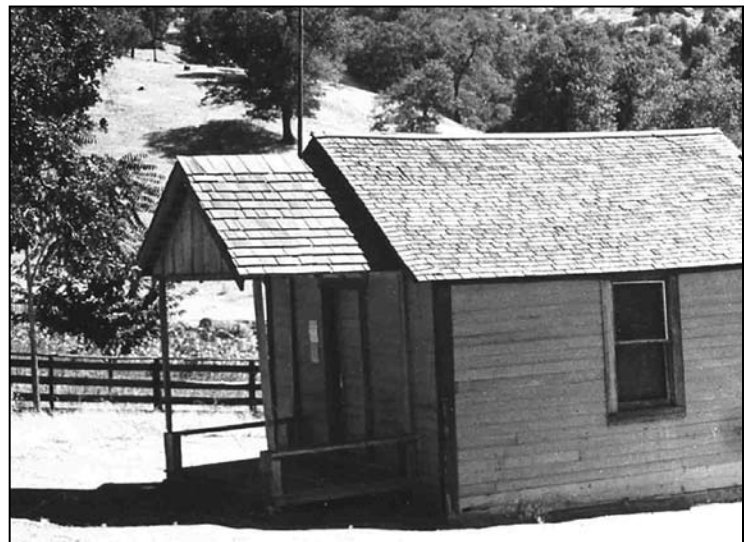
2007-08 - 20 students

Current enrollment (November, 2009) is nineteen students and just two of the seven available classrooms are being used.

In 1997, through an agreement with the Hot Springs School District, Linn's Valley extended its boundaries to include a small portion of Tulare County. The purpose of the boundary change was to facilitate transportation of students who live in an isolated area near the line separating Kern and Tulare counties. Currently there are seven students from the Hot Springs district attending the Linn's Valley School.

The district's low and declining enrollment is attributable to a couple of factors the most prevalent being the large number of children in the community who are being home schooled. Currently (2009), twenty-eight students who reside in the district are being taught at home. That problem is compounded by the fact that most new residents to the area are retired couples with no school-age children. Families with young children who would like to move to Glennville are not doing so because there are few jobs to be had.

The present superintendent of Linn's Valley-Poso Flat Union School District is Dr. Curt Guaglianone. Dr. Guaglianone serves as a liaison between the school district and the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, providing direction and guidance to the district on a part time basis. He has served in that capacity since 2008. Other recent chief administrators have been: Rita Brock (1970-72); Gary Bray (1972-82); John Barnes (1982-92); Bob Chrisman (1992-96), Gary Mullen (1996-2000); Michelle Antonell, Principal (2000-01); Kevin Silberberg (2001-02); Tammy Rhoades Pritchard served as Principal in 2002-05, and then as Superintendent/Principal 2005-07. Mark Fulmer was Superintendent and Kay Yarger was Lead Teacher in 2007-08. Kay Yarger is currently (2009) the Lead Teacher. ■



GREENHORN SCHOOL



# LOST HILLS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

History does not record with any degree of certainty how Lost Hills acquired its name. One story goes that two brothers with the last name of Hill were prospecting in the area sometime around 1900 when one of the brothers became lost. The remaining brother left to find others (perhaps in Wasco) to help with the search but finding no one willing to assist him, returned alone and continued looking. According to the legend, he, too, lost his way and neither brother was heard from again. Thus, the “*lost Hills*”.

Another version, perhaps more plausible than the first, suggests that Lost Hills was named by Orlando Barton, member of a pioneer Kern County family and a trained geologist who wandered the area for several years looking for indications that oil deposits lay beneath the surface. Barton, who did his exploring on a bicycle (carrying with him each day a lunch box and a canteen of water in a tandem basket), noted that a person traveling westward out of Wasco would, at a given point, see a low range of hills in the distance but upon proceeding further in that direction notice the little hills gradually receding until finally they were lost to view altogether. It is that phenomenon, if legend is correct, that prompted Barton to name them the Lost Hills.

It may or may not have been Barton who gave the Lost Hills area its name but it is well documented that it was he, aided by the financial backing of two Visalia businessmen, John Martin and Benjamin Dudley, who drilled the first oil well there. Having formed the Lakeshore Oil Company, the partners began drilling Lakeshore No. 1 in December of 1909 and the well, a good producer, was completed in July of 1910. News of the discovery spread quickly, of course, and other speculators and oilmen soon arrived in the Lost Hills area anxious to lease adjacent properties and begin their quest for “*black gold*”. Before long a score of derricks dotted the landscape in the vicinity of the discovery well.

---

**Note:** Eventually the Lakeshore Oil Company properties, along with most of the other oil leases in the Lost Hills field, were acquired by Universal Oil Company, a San Francisco syndicate under George T. Camerson of the Crocker National Bank.

---

Within months after completion of the Lost Hills discovery well, according to an October, 1910, edition of *The Morning Echo*, Martin and



Dudley had laid out a townsite and a number of businesses had sprung up to accommodate the needs of Lost Hill's growing population, mostly men living away from their families. In addition to a general store, there was a men's clothing store, a hotel, several saloons, a drug store and a pool hall.

---

**Note:** Today Highway 46 serves as Lost Hill's "*main street*" but when the town was first established the principal street was Lost Hills Road and most businesses were fronted on that street. Taylor's Hotel, for instance, a landmark until torn down in 1973, was situated at the corner of Lost Hills Road and Badger Street.

---

A post office was established in 1911 and, oddly enough, the first postmaster, a man named Cuttens, decided to name the town after himself! The townspeople objected, however, and by the end of the year, the Cuttens name had been dropped in favor of Lost Hills.

By 1912, three restaurants, four more saloons, two livery stables, a supply house, and three barber shops had opened for business. A newspaper, The Lost Hills Gusher, began publishing in 1913, then was acquired by The Petroleum Reporter in April of 1914.

The **Lost Hills School District** was organized on February 9, 1912, and lacking a proper facility at that time, began holding class in Butt's Garage. Martha Nelson was the school's first teacher and the average daily attendance that first year was nine students.

The district held a successful \$10,000 bond election in 1913 and set about building a new schoolhouse. The new school was completed in December of that year and its opening, obviously of considerable import to the community, was celebrated with a Wild West Show, a rodeo, tug-a-wars, baseball games, a barbeque, and a dance. Rodeo participants came from as far away as San Luis Obispo.

For the next few years the Lost Hills community, supported almost exclusively by revenues generated by oil production and oil related businesses, had a somewhat tenuous existence. In March of 1910, a well near Maricopa that would come to be known as the Lakeview Gusher, had blown in and was to flow out of control for the next eighteen months. All efforts to cap the well failed and little could be done beyond collecting



the oil - an estimated 9.4 million barrels - in earthen reservoirs. What could be recovered, which amounted to about half of the total production, was transferred to storage tanks, then shipped via pipeline to Avila for distribution to refineries.

The result of so much oil suddenly saturating the market was not immediate but it was inevitable; the price of oil drifted downward until at one time it was selling for as little as 30 cents per barrel and producers were forced to shut their wells in. By 1915, Lost Hills began to take on the appearance of a ghost town.

Gradually the market stabilized and oil could once again be produced at a profit. However, in 1916, just as Lost Hills began showing signs of recovery, a devastating fire destroyed much of the town and many residents and businesses were forced to start over again.

By 1917 the Lost Hills School District was operating three schools: the Lost Hills School in Lost Hills; the Universal School, approximately three miles to the northwest; and Martin School, located south of the Lost Hills townsite.

---

**Note:** While it is likely that the Universal and Martin schools were remotely situated and had to close their doors because they had too few students to warrant remaining open, in fact the fate of those schools is not known and no records of their existence could be found.

---

The 1932-33 *Directory of Public Schools for Kern County* does not list a superintendent for the Lost Hills School District but it does show F. J. Cuslidge to be the principal and also the P.E. teacher of grades 6, 7, and 8. Clementine Nunez taught the primary grades and Helen Holmes the intermediate. Average Daily Attendance for the prior year was 71 students.

In 1940, a vote in favor of unionization combined Lost Hills School District with the **Semitropic School District** and the first **Lost Hills Union School District** was formed. That union lasted but three years, however, before being dissolved by a vote of the electorate in June of 1943.

A second unionization proposal, combining the Lost Hills School District and the **Annette School District**, was approved by the voters in January of 1952 and Lost Hills found itself designated a “*union*” school

district once again. In its first full year of operation, 1952-53, the “*new*” district had an ADA of 110 pupils.

The Annette School District had been formed on January 10, 1910, with the schoolhouse located in the small community of Annette some ten miles southeast of Cholame and four miles south of Highway 46, very near the San Luis Obispo County line. The first post office was established there in 1889 and, in fact, the town took its name from the first postmistress, Annette Jenness. The Annette School reached its peak enrollment of 31 pupils in 1945-46 but at the time of its union with Lost Hills, attendance had fallen to just eleven students.

Other than a few scattered ranch houses and outbuildings, there is little to indicate that the town of Annette ever existed. The old school, now gone, was adjacent of a community center building which exists but in a state of near collapse.

Two other small districts, the **Sunflower School District** and the **Antelope School District**, were formed in 1885 and both were eventually absorbed by the Annette School District. The Antelope district never had more than a handful of students and finally lapsed in 1903 and was annexed to the Sunflower district. The Sunflower School District, located in Devils Den near the Kings County line, was suspended a number of times for lack of enrollment but continued to operate until 1935 when it was officially declared lapsed and annexed to the Annette School District.

The **Duncan School District**, with its schoolhouse located on Bitterwater Road about two miles south of Highway 46, was formed in 1913 and remained in operation for thirteen years. Its peak enrollment, in 1915-16, was nine pupils. The district lapsed in 1926 and it, too, became a part of the Lost Hills district.

Over the years, as oil production in the Lost Hills field fell off, the population of the town began to decline and so, too, did school enrollment. ADA fell from 119 students in 1952-53 to just 69 students in 1961-1962 and, isolated as they were, there was little reason to believe that the downward trend would not continue. The future of the tiny community did not seem promising but prospects improved to some degree with the completion of Interstate 5 in the 1960s and then even more with the completion of the California Aqueduct in the early 1970s. The availability of water from the aqueduct led to diverse, large

scale farming of the previously barren scrub lands around Lost Hills. Farm workers, most of them Hispanic, were attracted to the area and, beginning about 1970, Lost Hills School began to experience a significant increase in enrollment as more and more children from these Hispanic families entered school.

On September 11, 1973, Superintendent Allison M. Thomas reported an opening enrollment of 173 students. Thomas further noted that 84 of those 173 children were Hispanic and that *"14 speak very little English"*.

By 1974-75, the average daily attendance had climbed to 195 students and by 1977-78, to 255.

Thomas retired as of June 30, 1978, and while board minutes offer no details as to the circumstances surrounding his decision to retire, they do note that Ingiver Ketelsen was hired as acting superintendent from March 6 to March 17, 1978 and that John Prueitt was then hired as a consultant for the remainder of the year. Thomas was officially replaced by John Bogie'on July 1, 1978.

Enrollment continued to climb. By April of 1979 it had topped 300 and in September of 1981, the recorded opening enrollment was 340 students. A leveling off period followed and enrollment stayed between 330 and 350 for the next seven years.

In August of 1984, a new kindergarten complex and classroom addition were completed and certified for occupancy. Apparently there were some construction issues yet unresolved, however, and the district opted initially not to sign the notice of completion. The building was finally accepted in April of 1985.

The district scheduled a \$3.5 million bond election for April of 1988 but the measure fell far short of the 2/3 majority required for passage.

By November of 1988 enrollment was up to 376 and projected to go higher.

---

**Note:** About this time there was considerable discussion and written communication between the district and Chevron USA regarding an offer made by the district to purchase a 13.5 acre parcel of land immediately to the west of the school site. The land was needed in part because long term plans called for a left turn lane off Highway 46 to be constructed in this area and there was also discussion of building another elementary school here. Negotiations would go on for several

years before the property was finally deeded to the district. The left turn lane was completed and provided easier and safer access to the school property but it appears that the board dropped its interest in building a second elementary school. The district also acquired a 64 acre parcel south and southeast of the school property from Paramount Farms. That property is bordered on the east by the California Aqueduct. There is some indication that the district was interested in using this parcel to develop an ag science program.

---

On March 1, 1990, the superintendent reported an enrollment of 431 regular students plus 13 Special Day Class students.

On June 4, 1990, another bond election was held, this one for \$5.4 million. It passed handily with 71% of the votes cast in its favor and those monies were used to significantly improve the Lost Hills School campus. Construction of a new transportation facility got underway in November of 1991 and architects were soon engaged to begin planning a new multipurpose room/gymnasium/cafeteria complex. Plans included the conversion of the old cafeteria into a library/learning center.

Enrollment continued upward. By November of 1994, 441 regular students plus 12 Special Day Class students were on the rolls.

Work began on the multipurpose room/gymnasium/ cafeteria complex in January of 1995. Costing just over \$3 million, this project would be fraught with problems. A series of delays resulted in the notice of completion being filed 400 days beyond the contracted completion date and a considerable amount of legal wrangling followed. The building was finally dedicated on March 21, 1997.

In May of 1998, the district made it known that the board and the community wanted to form a unified school district in Lost Hills and, with some assistance from FCMAT, initiated the procedures required to do so. They first secured the signatures of the requisite 25% of the registered voters who by so doing indicated they were in favor of the change, then forwarded the petition to the County Committee on School District Organization. The plan was opposed by that committee, but protocol required it be sent on for review by the State Board of Education. Hope vanished, however, when the request was officially denied by that body in October of 1999.

There was a considerable amount of upheaval in the Lost Hills district

for the next two years. The community was at loggerheads with the board and the superintendent over several issues and demanded changes. They wanted the meeting time for board meetings changed from 12 noon to some time in the evening so more residents could attend. They also wanted two board members, neither of whom lived in the district, to resign. Additionally, they questioned the superintendent's salary, which they considered excessive and they also questioned the cost incurred for the superintendent to attend conferences in Hawaii and New Orleans. Pressure from the community had the desired effect: the time for board meetings was changed to the evening, the two board members resigned, and on June 30, 2001, Dr. Bogie' retired. He was replaced beginning July 1 by Jerry Scott. Scott had served for many years as a principal in the Wasco Union High School District.

In July of 2004, the district completed modernization of the A. M. Thomas Middle School. The project included replacement of windows and doors and the upgrading of restroom facilities.

Revenue from a \$6.2 million bond election held in November of 2005 will be used to add ten new classrooms and a much needed district office to the Lost Hills campus. Construction was expected to begin in February of 2008 and the projected completion date for the classrooms, August of 2009. A new boardroom also was planned.

Opening enrollment in the Lost Hills School in 2006 was 540 students. Not unlike other schools and school districts in the Central Valley's agricultural communities, almost all (99%) of those students are Hispanic.

*A footnote to the past:*

#### **EARLY SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF KERN COUNTY**

Beginning in 1880, several school districts were formed in the northwest corner of the county. Miller and Lux et al had large land holdings between Buena Vista Lake and Tulare Lake and this was prime grazing land for sheep and cattle. Schools were established to accommodate the children who lived with their families at the various ranch headquarters and later, around Devil's Den when oil was discovered in that area. All this territory eventually became a part of the Lost Hills Union School District.

- The **Shamrock School District** was formed on July 23 1880. Beginning at the county's northwest corner and running eastward along the county line, Shamrock's boundaries formed a huge rectangle that was 60 miles long from east to west and 8 miles long from north to south, an area of 480 square miles. Records indicate the district was "*abolished*" in July of 1894, then declared lapsed in November of that year. For reasons that could not be determined, the Shamrock district was re-formed on March 4, 1897, on a much smaller scale. It now covered an area of about 30 square miles situated east and north of McFarland. That territory was eventually annexed by the McFarland and Delano school districts.
- The **Antelope School District** was formed on May 6, 1885 wholly within the boundaries of the original Shamrock district. Although it had the same northern and southern boundaries as Shamrock, its area was slightly smaller than that of Shamrock, about 240 square miles. Uncertain attendance caused Antelope to be suspended in 1889, reinstated and then suspended again in 1902. It was annexed to the Sunflower School District in 1903.
- The **Sunflower School District** was formed in 1885 and served the little community of Devil's Den as well as the surrounding countryside. Sunflower's territory included the first three townships that extended east from the point of intersection of Kern, Tulare, and San Luis Obispo counties, a total area of 108 square miles. The district was in existence for fifty years before being annexed to the Annette district in 1935.
- The **Annette School District**, situated directly south of the Sunflower district, was formed in 1910. Sunflower was annexed to Annette in 1935 and Annette was joined with the Lost Hills district in 1952 to form the Lost Hills Union School District. ■

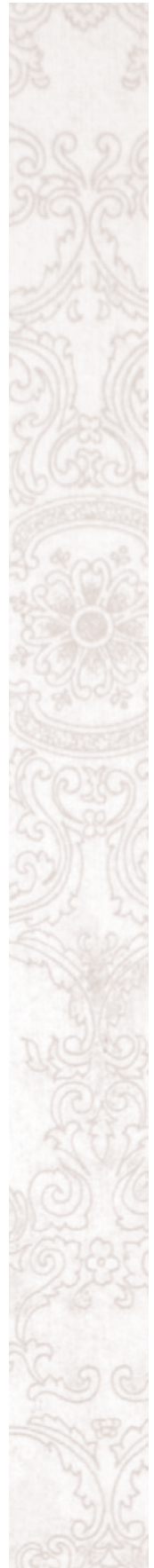
# MAPLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Maple School District** was organized in 1910 to serve the youngsters in the rich agricultural area north and west of Shafter. About a dozen students were in attendance that first year, all under the tutelage of Miss Eleanor Carroll. The original schoolhouse was situated on ten acres of land at the corner of Lerdo Highway and Palm Avenue but that building was relocated in 1926 to a site on Fresno Avenue just west of Wasco Avenue.

A new school, comprised of five classrooms, an auditorium, a shop, and a cafeteria, was built on the Fresno Avenue site in 1938. Unfortunately that school was destroyed by fire in March of 1961, faulty electrical wiring being the probable cause. Planning for the construction of a new facility began almost immediately and the “*new*” Maple School, was completed about a year later. It is still fully used today, some forty years later. During that year of planning and construction, Maple School students were housed in classrooms provided by the elementary and high school districts in Wasco.

As noted above, the Maple district began with just a handful of students in 1910 and it would remain small for the next twenty years, until about 1930 and the onset of the Great Depression. The economic hardships experienced during the Depression years, teamed with a period of extended drought in many of the southwestern states, prompted thousands of families to seek a better life in California. In the decade of the 1930s the Central Valley experienced a huge influx of agricultural workers causing enrollment to skyrocket in many districts.

Maple’s enrollment had jumped to almost 160 students by 1930 but, unlike many of the surrounding districts, enrollment leveled off there and for the next thirty years the district experienced virtually no growth, the recorded ADA for the 1961-62 school year being just 165 students. There then followed a slow but steady decline in enrollment as the children in the district’s farm families matured and fewer of elementary school age were to be found in each household. Concerned over the continuing loss of revenue due to dwindling enrollment, the district held a tax election in June of 1972 asking voters to approve an increase in the tax rate from \$2.30 to \$3.00 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The measure was approved with 78 “*aye*” votes vs. 56 “*no*” votes. The added revenue helped for a while but when, in 1974, the ADA fell to just 90



students, more drastic measures were called for and, reluctantly, the teaching staff was reduced from six teachers to five. By November of 1978 enrollment had fallen to just 88 students and trustees began to wonder if they were going to be able to keep the school doors open. That proved to be the low point, however, and the picture brightened as enrollment began to increase at a slow but steady rate and by 1984 the district was serving some 130 students. Several years of decline in enrollment followed, however, and by 1990, with district trustees well aware that low enrollment was going to be a continuing problem, the Maple district opted to open their doors to children from outside the district boundaries. Enrollment grew steadily from that point and, in 2005, stood at 266, with approximately three-fourths of those students having transferred from schools in Wasco, Shafter, Buttonwillow, and Bakersfield. The district has a target maximum enrollment of 270 students and has no trouble maintaining attendance at that level. There is, in fact, a waiting list of potential enrollees from outside the district and selections are made from that list as openings occur at any particular grade level. Transportation is provided only for those students who live within district boundaries. Maple maintains one class per grade level and, in an effort to avoid combination classes, the district has opted not to take the supplementary state funds now available for class size reduction.

To the district's great advantage, they have, over the years, had very effective leadership. Dr. Kelly Blanton, who would later serve as the county superintendent of schools, succeeded Clyde Johnston as principal/superintendent of Maple in 1967 and served in that capacity for five years. Blanton resigned and moved into the county office in 1971 and was replaced by Ingiver Ketelsen. Gordon Walter took over from Ketelsen in 1975, then resigned and was replaced by Dr. Carl Olsen in 1985. Olsen stayed just two years before resigning to take over as superintendent of the Fruitvale School District. Olsen handed the reins over to Ann Paslay, who was followed in 2008-09, by Rebecca Devahl. ■



# MCKITTRICK SCHOOL DISTRICT

As early as 1864, and extending well into the 1880s, mining interests were finding rich deposits of asphaltum in the foothills some forty miles west of Bakersfield. A new little town, Asphalto, was founded by the Union Land and Oil Company of Columbus, Georgia and a survey for the townsite completed in May of 1893.

---

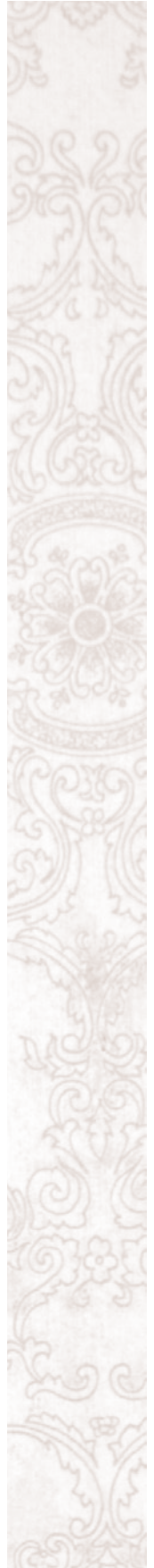
**Note:** Asphalto was located approximately two miles due east of what would become the town of McKittrick.

---

Asphalto's economic mainstay was the production of asphaltum, a solid or semi-solid form of petroleum that by the early 1890s was being used as a protective coating for pipe, in the manufacture of roofing paper, and in the treatment of pier, bridge, and tunnel timbers. Additionally, it was an ingredient in paint and varnish, in printer's ink, and in electrical insulation. Asphalt was also being used for the paving of streets.

In December 1890, Solomon Jewett and Hugh Blodgett of Bakersfield, Henry Williams of San Francisco, and Sutherland Hutton and Louis Blankenhorn of Los Angeles, organized the Standard Asphalt Company. The May 25, 1894, edition of the San Luis Obispo Tribune, reporting on mining activities in the Asphalto area, noted that Jewett and Blodgett, having sunk a 100 foot shaft, found a ledge of asphaltum 14 feet wide and of unknown thickness. Judged to be 90% pure, it was a rich enough find that the company set about hiring forty men to help with the extraction and processing of the material. To sustain a labor force of that size in such a remote area, the company built a lodging house, a boarding house, and a company store. Workers were paid \$1.25 per day plus board.

Since the processing of asphaltum required that the material be reduced to a liquid by heating it in large kettles, a reduction plant had also to be constructed. The plant, located south of town, consisted of 21-five ton kettles and 2-fourteen ton kettles, each set in masonry. Once the raw asphaltum was converted to a liquid and the dross removed, the refined product was drawn off into boxes, allowed to solidify, then loaded onto wagons for shipment to Bakersfield. But using teamsters to haul the asphalt was very expensive and it soon became apparent that shipping by rail would be a much more cost effective way of getting the product to market. In March 1892, convinced that there would be sufficient traffic



to make the venture profitable, the Southern Pacific Railroad began construction of a line from Sumner (now East Bakersfield) to Asphalto. It was completed in February 1893.

---

**Note:** There were plans to extend the railroad as far as the asphaltum reduction plant and some grading was done but the mines were worked out before the extension could be completed.

---

The first building completed in the new town, according to an article in *The Daily Californian* and dated February 23, 1901, was A. L. Thackery's saloon. The little community also boasted of a new lumberyard and it was noted that an extension of the railroad, running westward from Asphalto to Reward, had been completed. Economic hard times in the 1890s made asphalt production unprofitable, however, and the purchase of Standard Asphalt by Southern Pacific Railroad signaled the diminished viability and eventual demise of Asphalto. Simultaneously there was growing interest in the nearby McKittrick oilfield and, in 1899, Southern Pacific founded the town of McKittrick, naming it for Captain William McKittrick, a prominent Kern County rancher and landowner who was also the son-in-law of General William R. Shafter.

In 1901, the **McKittrick School District** was formed with students attending classes in a former store building. The average daily attendance that first year was thirteen students. In 1911, the district opened a new schoolhouse, built at a cost of \$5,000.

As described in an article in the September 10, 1911, edition of *The Fresno Morning Republican*, McKittrick at that time had become a thriving little community. There were several restaurants, a new public hall, and two garages; railroad passenger service was growing and Southern Pacific had increased the space for freight at their depot; post office facilities and services had been expanded; there was reliable telegraph and telephone service; and "automobile stages", made daily runs to neighboring cities.

The development of the town of McKittrick and the **McKittrick School District** is closely tied, in a historical sense, to the town of Reward and the **Olig School District**. Evidence of that relationship goes back as far as 1864 when, preceding all others who would come to this area to seek

their fortunes in the oil business, Thomas Harvey and John Hambleton founded the Buena Vista Oil Company and set out to develop asphaltum deposits at two sites some three miles apart at the base of the Temblor Mountain Range. The two sites, destined in later years to become noted oil producing areas, would eventually develop into the towns of McKittrick and Reward.

Having experienced periods of both boom and bust, the Buena Vista Oil Company lasted a few years, then disappeared altogether. But, if nothing else, Harvey and Hambleton had drawn attention to the possibility that commercial oil deposits lay beneath the surface in this area. Within a few years, oil products of a more refined nature would be in great demand and crude oil would become the focal point of exploration.

Reward, about three miles west of McKittrick, was founded as a company town by the Reward Oil Company, one of the early developers of the westside oilfields. Officially established in 1907 but never incorporated, Reward was of sufficient significance by 1909 to have its own post office. A number of businesses, including two general stores, were well established by 1914. As the oilfield was developed and the amount of crude produced each day continued on the rise, Reward would experience a substantial increase in population, bolstered largely by the arrival of those hoping to make a living by providing various services for the oil workers and their families. Although there are no exact figures - only estimates based on voter registration rolls - it is thought that Reward had a population in 1918 of about 1,300 people.

The company made living in such an isolated area much more appealing by providing a number of amenities that included a swimming pool, tennis courts, a pool hall, movies for employees and their families, and an ice cream machine.

Unlike most of the early oil towns, Reward had no saloons or houses of ill repute and, perhaps as a consequence, there was little crime or rowdiness. It did not even have a law enforcement officer.

In 1905, the **Olig School District**, with its schoolhouse in Reward, was formed from territory wholly within the boundaries of the McKittrick School District. (At one time, a second school, referred to as the Ethel School, was maintained by the Olig district but little evidence of its existence can be found in the records.)

In its first year of operation, 1905-06, the Olig district had an average daily attendance of thirty-five students, all “*under the management of Mrs. M.F. Upton, assisted by Mrs. Alice Dye.*” Enrollment increased steadily for almost twenty years, topping out at 119 in 1924-25. Since the original wooden schoolhouse had but two classrooms, burgeoning enrollment made it necessary to expand the facilities and, at some point, a four-classroom brick structure was added to the campus. The new addition, built over a basement that housed a cafeteria and a woodshop, also included an auditorium, a bus garage, and a teacherage.

Like many rural schools of the day, Olig was the social center of the little town and members of the community gathered there for plays, dances, box socials, and costume contests. The school even had its own newspaper, “*The Sagebrush Special*”.

The **Miller School District** was formed in 1918 from territory in the Belridge and Duncan school districts and was named for Henry Miller of Miller and Lux, large landholders in the area. The Miller School, located north and considerably east, of McKittrick, opened its first year with just seven students. Enrollment peaked at thirteen students in 1920-21, then declined to just eight students in 1924-25. A year later the Miller district lapsed and was annexed to Olig.

---

**Note:** There is reason to believe that in the early 1900s, during the oil boom years, there were perhaps as many as a half dozen small school districts in the McKittrick area. It was easier, in many instances, to build a schoolhouse and hire a teacher than it was to transport youngsters to an existing facility some miles away.--

---

In 1932, the McKittrick School District had a recorded ADA of 30 students and the Olig district, 52 students. Three years later, on November 4, 1935, for no reason that could be determined from a review of the board minutes, the McKittrick School District ceased operations and was annexed to the Olig School District. Over the next two decades, as oil production declined, so too did the population of Reward and the number of youngsters enrolled in the Olig School. The post office closed in 1937 and all businesses were gone by the early 1940s. In October of 1947, with Reward looking more and more like a ghost town, the Olig board

of trustees announced their interest in building a new school. While that seems odd given the circumstances, perhaps they were urged to do so by the principal at that time, Frederick Ammann, who described the Olig campus as “*rundown*”. No site for a new school was designated but the board agreed to move along on the project by establishing a building fund to which the district would contribute \$40,000 each year for three years.

In the spring of the following year the board met with architects from Wright, Metcalf, and Parsons to begin preliminary planning for a new facility. They were very specific in that the plans had to include provisions for a kindergarten, three classrooms, a cafeteria/auditorium, and administration rooms. The architects were advised to proceed but the board added the caveat that funding for the project was contingent upon passage of a bond measure. The election, which would authorize the sale of bonds in the amount of \$200,000 for capital improvements, was held on December 14, 1948, and passed by a wide margin.

On June 12, 1950, bids for construction of the new school were opened and, shortly thereafter, ground was broken on a site just north of the McKittrick townsite. The new facility, completed in about six months at a cost of \$260,000, was accepted by the board on January 20, 1951. It was a modern structure in every regard and even included air conditioning, an unusual feature for schools being built at that time because of the expense of both installation and operation.

The matter of naming the school was put before the voters in the district who opted to call it McKittrick Elementary School. It opened with sixty-five students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade and, with its opening, the McKittrick School District experienced a rebirth and the Olig School District became just a memory.

---

**Note:** While these two districts combined their respective territories and student populations on two occasions, neither of the newly reconfigured districts was designated a “*union*” district.

---

McKittrick’s current enrollment (2006) is 62 students. Classes are multigraded with a staff of four teachers for the nine grade levels. There is also a principal/superintendent. About forty of McKittrick’s students are residents of nearby districts and attend McKittrick on interdistrict

agreements. The district offers a modern curriculum with a strong emphasis on science and computer technology.

Eight administrators have headed up the McKittrick district since 1951, either as teacher/principal, principal, or principal/superintendent. The first, Fred Ammann, had been the principal at Olig School and served in that capacity at McKittrick when it first opened. He was followed by: Willis Reed (1952-1958), George Perkins (1958-1965), Charles Arnett (1965-1968), Alyce Willis (1968-1990), Richard Moon (1990-1992), John Barnes (1992-2005), and Barry Koerner (2005 to the present). ■

# MIDWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The little town of Fellows, a few miles northeast of Taft and in the center of the westside oilfields, was named for Charles A. Fellows, a railroad construction contractor. It was officially founded in April 1910, the townsite having been surveyed by James Jameson, Ernest Wrampelmeier, and Lawrence Strassburger. Town lots, leasing for \$10 a month, were offered to individuals by the oil companies but with the understanding that the lease was for surface rights only and that any building was subject to being moved to accommodate oil drilling operations. Even with those restrictions, property was in heavy demand during the oil boom years.

As oil towns such as Maricopa, Taft, Fellows, and McKittrick began to spring up along the westside of the valley in the early 1900s, their potential for having some degree of permanency could be measured by whether or not the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroad opted to run their tracks through the town. In May 1908, the railroad began construction on the Sunset Western Railroad, a line that started at Pentland on the Sunset Railroad and ran along a northwest course to the future sites of Taft and Fellows. It was completed in 1909 and Fellows quickly developed into a vibrant community with a growing number of businesses.

---

**Note 1:** Between 1890 and 1900, three hamlets - Maricopa, Pentland, and Hazelton - would spring up in the Sunset oilfield. Of the three, only Maricopa survived.

---

**Note 2:** Development in Fellows was hampered early on when the supply of domestic water proved to be insufficient. For a time it was hauled to Fellows in barrels, not infrequently in barrels that had previously been used to haul crude oil to market. Fresh water was finally piped into town in 1920.

---

Many of those who came to Fellows to join in the oil boom found rooms to rent above the Heck brother's general store. Accommodations could also be found at the newly completed Fellows Hotel, owned and operated by Martha Burress and her husband, Jay. (Lacking firm evidence



to the contrary, Burress may or may not have been Martha's first husband and he was certainly not to be her last). Martha, who was of French descent and spoke with a strong French accent, divorced Burress in 1912 to marry Joe Randall. Randall, reputed to be a hard drinker, died in 1942 and Martha was remarried in 1948 to Lester Myers. For whatever reason, when Myers died in 1959 Martha took back the Randall name and she would go on to gain notoriety, if not fame - and considerable fortune - as Ma Randall. For some fifty plus years after it was built, Ma Randall, along with her husbands and a nephew, owned and operated the Fellows Hotel.

---

**Note:** Tales of Ma Randall's exploits are endless and separating fact from fiction is a task that no one seems to have accomplished. Some count her as generous and civic minded, others as mean and self-serving. But few would dispute the notion that she was one of the little town's most influential - and perhaps, most infamous - personages, infamous in that her legacy will always suggest that she operated a house of ill repute. By some accounts she would go so far as to load her girls onto wagons and transport them out to entertain the men in the oil camps.

---

While one cannot claim with absolute certainty that Ma Randall was involved in prostitution, what is certain is that she was a shrewd businesswoman. In addition to owning a hotel that did a lively business for many years, she also speculated in real estate and had a number of rental properties, all of which must have provided handsome returns since at the time of her death in 1968, she left an estate valued at \$977,000.

The Fellows Hotel was moved to The Kern County Museum in 1989.

The **Midway School District** was established in 1903, before Fellows was officially a town. The first schoolhouse was located at Midland, a few miles southeast of the Fellows townsite. ADA for the 1903-04 school year was just seven students but enrollment would increase dramatically as the oil boom brought new families into the area. That first schoolhouse, such as it was, was destroyed by fire in 1910 with the loss of all books, equipment, and supplies. Classes were held in temporary quarters until the end of the 1910-1911 school year.

The district opened a new and larger school on Midway Hill in Fellows in 1911. Built at a cost of \$15,000, it was comprised of four classrooms and



an auditorium and staffed by three teachers: T.E. Carr, Zilda Williams, and Hazel Burns.

By 1912, the average daily attendance had climbed to 103 and five years later, in 1917, additional classrooms had to be added to accommodate the burgeoning enrollment, now over 300 students. A home for the janitor and a teacherage were also added to the campus at that time, the teacherage being necessary to accommodate a staff that now included a principal, a kindergarten teacher, and nine “*regular*” teachers. In 1914, the Midway School District began offering the first two years of high school in what was known as Fellows High School. That program lasted just two years, however, after which high school students in Fellows began attending Conley High School in Taft.

The **Browngold School District**, with a schoolhouse on Shale Road about two miles north and west of Fellows, was established in 1910 to serve the area known as Shale. Enrollment at Browngold peaked at ninety-four students in 1919, the same year that the schoolhouse was destroyed by fire. Enrollment had fallen off to seventy-one students by 1920 and a year later Browngold was absorbed by the Midway district. The population of Fellows peaked at about 2,500 in 1925. At that time it was a prosperous community with a host of businesses, including two banks, a firehouse, grocery stores, restaurants, three pool halls, a library, a movie theater, several fraternal organizations, a full-time doctor and hospital and, of course, the Fellows Hotel.

---

**Note:** Statistics relative to the demographics of Fellows are often contradictory and those stated here must be considered little more than estimates. The town was never zoned by the county and, consequently, the establishment of businesses and the ownership of houses was poorly documented. Similarly, absent census records, figures that are intended to represent the number of Fellows residents at any one time cannot be counted as accurate. One source, for instance, places the population of Fellows at 1,500 in 1929, 400 less than in 1925, which makes both figures suspect. School enrollment figures, however, are verifiable and reasonably accurate.

---

With an average daily attendance of 509 students in 1925-26 students,

Midway School was also prospering in the mid-1920s. The ADA would remain near 500 for the next few years but then, as drilling activity and crude oil production in the surrounding oilfields began to decline, so too did the number of students attending the Midway School. Between the 1930-31 school year and the 1939-40 school year, the average daily attendance fell from 424 students to just 183 students. Assessed valuation remained high, however, and if the level of staffing is any indicator, funding was little affected by the declining enrollment; in 1933, for instance, the district's 348 students were being served by a staff of seventeen teachers, a nurse, a primary principal, an intermediate teacher/principal, and the superintendent, R. N. Hatch.

The enrollment stayed near 200 students until about 1980 and then began to fall off at a slow but steady pace. A sampling of opening enrollment figures from 1980 to the present clearly illustrates the nature of the decline: 1980 (174 students), 1984 (165 students), 1989 (163 students), 1992 (152 students), 1997 (136 students), and 1999 (116 students). As of 2006, Midway's enrollment remains fairly steady, fluctuated between 70 and 80 students.

The old school having fallen into disrepair, the district opened a new school on an adjacent site in April of 1952.

In March 1993, the district attempted to gain voter approval of a \$10 million bond issue but it failed by a wide margin. In 2004, however, the district was successful in the passage of a \$7.7 million bond issue and those funds are currently being used to modernize all classrooms, a major upgrading that will include dropped ceilings, improved lighting, and better media access. The cafeteria, gymnasium, and auditorium are also scheduled for renovation. \$357,000 in bond monies was set aside for site improvement, a project that included the installation of new playground equipment along with the expansion of the blacktop and grassy areas.

Students in the Midway School come mostly from Fellows and Derby Acres with a limited number attending through interdistrict transfers. Residential property in Fellows is owned by Chevron and as housing there is vacated the structures are often torn down and not replaced; as a consequence, fewer and fewer Midway students come from the area immediately adjacent to the school.

Midway offers a modern curriculum with a strong reading program, including a reading lab, and an emphasis on technology. The staff includes six teachers who are assigned as follows: K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 7-8/ P.E, and Lead Teacher/computers/P.E.

Frank Wiley served as the superintendent of the Midway district from 1948 to 1963. He was followed by William Doonan (1963-64), Edward McPherson (1964-1980), Robert Mickelson (1980-1995), Dr. Don Swearingon (1995-2002), and Greg Coker from 2002 to the present . ■



# NORRIS SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Norris School District** was formed in 1880 and named for Robert Norris, a farmer in the area who donated a one acre of his land to be used for a school site. Classes were held in a private home until a one room red schoolhouse was completed in 1882.

A typical one-room schoolhouse, the first Norris School served students in grades one through eight. ADA that first year was ten students. Drinking water was drawn from a well using a hand pump and those who wished to drink did so from a bucket using a communal dipper. Heat in the winter was provided by a wood stove, also typical of the day. Although some students could walk to school, most arrived on horseback or in horse drawn buggies or wagons that had to travel over narrow dirt roads.

That original Norris schoolhouse was used for 32 years before being moved to the Rosedale Ranch where it was used for grain storage. It was donated to the Kern County Museum in 1959 where it now resides.

In 1914 the district purchased two additional acres from a Mr. Coughran and a new school was built. It consisted of two classrooms, an auditorium, a library and a teacher's room. The structure also included a bell tower which housed the large bell used to summon students to the classroom. Today, that bell is on display outside the Norris Middle School cafeteria.

Norris School remained quite small for some fifty years but began to experience some growth with the influx of agricultural workers in the early thirties. ADA for 1930-31 was 61 pupils.

A new frame stucco school was built in 1960 and it was sorely needed as the district's ADA was now up to 115 students. It consisted of four classrooms, a teachers' room, a health room, a conference room, and the principal's office. Norris Elementary School, Norris Middle School, and the district offices occupied this site with the original structure serving as one wing of the greatly expanded facility. The size of the site had been expanded to ten acres by 1980.

Using funds generated by a successful bond election, Norris built and opened the Olive Drive School in 1989. The district also purchased an additional 18 acres adjacent to their middle school site which allowed them to expand that facility. By 1992, the Norris School site, now twenty-eight acres, had an enrollment of 1,264 students, more than double the



1980 enrollment of 622.

Coinciding closely with the beginning of the new century, northwest Bakersfield began experiencing rapid residential development, much of it in the Norris district. Enrollment continued to skyrocket and, anticipating future needs, the district purchased three additional school sites.

Bimat Elementary School opened in 2001, then added two kindergarten classrooms and six modular buildings within the next three years.

In 2003, eight new classrooms and a gymnasium were added to the Norris Middle School, now the exclusive resident of the original twenty-eight acre site. Using Mello-Roos funds, the \$5 million project was the first stage of a \$12 million renovation of the 50 year old middle school.

In 2007, Norris opened Veterans Elementary School, its fourth K-5 school, at Snow Road and Old Farm Road and a site for a fifth elementary school has been purchased.

District ADA for the 2008-09 school year was over 3,500 students.

Al Sandrini served as the district superintendent from 1988 to 2000. Since that time, the district has been under the guidance of Dr. Wallace McCormick. ■

## PANAMA-BUENA VISTA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Panama School District** was formed in 1873 but did not become operational until the district's first schoolhouse was completed in 1875. Just eleven students were enrolled that first year but the passage of time has been witness to a dramatic transformation and tiny Panama's successor, the **Panama-Buena Vista Union School District**, has grown to a large urban district, with an enrollment of close to 16,000 students in twenty-one schools. And more schools are on the drawing boards.

---

**Note:** The rich history of the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District has been well-documented in a publication titled, *"Celebrating 125 Years of Excellence"*, published by the district in 2000. The details of the district's early development that follow were taken largely from that document.

---

Early in the 19th century, the Panama area was home to a small Mexican settlement known as Rio Bravo. It is well documented that Ventura Cuen, a former miner from Sonora, Mexico, came into the San Joaquin Valley in 1849 via El Camino Viejo, the old Spanish highway, and after passing through San Emidio, the Mexican settlement near the base of the mountains to the south, Cuen stopped at the village of Rio Bravo. He apparently found the area to his liking as he opted to stay. Mexicans at that time had squatter's rights and before many years had passed, Cuen had each acquired title to a quarter section (125 acres) of land.

Rio Bravo was known to the Americans at that time as the land of *"chills and fever"*. American settlers who made their way to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama noted that the two areas were quite similar in the respect that both were covered largely by tule lined marshes and swamps that served as breeding grounds for malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Its fever producing reputation soon prompted those early settlers to began substituting the name Panama in place of Rio Bravo, Panama, in this instance, being a term of derision.

For some years before Cuen's arrival, and thus long before the establishment of public schools, there is evidence that children living in the Panama area were being offered instruction by traveling Spanish missionaries. Class was held in a little log schoolhouse that was situated on land owned by Miller and Lux Company, whose headquarters was located near the present corner of Stine Road and Panama Lane.



There were few white settlers in the Rio Bravo area in the 1840s. The Indians along the lakes were engaged in warfare with other tribes from the coast and high mountain regions and following a general uprising in 1849, an Indian agent named E.F. Beale sent all the Indians to live on what is now the Tejon Ranch. Once the Indians had been relocated, white farmers, miners, and cattlemen began moving into the area.

When Kern County was created in 1866, each township within the county (a township is comprised of 36 sections and each section is one mile square, thus a township has an area of 36 square miles) was designated a school district. It is interesting to note, however, that neither Bakersfield nor Kern Delta was included in this judicial organization.

The first schoolhouse in the Panama School District was located about a mile west of the intersection of Stine Road and Panama Lane, the site of the present Panama School. Benches were made by the parents and each bench seated three children. Water had to be hauled by the teacher and pupils and was used sparingly for washing hands. Two roller-type towels were allowed each week and the mothers took turns taking them home to be washed. The teacher also served as the janitor.

Word spread that Panama was operating a free school, news that prompted a few new families to move into the area. As enrollment began to increase, it became obvious that a larger school room was needed and, subsequently, a rough two-room structure was built on reclaimed swampland. The teacher, Miss Rebecca Stockton, lived in the room next to the classroom.

Following a drought in 1876-77, water conditions were so bad at the school site that a portion of the school was picked up and moved to within a quarter of a mile of the present Panama School to be closer to a potable water supply. At this time, the school term was increased from 3 months to 6 months. Miss Margaret Ashe was the teacher and, for her services, she received \$40 per month.

The Panama area remained sparsely populated for some years and the only two schools in the vicinity were Panama and Fairview. The Fairview district had been formed in 1878 with the schoolhouse on land that was, oddly enough, within the Panama district boundaries.

In 1880, the Panama School was moved to the corner of Stine Road and Taft Highway where a newly drilled well produced an ample supply of good water.



A year later, in 1881, the Old River School opened its doors, a move that produced no small amount of consternation on the part of Panama officials. The Old River School was located on the east side of Old River Road about two blocks south of the Taft Highway and it was soon discovered that many of the children who had been attending Panama School were, in fact, living within the boundaries of the newly created Old River district. The number of children required to move from Panama to Old River was significant and there was genuine concern that Panama School might have to close its doors. While that did not come to pass, there was nonetheless lingering bitterness among the Panama residents and for several years, the Old River folks and the Panama folks were less than friendly to each other.

By 1882, enrollment at Panama had grown to about 30 students. The teacher that year was Miss Elizabeth Stockton, one of many members of the Stockton family who would enter service in the public schools in Kern County. The Kern County Land Company, having acquired the holdings of Haggin and Carr in the Panama area, donated an acre of land to the school district in 1891. A new school, its design touted as the best ever for rural areas, was built on the donated parcel in 1890-91. Soon thereafter, the Fairview and Old River school districts built schools of very similar design.

In 1894, a sizeable portion of Panama's eastern territory was ceded to the **Mountain View District**, which had been formed that same year. The loss of that sparsely populated territory had little effect on Panama, however, and enrollment continued to grow forcing the district to hire a second teacher to accommodate the increase. The two teachers hired for that 1894-95 school year were Carrie Ryan and Josephine Galloway.

The next few years would be witness to the formation of several new school districts and, as a consequence, the transfer of a considerable amount of territory. In 1896, Panama ceded most of the southeast portion of its territory to the **Greenfield School District** which was formed that same year. The **Stine School District**, bordering on Panama to the north, was formed in 1900. The **General Shafter School District**, with territory south and east of Panama's boundaries, was formed in 1903 and at this same time Panama acquired one half of township 27 extending a narrow strip of the district as far south as Copus Road.

The **Wible School District** was formed in 1909. Its territory was bounded on the north by the Stine district and on the south by Panama. The Wible schoolhouse was located on the west side of the present Stine Road and north of Wilson Road. This proved to be a poor location, the area being infested with mosquitoes and a movement was soon underway to close the school and return adjacent districts to their former boundaries. In 1917, the Wible district was declared lapsed and its territory absorbed by the Stine district.

Enrollment in Panama School for the 1916-17 school year climbed to eighty students and the average daily attendance for that year was 73. A third teacher was hired to accommodate the increase in enrollment.

---

**Note:** Beginning in the mid-1920s, cotton was planted in huge quantities in the Kern Lake area. A chance for work in the cotton fields attracted many migratory workers (as they were called at that time) and a new school was needed to accommodate the children of these workers. In 1926, the Panama district built a one-room school on the southeast corner of section 23 T32 R27. In the beginning, this school operated only during the cotton growing months but it was converted to a standard school in 1929 and another teacher was added to the staff. The school was moved to the northwest quarter of section 13 in 1935, a site that was more centrally located. When it came time to pick the cotton, attendance at times became so heavy that four teachers were needed. In 1938, a new school was built although the old building was occasionally returned to service. Tents were often used as classrooms as well. Teachers were not only responsible for instruction, but also did the cooking for the lunchroom. In 1938, a new two-room school was built and was used until shortly after the beginning of World War II in December of 1941. The migratory program ended and the school was closed in 1943.

---

By 1937-38, Panama's ADA had grown to 165 students, far too many to be accommodated in the old schoolhouse. A new school, a project of the federal government's Works Progress Administration, was built and opened in November of 1939. Modernized and upgraded in recent years, that building is still in operation today.

The Panama district's boundaries were expanded in 1944 when the

Panama and Stine school districts were combined to form the Panama Union School District. At the time of the unionization, Panama had an average daily attendance of 221 students and the Stine an average daily attendance of 68 students.

The **Stine School District** had been formed in 1900 with an average daily attendance that first year of 16 students. A portion of Stine's territory was taken in 1909 to form the Wible School District but, as noted earlier, that district lapsed in 1917 and its territory returned to the Stine district. Although the Stine district ceased to exist as a separate entity after its union with Panama in 1944, its identity was retained when the Panama district opened the new Stine School in 1957 with attendance boundaries that closely approximated the territorial boundaries of the old Stine district.

The **Buena Vista School District** dates from 1875 although it may not have been so named at the time. Newspaper accounts from that day refer to the school as the Canfield School, no doubt because of its proximity to the Canfield Ranch. In fact, Mr. Canfield served as the first district clerk and remained in that position for eighteen years. The original Canfield schoolhouse was located in the northeast quarter of Section 26, almost exactly one mile west of the present day Buena Vista School, situated as it is on the northeast corner of Section 27.

---

**Note:** An article in *The Kern County Gazette*, dated November 6, 1875, provided the following information: "A Mr. Richards is now teaching the Public School at Canfield and is occupying the new house. The number of pupils in attendance is about 25. There are 60 children in the district of the proper age for schooling and, after the session is a little farther advanced, the attendance will doubtless be larger."

---

Buena Vista was always a small district and remained so even after the annexation of neighboring **New River School District** at the turn of the century.

The New River School District was formed in July of 1880 from territory that included most of present day McKittrick, Buttonwillow, Elk Hills, and Rio Bravo-Greeley school districts, as well as property that now lies within the boundaries of the Rosedale, Panama-Buena Vista, and Taft City school districts.



STINE SCHOOL 1916-17

---

**Note:** The exact site of the New River schoolhouse has not been determined but its general location, as shown on an 1892 map of Kern County, clearly indicates that it was situated in the northwest quadrant of section 18, T30S R26E. Those coordinates place it on the north side of the Kern River, about 2-1/4 miles south of Stockdale Highway and about 1-1/4 miles east of Highway 43.

---

The New River district was huge in terms of territory, well over 400 square miles but the area was sparsely populated and the district remained quite small in terms of enrollment for the entire twenty years of its existence. It began its first year with five students and the following year, 1881-82, reached what would prove to be its peak enrollment of twenty-one students. Enrollment slowly declined and annexation by the Buena Vista School District followed in 1900.

---

**Note:** A picture of the New River School, along with the students and their teacher, Margaret Gardette, is included as part of this history (*page 141*). The names of some of the students, 5 from the Tucker family and 2 from the Still family, were on the back of the original photo. Census records from 1890 reveal that the father of the Still children was a superintendent for the Kern County Land Company so it's not unreasonable to suppose that this family lived on the nearby Canfield Ranch.

---

Having absorbed the New River district, Buena Vista's boundaries now circumscribed a huge geographical area but the oil boom in the early 1900s saw a number of new towns spring up at the base of the foothills to the west and each of those new towns would soon form its own school district. Much of the territory for those new districts - McKittrick, formed in 1901; Midway, formed in 1903; Rio Bravo, formed in 1912; and Greeley, also formed in 1912 - was taken from Buena Vista's western expanse.

The Buena Vista School was relocated to its present site in 1913

following purchase by the district of an acre of land from the Kern County Land Company and Joel Wright Coulter for \$168. A new school was built the following year. That school burned in 1920 and classes were held in a barn behind the old school until a new structure, this one of brick, could be built. In 1930, Mr. Coulter donated five more acres to the school.



NEW RIVER SCHOOL  
CA. 1890

In its first year, Buena Vista had an average daily attendance of 16 students. In 1938, it reached its peak enrollment of 62 students and a slow but steady decline followed. In 1948, a fourth classroom was added, along with a bus barn and shop. By 1961-62, average daily attendance had dropped to 41 students.

Because of its small enrollment and the value of the rich agricultural areas within its boundaries, Buena Vista, before the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, was one of the county's wealthiest districts, having an assessed valuation of better than \$23 million, or more than a half-million dollars per pupil.

In 1988, in an unusual move designed to benefit both districts, an agreement was reached whereby tiny Buena Vista would annex its huge neighbor to the east. The annexation resulted in the formation of the **Panama-Buena Vista Union School District** and netted the new district a significant increase in state funding but also the wrath of the Bakersfield City School District which declared the annexation resulted in an unfair distribution of funds. A lawsuit followed but was dropped after Panama-Buena Vista agreed to a nominal compensation package for Bakersfield City.

---

**Note:** This was not the first time an effort was made to combine the two districts. On March 19, and again on March 26, 1954, the two boards met to discuss the possibility of joining together to form a single district but no agreement could be reached and the proposal was dropped.

---

At the time of the annexation, Buena Vista School had been in

continuous use for 48 years and there was an obvious need to upgrade the facility. In 1993, extensive remodeling was completed and the Buena Vista School now includes all the features of a modern school facility.

Long before it merged with Buena Vista, the Panama district had been experiencing severe growing pains and for some time it struggled to keep up with new housing developments in the southwest. The district's third school - after the old Panama School and Stine School - was the Amy B. Seibert School, opened in 1963. Seibert was followed by Fred L. Thompson Junior High School in 1966, then Wayne Van Horn School in Park Stockdale in 1969. A brief respite followed before the opening of the Charles Castle School in 1976 but there have been few respites since. Stockdale School opened in 1977; Sandrini School and O.J. Actis Junior High School both opened in 1979; and Sing Lum School in 1984. Laurelglenn, funded through the State Building Aid Program and built on a site donated by Tenneco, was opened in 1985.

In 1987, a \$25,700,000 bond election was held. It passed by an overwhelming margin and those monies were used to build Leo B. Hart School and Tevis Junior High School, both of which opened in 1988. Roy Loudon School opened in 1989, Christa McAuliffe in 1991, and Earl Warren Junior High School in 1994.

\$18,000,000 in Certificates of Participation were issued in June 1994 and a portion of those funds were used to build the Bill L. Williams School, which opened in 1996. Ronald Reagan, on the district's western fringe, opened in 1998. In 2002, the district opened the Berkshire School on Berkshire Road. Property and construction costs for Berkshire were paid for through a combination of developer's fees, funds from the state building program, and district reserves.

The district approved the use of \$33,880,000 in COPs to complete Stonecreek Junior High School, which opened in 2006, and that same funding source was used for the construction of Old River School, which opened in the fall of 2007.

Projections indicate that within a very few years, new developments will add somewhere between 5,000 and 9,000 new homes in the southern part of the district. To accommodate children coming from those homes, the district hopes to form a Community Facilities District, sometimes called Mello-Roos, which is empowered to assess taxes on each parcel to pay for

community facilities, including schools.

According to information provided on the annual CBEDS survey, 7,687 students were enrolled in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District in October of 1986. By 1991, that figure had grown to 10,681 students; by 1996, to 12,145 students; by 2001, to 13,231 students; and by 2005, to 15,206 students.

A review of the CBEDS data also reveals a dramatic change in the district's ethnic composition for that same twenty year period. In 1986, there were 725 Hispanic students in the district, representing 9.4% of the total student population. In 2005, there were 6,238 Hispanic students in the district or 41% of the total student population.

Since 1945, the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District has been served by just four superintendents: Wayne Van Horn from 1945 to 1973, Chester Troudy from 1973 to 1979, Dr. Bill L. Williams from 1979 to 1994, and Douglas J. Miller from 1994 until his retirement in 2007. Kip HERRON was named to replace Miller as of July 1, 2007.



BUENA VISTA SCHOOL - 1918

---

**A footnote to history:** The New River School was annexed to the Buena Vista district in 1900 but the schoolhouse remained on the site until 1907 when it burned to the ground. Hours of searching with a metal detector by this writer yielded no physical evidence of the school's existence.

---

In the photo of the New River School (*page 141*), a small cart can be seen next to the schoolhouse. The teacher, Margaret Gardette, lived at the nearby McClung Ranch and rode the one mile to school each day in the cart drawn by a mule. ■



BUENA VISTA SCHOOL





# POND UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The tiny hamlet of Pond, or at least what remains of it, is located seven miles north of Wasco at the intersection of Highway 43 and Pond Road. In 1920 the Standard Oil Company, during construction of a crude oil pipeline from Bakersfield to Richmond, built one of their pump stations at Pond. Huge oil storage tanks, gone now, were erected on the site as well as a number of houses for company employees. Pond also had a store and a post office which suggests that it was something of a community center at one time.

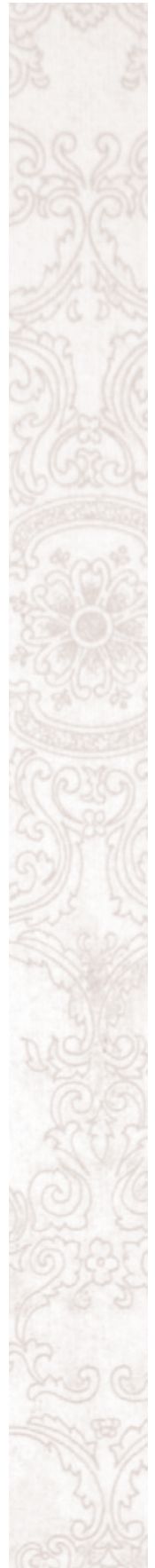
Much as it is today, Pond in 1920 was an agriculture community and two small school districts, Hamlin and Pond, were established to provide schooling for the youngsters who lived on the nearby farms.

The **Hamlin School District**, named for early settlers in the area, had been formed in 1889. The school was located at the intersection of Leonard and Peterson Roads, three miles west and one mile south of the Pond townsite. In its first year of operation the Hamlin School recorded an average daily attendance of nine students. Enrollment peaked at thirty-three pupils in 1915-16 then began a slow decline, bottoming out at thirteen students in 1929-30 which would prove to be the Hamlin district's final year of operation.

The **Pond School District** was formed on February 6, 1914, from territory formerly in the Lone Tree and Hamlin school districts. In its first year of operation, 1914-1915, Pond recorded an average daily attendance of five students. By 1923-24, the ADA had risen to seventy-two and by 1929-30 was up to ninety-one pupils.

By the spring of 1930 it was apparent that there were too few students in the Hamlin School to warrant its continued existence and the district was declared lapsed. The next fall Hamlin's territory was joined with that of Pond, resulting in the formation of the **Pondham Union School District**. Residents of the two school communities wanted the newly formed district to bear the name of each of the antecedent districts in some fashion but having determined that Pond-Hamlin would not roll easily off the tongue, opted instead for Pondham. In 1963, with permission of the Board of Supervisors, the name of the district was shortened to Pond.

The Pond district retained ownership of the old Hamlin School site and, for many years, leased it to a sheep rancher, Pete Arotzarena, for \$10



a month. In May of 1979 the district gave public notice that the property was for sale and that closed bids were being accepted. Mr. Arotzarena's offer of \$6,050 proved to be the winning bid. He received title to the property and the \$6,050 was used by the district for long-neglected deferred maintenance projects.

The Pond School is located on Pond Road just one mile east of the old Pond townsite. Boundaries for the district extend north to the Kern/Tulare county line, south to Peterson and Blankenship Roads, east to a line three miles beyond Highway 43, and west for four miles beyond Corcoran Road.

Following are some interesting sidelights that have been lifted from Pond's board minutes - some from meetings held decades ago - and are included simply to illustrate the close relationships and genuine interest in the school community that one finds here and in most other small, rural school districts:

- An entry in the district's board minutes from November of 1969 reminds us that a school district's business operations were a good deal less formal thirty or forty years ago than they are today. The minutes note that a Mr. Regan, who had contracted to paint one of the district vehicles, appeared before them to express dissatisfaction with the fee he had received. A monetary adjustment offered by the board was refused by Mr. Regan but he went away happy when, in lieu of cash, the district offered to donate eight light fixtures for use in his paint shop!
- Based on comments made at a board meeting in November of 1970, it would seem reasonable to assume that Pond's board of trustees at that time had something of a conservative bent, not just fiscally but morally as well. The then superintendent/principal, Phil Masonheimer, reported that due to a recent reduction in teaching staff, he was now teaching eighth grade math and also girl's P.E. for grades six, seven, and eight. The arrangement was apparently allowed to continue although the board made it clear that they had concerns about the propriety of a man teaching girl's P.E.!

During the 1989-90 school year, the district was granted \$227,000 in modernization funds and used the entire allocation to upgrade classroom interiors. The plan was to have the exterior painted as well but the funds were depleted before that could be accomplished. Undaunted, the board members took up brush and roller and teamed up to apply a fresh coat of paint to the outside of the buildings during the summer months.

Leo B. Hart, county superintendent of schools from 1939 through 1946, served as the superintendent of Pond Union School District from 1949 to 1959. One of Kern County's most innovative and highly esteemed educators, Hart developed a unique instructional plan which he called the Pondham Project. The plan called for children in grades five through eight to be taught a variety of special interest subjects each Monday with basic subjects being taught the other four days of the week. The Pondham Project was extremely popular and successful and was continued under Hart's successor, J. J. Thornton. Records from the 1961-62 school year indicate that special interest subjects being offered that year included chemistry, drafting, Spanish, algebra, typing, cooking, sewing, speech, crafts, clay, drawing, painting, electricity, shop, chorus, instrumental music, band, arithmetic skills, and reading skills. No records were found to indicate when or why the Pondham Project was abandoned.

Not unlike other small rural school districts, Pond has, over the course of its existence, experienced dramatic fluctuations in enrollment, a fact clearly demonstrated by these enrollment figures:

September, 1968	156 students present on opening day
September, 1971	136 students present on opening day
September, 1977	106 students present on opening day
June, 1980	134 students present at end of year
June, 1981	151 students present at end of year
September, 1981	115 students present on opening day

The loss of 36 students from the time school closed in June of 1981 until it opened the following September was the harbinger of a period of declining enrollment. In December of 1984 the superintendent reported a total enrollment of just 93 students. At this point the district was forced to consider reducing the number of certificated employees for the following year. Two contracts were not renewed and school opened in the fall of

1985 with five teachers on staff rather than seven.

Board minutes reveal that about this time, in the mid-1980s, the district began accepting a growing number of students on interdistrict transfers, a move they hoped would stabilize enrollment. Many parents from Delano and McFarland preferred to have their youngsters in a small school setting and, upon formal request, were granted permission to have them attend Pond. As of 2006, the students who attend Pond on interdistrict transfers represent almost half of the district's total enrollment. It should be noted, however, that Pond is not considered an "open enrollment" district and caps on enrollment have been established for each grade level. Requests for interdistrict transfers are granted only when room is available and then only after the student and his/her parents have met with the superintendent to sign a conditional agreement requiring regular attendance, appropriate behavior, and satisfactory academic performance. Non-compliance can result in revocation of the transfer agreement.

Pond provides bus transportation for those students living in Delano but parents are advised that, ultimately, it is their responsibility to see that their youngster arrives on time and has regular attendance.

In a measure no doubt intended to reduce operating costs, the district in 1979 discontinued their food service program, opting instead to purchase meals prepared and delivered by the Kern High School District. That arrangement continued until 1998 at which time the district began contracting for food services with the Wasco Union School District.

The southern San Joaquin Valley has undergone a dramatic change in demographics in recent years and the ethnic makeup of Pond's student population reflects that change. In 2005, the district's annual California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) ethnic survey reported a total enrollment of 225 students and the ethnic makeup as 70% Hispanic, 22% Caucasian, 6% Asian, and 2% African American and Pacific Islanders.

New construction money was made available to the district in 2006 with those funds earmarked to purchase three new portable classrooms and an additional student restroom facility. Pond has also been approved for "critical hardship" funds to improve the appearance of the exteriors of their older buildings with the application of new stucco and paint.

Following in the footsteps of Leo Hart, J. J. Thornton remained as

Pond's superintendent for twenty-three years, from 1946 to 1967. He was replaced by Lloyd Moore, who served just one year, 1967-68, and then Phil Masonheimer headed up the district from 1968 to 1974. Upon Masonheimer's departure, Virgil Trandem, a consultant from the county superintendent's office, served as interim superintendent until a replacement for Masonheimer could be found. In January of 1975 the position was filled by Ken Thomas, who served until July of 1977. He was followed by Jim Gaither (1977-1982), John Leonard (1982-1992), and Adolph Wirth (1992-96). In 1996 Leonard was re-hired and remained until 2002 at which time he was replaced by Lorah Carroll. Carroll retired in 2003 and the position was then filled by the current (2006) superintendent, Robert Parsons. ■



POND SCHOOL



# RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

In early October of 1914, three petitioners appeared before the Kern County board of supervisors to argue in favor of forming a new school district to serve what was then called the Shafter Colony. They asked that territory from the existing **Maple School District** be set aside to form this new district and suggested it be called Richland, which described the soil that had brought this area into agricultural prominence.

The three men, Charles Shoemate, Ed Wright, and the area postmaster, W.H. Hutchins, had apparently anticipated a favorable response from the board for they had already secured temporary housing for the school and raised funds for maintenance through private subscription. The petition was indeed granted and school began the next week under the tutelage of Mrs. Hazel Burns.

The Kern County Land Company had donated the building, a small one-room shelter situated on James Street directly across from the present Veterans Memorial Hall. Those somewhat rustic quarters were used for the remainder of that year.

Beginning in 1915, school was held in the new Santa Fe School, a larger, more modern facility. The Santa Fe School, named for the railroad which was so vital to the community's development, consisted of two classrooms and an assembly hall. The assembly hall was used for a variety of community activities, including church services, farm bureau meetings, and even weddings. Shafter's very first wedding, joining Woods Stone and Martha Buller was, in fact, held in the school's assembly hall.

Santa Fe School that first year had an ADA of just fifteen students and there were many complaints by citizens that the trustees had wasted money by building a school that was much too large, so large that it would still be half empty after fifty years. But enrollment tripled to forty-five students the next year and that no doubt stilled the voices of most of the complainants. Enrollment continued to grow and during World War I Santa Fe School was enlarged to ten classrooms. Full use of Santa Fe diminished once the district began to build other schools in the 1930's but at least a portion of the school was used until 1948, after which it was abandoned in favor of the newer, more modern facilities. Santa Fe School was finally razed in the 1950's and most of the property sold to the city of Shafter. That portion of the site retained by the district



is now occupied by their maintenance, operations, and transportation department. Although there have been brief periods of no growth or even declining enrollment, Richland has, for the most part, seen steady increases in average daily attendance since the district was formed in 1914. By its tenth year, the average daily attendance had reached 323 pupils. By 1934-35 it had climbed to 574 pupils, by 1944-45, to 1,077 pupils, and by 1961-62, to 1,880 pupils. While the pace of growth slowed over the next twenty-five years, the number of students eventually outstripped the available classroom space and by May of 1988 enrollment had reached a critical stage. The district was serving almost 2,200 pupils and classrooms were bulging at the seams. Fate intervened in the form of the adjoining **Lerdo School District**. The Lerdo district for some years had been experiencing declining enrollment and it seemed to be in the best interest of both districts to consider a merger. A similar proposal had been made as early as 1950 but a significant difference in assessed valuation prompted the Richland district officials to oppose the measure. A merger was also proposed in 1987 but, once again, the two districts were unable to reach an agreement. This time they were able to agree; consolidation was accomplished in July of 1989 and a “new” district, the **Richland-Lerdo School District**, was formed. (The district dropped “Lerdo” from its name in 2000 because the nearby detention facility operated by the Kern County Sheriff’s Office bears that same name.)

The Lerdo School District, located east of Shafter and north of Bakersfield, had been formed in 1910 to serve the children who lived in the Martindale Colony. The Martindale Colony was a group of sixty-five farm families from the mid-west who had settled in the Lerdo area in 1909. The land proved less fruitful than the settlers had anticipated, however, and after about a year they moved on to other parts of the state. It was thought that the Lerdo community would cease to exist when the Martindale families moved out but the territory was resettled in 1911 by a new group of colonists from Michigan and, consequently, the Lerdo School was able to remain open even though just eleven children were in attendance that first year. The district remained small and had fewer than 100 pupils each year until 1944-45 when enrollment reached 116 pupils due, for the most part, to the establishment of Minter Field as an Army Air Force Base. After the war, housing of any sort was in short



supply and the barracks buildings on the base were quickly converted to inexpensive rentals and just as quickly occupied by civilian families. By the 1952-53 school year, Lerdo's ADA had skyrocketed to 441 pupils. The buildings at Minter Field were gradually sold and removed from the base, however, and that led to a steady decline in Lerdo's enrollment. By 1961-62 the average daily attendance for the district had dropped to 151 pupils and by the time of the merger with Richland in 1989, just 63 pupils were enrolled.

The merger with Lerdo added considerable territory to the Richland district boundaries but it was not the first time that those boundaries had been expanded. Formed in January of 1910, tiny **Nord School District**, with territory adjoining that of the **Lerdo, Richland, and Beardsley** districts, had too few students from the very beginning to remain open. It ceased operations after ten months even before a schoolhouse could be built or a board of trustees elected. Richland acquired two sections, two square miles, of the defunct Nord district's territory.

In 1936 the **Poplar School District** lapsed and Richland acquired some of the territory that had been served by that district. Formed in 1914, the same year as Richland, the Poplar district had an average daily attendance of seven pupils that first year. Enrollment peaked at thirty-four pupils in 1926-27 and again in 1929-30 but a slow decline followed and the district lapsed in 1936 after enrollment had fallen to twenty-three pupils. Territory of the Poplar district was divided between the **Maple, Richland, and Rio-Bravo** school districts.

The original Richland School, built in 1934 as a WPA project, is currently the home of Richland Junior High School. In 1954, a wing consisting of five classrooms was added. A fire in the early 1980's destroyed approximately two-thirds of the original building which was then rebuilt and reopened in 1985. Six of the original classrooms remain in use and three additional, but detached, classroom wings have been added to the campus.

The first stage of what is now the Richland Primary School, a wing of four classrooms, was completed in 1938. In 1940, another wing of four classrooms was added to the campus. The final permanent structures: a multipurpose room, a new administration office, two kindergarten buildings with two rooms each, and four additional classroom wings,

were added thirteen years later, in 1953.

Much like the primary school, the present Richland Intermediate School was also built in stages. The initial phase, two wings of six classrooms, was completed in 1950. Two years later, two more 6-classroom wings were completed and occupied. In 1958, the library and an administration office were added to the campus. The administration building was destroyed by fire in December of 1964 and a new facility completed in July of 1965. The school's final permanent structure, a music room, was completed in 1969.

The Richland School District currently serves more than 2,900 students in three schools: Golden Oak, for grades K through 3, Redwood Elementary, for grades K through 6, Sequoia Elementary, also for grades K through 6, and Richland Junior High School for grades 7 and 8.

Richland's longest serving superintendent was Bruce Crawford, who guided district operations from 1950 to 1967. He was followed by David Cooke (1967 - December, 1970), Evron Barber (December, 1970 - August, 1979), and Gary Smith (1979 - 1982). Clifford Rogers then served a very brief pro tem assignment as superintendent until the district hired Vera Stone in July of 1982. Stone served until December of 1986 and at that time was replaced by Larry Reider, who was interim superintendent until June of 1987. He was followed by George Bury (1987 - 1990), then another interim superintendent, George Wolters (July, 1990 - October, 1990), and Daniel Knapp (October, 1990 - March, 1999.) Lyle Mack was appointed chief administrator of the district in March of 1999. Mack retired in 2007 and was replaced by Kenneth R. Bergevin.

In June of 2002, district voters gave their approval for the district to sell \$13 million in bonds over a period of ten years. Those monies, along with matching funds from the state were used to build a much-needed new K-5 school and the modernization of existing facilities. At the time of the bond election, the district had more than a thousand students housed in portable buildings. Modernization projects included the installation of new heating/air conditioning systems and the updating of electrical wiring, necessary for expanding and upgrading the district's technology program. ■

## RIO BRAVO-GREELEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Rio Bravo School District**, the genesis of the present day Rio Bravo-Greeley Union School District, was formed in May of 1891, with classes held that first year in a rustic 10 by 25 foot shack. A new two-story brick structure, with an auditorium and a single large classroom, was built in 1921. The classroom of the new facility was used for grades one through three and the auditorium served as a classroom for grades four through eight.

Not unlike many other rural school districts in those early years, the Rio Bravo schoolhouse was the center for community social activities and the upstairs auditorium was frequently used for weddings, plays, fairs, and dances.

Average daily attendance that first year was sixteen students and there would be very little growth for the next three decades. ADA for the 1921-22 school year was twenty-three students, a figure that had almost doubled, to forty-five students, by the 1931-32 school year.

In 1939, the Rio Bravo School District joined with the Munzer School District, their neighbor to the south, to form the Rio Bravo Union School District.

The **Munzer School District**, situated on Standard Oil property, had been formed in December of 1920 from territory formerly in the Greeley and Buena Vista school districts.

Eighty acres of what would become district territory had been purchased by the Standard Oil Company in 1907 to accommodate oil storage and pumping facilities comprised of five 135,000 barrel tanks and several smaller tanks. The Munzer schoolhouse sat on five acres of land adjacent to Standard's installation and a goodly portion of the Munzer student body was made up of children whose families lived in company housing on the pump station site.

The area that would one day fall within the boundaries of the Munzer district had been settled by homesteaders during the 1870s and 1880s. There was plenty of grazing land for cattle and, since the soil was rich and fertile, these early settlers also raised alfalfa and fruit trees. Before many years had passed, however, the entire area, on both sides of the river, would be home to a number of huge cattle ranches owned and operated by the Kern County Land Company.

During its first year of operation, class for Munzer's thirteen students



was held in a tent as they awaited completion of the schoolhouse. The district's average daily attendance peaked at thirty-two students in 1937-38, then dropped off sharply the next year to just seventeen students.

An election was held in July of 1939 asking that Rio Bravo and Munzer be allowed to join together to form a new "union" school district. The measure was solidly approved by the voters in both districts.

Both school districts had recently experienced dramatic increases in revenue when oil was discovered in the area. At the time of the unionization, the Rio Bravo district, with an ADA of eighty-eight students, had an assessed valuation of about \$5.3 million, and the Munzer district, with its seventeen students, had an assessed valuation of almost \$5.8 million. As a consequence, the newly formed Rio Bravo Union School District was for many years one of the wealthiest districts in the state.

---

**Note:** While Munzer's declining enrollment was no doubt a factor, a former Munzer School student, Joe Fregeau, suggested in a 1991 district centennial publication that consolidation of the two districts was prompted by the condemnation of the Munzer School as a result of its failure to meet the Field Act standards that had been established after the Long Beach earthquake of 1933. The old Munzer school building was relocated to a site on Rosedale Highway where it now serves as a residence.

---

The Rio Bravo district was further expanded in 1971 when it was joined with neighboring Greeley School District to form the present **Rio Bravo-Greeley Union School District**.

The **Greeley School District** had been formed in February of 1911 from territory formerly in the **Palm, Rio Bravo, and Buena Vista** school districts. Beginning with an average daily attendance of eight students in 1911-12, the Greeley district experienced slow but steady growth and in 1961-62 had an enrollment of 136 students. The Greeley district was comprised of approximately sixteen square miles of farmland dotted here and there with producing oil wells.

By 1971, both Rio Bravo and Greeley were experiencing stagnant or declining enrollment and saw that considerable benefit would be derived from joining their territories. There was little opposition to the move since

for some time they had been sharing facilities in an effort to reduce costs. All kindergarten and junior high students from both districts attended school at Rio Bravo while classes for all fifth and sixth graders were held at the Greeley School.

At the time the merger became official, July 1, 1971, the Rio Bravo district had an assessed valuation of \$9,441,510 and Greeley an assessed valuation of \$2,917,360.

The Greeley facility was leased to the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools and used for the next ten years to house special education classes. It was renamed the Harry E. Blair Learning Center in honor of the former county superintendent of schools. In 1981 the property became home to the Temple Baptist Church.

In 1994, faced with encroaching development and a growing student population, voters in the Rio Bravo-Greeley district overwhelmingly approved a \$5.5 million general obligation bond. A portion of those funds went toward construction of a new cafeteria, a project that was completed in 1997. Two years later the district began construction of Rio Bravo-Greeley Elementary School, a 16-classroom primary school situated on a fifteen acre parcel adjacent to and directly north of the current facility. It's interesting to note that, while the center of new growth in the district is some distance east of Enos Lane, members of the Rio Bravo school community, concerned about the possible loss of identity, insisted that the new school be physically integrated with the old campus.

Since 1945 the Rio Bravo Union School District, and subsequently the Rio Bravo-Greeley Union School District, has had just four superintendents: Frank O'Neill served from 1945 to 1972, William Luttrell from 1972 to 1984, Gerald Higbee from 1984 to 2006, and Ernie Unruh from 2006 to the present. ■



# ROSEDALE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Rosedale School District** and the **Palm Street School District** were consolidated in 1933 to form the Rosedale Union School District. In its first year of operation the newly formed district, its territory now covering an area of some 24 square miles, had an average daily attendance of 244 pupils.

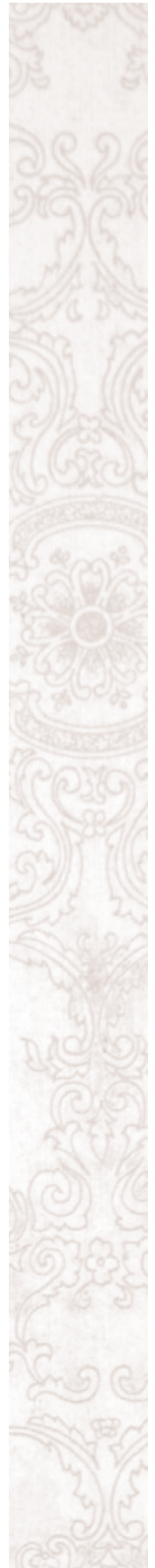
The original Rosedale School District had been formed in 1890 and in its first year of operation, 1890-91, had an average daily attendance of 18 pupils. The Rosedale School, located six miles west of Bakersfield on Rosedale Highway, was destroyed by fire in 1893 and a new school built in its place. By 1920-21, district enrollment had grown to 70 pupils and by 1932-33, the last year before its union with the Palm Avenue School District, 120 pupils were in attendance.

The **Palm School District** was formed in April of 1894 with the schoolhouse located west of Rosedale School at the intersection of Noriega Road and Heath Road. The school and the district were so named because there were a number of large palm trees on the school site. In its first year of operation the Palm School had an enrollment of eighteen pupils. It reached a peak average daily attendance of thirty-one pupils in 1904-05 but by 1932-33, its last year as an independent district, enrollment had dropped to just twenty-one pupils.

Another small district, the **Bellevue School District**, had been formed in the Rosedale area in 1899. The district lasted just two years, lapsing when enrollment slipped to just seven students. The Bellevue district covered an area of thirty-six square miles and it was so situated that parts of that district's territory can now be found in the **Rosedale Union, Rio Bravo-Greeley, Panama-Buena Vista, and Fruitvale** school districts.

An article in *The Bakersfield Californian*, dated March 18, 1935, noted a proposed consolidation of the Rosedale and Greeley school districts. The proposed union of the two districts was strongly supported by then county superintendent of schools, Herbert Healy, who appeared before the Rosedale board of trustees to point out "*the educational advantages of a large school over a small one.*" Mr. Healy failed to convince the board, however, and the proposal died from lack of support.

Following are enrollment figures that demonstrate the growth pattern experienced by the Rosedale district from 1922 to the period in the late 1960s when enrollment began experiencing significant increases due to



development in the area. Enrollment in parentheses: 1922-23 (81); 1928-29 (73); 1933-34 (120); 1937-38 (204); 1948-49 (261); 1955-56 (374).

By 1961-62, enrollment in Rosedale Union School District had risen to 523 students, heralding a growth trend that continues to the present day. In recent years, large blocks of land in the corridor between Hageman Road and Brimhall Road have been converted from agricultural to residential use and as the city of Bakersfield continues to expand westward, what was once an exclusively agricultural community is now a growing urban center. That urbanization is graphically reflected in district enrollment figures. The average daily attendance was 1,009 students in 1977-78 and had grown to 1,446 students by 1987-88. A dramatic increase in enrollment followed in the next eight years and by 1995-96 the district was serving 3,162 students. The Rosedale district continues to experience substantial annual increases in student population. Average daily attendance for 1997-98 was 3,388 students but a thousand more students had swelled the rolls to 4,333 by 2005. By 2009, the district's ADA topped 5,000 students.

Beginning with a 1975 bond election, Rosedale district residents approved the issuance of a series of general obligation bonds to provide additional school facilities for their growing student population. Proceeds from these bonds have been used to acquire new sites, build new schools, and refurbish existing facilities. Subsequent to the 1975 election, successful bond elections were also held in 1976, 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1994.

Funds generated by the sale of these bonds were used to build Rosedale North Elementary School, opened in 1976, and Centennial Elementary, opened in 1990.

To augment funds generated by the sale of bonds, the Rosedale district, in 1992, using the authority granted by the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act, joined with the Norris and Rio Bravo-Greeley school districts to create Community Facilities District No. 92-1 for the purpose of financing the construction and acquisition of additional school facilities. In December of 1992 voters in the Community Facilities District authorized the issuance of \$350,000,000 in bonds to be apportioned among the three districts as follows: Rosedale \$175,000,000; Norris - \$87,500,000; and Rio Bravo-Greeley - \$87,500,000. Rosedale completed a new district office facility in 1991, then opened Del Rio Elementary in



1992 and Almondale Elementary in 1994.

On October 1, 1995, Rosedale Union School District issued Mello-Roos bonds in the amount of \$4,295,000 for the construction of Independence Elementary School which opened in 1997. Freedom Middle School, a \$10.1 million facility at Jewetta and Noriega roads, was completed in 2000.

In the past forty plus years the Rosedale Union School District has been served by just five superintendents: Seth Rollins was the district's chief administrator from 1955-1966, Floyd Luttrell from 1966-1969, Donald Himes from 1969-1974, Gary Mullhofer from 1974-1998, Jamie Henderson from 1998-2008. The current superintendent is John Mendiburu. ■



# SEMITROPIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Semitropic School District**, which serves a rural area west of Wasco, was formed on April 1, 1895. An antecedent district, the Hogan School District, had been formed in 1887 and included all of the territory now in the Semitropic School District and portions of territory now within the boundaries of the Wasco Union, Pond Union, Lost Hills Union, and Maple school districts. In 1890, the Hogan School District changed its name to the Miramonte School District. Declining enrollment forced the Miramonte district into lapsation at the end of the 1898-99 school year and it was annexed to Semitropic on October 5, 1900.

Several theories exist as to the origin of the Semitropic name. Some attribute it to the oasis like conditions created by the artesian wells at Gun Club Road and Highway 46. Others say it was so named by an east coast developer, still others by the family that donated the land for the school site. It has also been suggested that the name came from the label of a fruit packing company.

In its first year of operation the Semitropic district, with a territory of 107 square miles, had an average daily attendance of 14 pupils. It remained quite small for many years and as late as 1944-45 had a recorded enrollment of just 20 students.

---

**Note:** In January of 1940, Semitropic residents held an election and opted to become a part of the Lost Hills Union School District. There was rancor and disagreements between residents of the two districts, however, and the union was dissolved three years later.

---

The original Semitropic schoolhouse was on Highway 46, five miles to the north. It was moved on rollers to its presently location, then replaced in 1940 by a more modern plant. Additions and upgrades were made to those newer facilities in 1942 and again in 1963 and 1972. Several portable buildings were added to the campus in 1997 and 1998 to facilitate the district's commitment to class size reduction.

The population of the area served by the Semitropic School District grew considerably following World War II and by 1961-62 the average daily attendance had risen to 97 pupils. This was followed by three decades of very little growth, however, the district reporting an ADA of 95 pupils in 1971-72, 105 pupils in 1981-82, and 120 pupils for the 1991-92



school year. In the mid-1990s, Semitropic announced an “*open enrollment*” policy and, consequently, a considerable number of families in the Wasco area have opted to send their children to the Semitropic School. This has added an appreciable number of students and the 2007 enrollment stood at 260 students.

The area served by Semitropic School is almost exclusively agricultural and, as a consequence, the student population is made up principally of children who reside on the surrounding farms or whose parents work on those farms. Like all Kern County farm areas, Semitropic has been witness to a huge influx of Hispanic farm workers and their families in recent years and Hispanic children currently make up 92% of the school’s student body. Since instruction is in English, the district routinely assesses the language proficiency of individual students to better assist them in the transition from Spanish to English.

The district offers a modern curriculum with a strong emphasis on academic achievement and the development of appropriate human relations skills. Technology is considered to be a critical element of the curriculum and computers, all with internet access, can be found in every room.

Since 1950, just five superintendents have served as superintendent in the Semitropic School District: Bruce Jenkins (1950-1971), Russell Bigler (1971 -1979), Mike Woessner (1979-1986), and Mike Rucks (1986-2007). The current superintendent is Bryan Caples.

As in many rural areas, Semitropic School serves as a center for social activities in that school community. ■

# SOUTH FORK UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **South Fork Union School District** was established in March of 1921 with the joining of the **Scodie, Weldon,** and **South Fork** school districts. Six years later, in 1927, the **Kelso School District** lapsed and it, too, was annexed to South Fork Union.

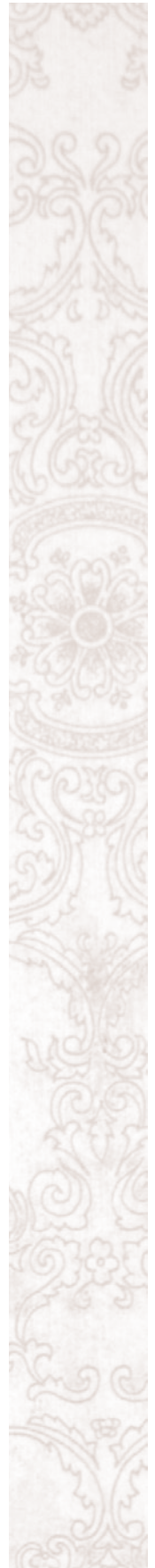
A portion of the territory from the **Erskine School District**, which lapsed in 1903, is also now a part of the South Fork district. As a result of these consolidations, along with the acquisition of the territory from Erskine, the South Fork district is quite large, at least in terms of area - some 417 square miles. Still, the student population remains relatively small simply because much of the land within district boundaries is uninhabited or only lightly inhabited. That is easily understood when one realizes that the district includes the South Fork of the Kern River, a portion of Lake Isabella, Walker's Pass, and a considerable amount of sparsely populated territory in the surrounding mountains.

The original South Fork School District was formed in 1877. The site where the schoolhouse stood, about four miles west of Weldon on the road to Bodfish, is now on the edge of Lake Isabella. The district had an average daily attendance of nine students that first year and enrollment remained near that level until the unionization in 1921.

The **Weldon School District** was established in 1873 and served just four students during its first year of operation. Enrollment reached its peak of thirty-three students in 1921, the year of the unionization. The Weldon School was located at Weldon, a tiny community on the south fork of the Kern River. Situated as it was between South Fork School and Scodie School, Weldon was selected as the location for the South Fork Union School when the new district was formed.

**Scodie School District** was formed in August of 1882. The Scodie School was located in Onyx, about six miles up Walker's Pass from Weldon. Eleven students were enrolled that first year and the district remained quite small throughout its almost forty years of existence. Average daily attendance in 1921, the year of the unionization, was seventeen students.

**The Kelso School District**, with territory in Kelso Valley between Weldon and Cantil, was established by the board of supervisors in 1866 but there are no reports of student attendance prior to the 1904-05 school year. ADA in 1904-05 was fifteen pupils but by 1924 just three students



were in attendance and the district was suspended. In 1927 the Kelso district became a part of the Weldon subdistrict of the South Fork Union School District.

The Erskine School District was formed in March of 1896 and was in existence but three years. Although no classes were held after 1899, the district was not officially declared lapsed until 1903. As a result of the lapsation, the South Fork Union School District acquired seventy-seven square miles of Erskine district territory. The remaining thirty-two square miles is now a part of the Kernville Union School District.

In its first year as a union district, South Fork had an average daily attendance of sixty-two pupils. The size of the district's student population remained virtually unchanged for the next forty years; the recorded ADA for the 1962-63 school year was sixty-four pupils. There has been considerable growth in recent years, however, and a number of children who attend school in South Fork do so because their parents are willing to trade a long commute to work for the slower pace and simple beauty of this mountain community. District enrollment more than quadrupled between 1962-63 and 1979-80 when the ADA reached 264 students. Slow but steady growth followed until about 1995 at which time enrollment leveled off at about 400 students then drifted slightly downward. By 2006 enrollment was about 350 students.

In 1952 a major earthquake that struck the Kern River Valley destroyed the South Fork School. There were no funds at that time to rebuild the school so staff and students were temporarily absorbed by the Kernville Union School District. The South Fork district was finally able to construct a cafeteria and two classrooms in 1954 which allowed students in grades one through four to return to their home campus. The other grades continued to attend school in Kernville. In the early 1960's the fifth grade students were returned to South Fork and housed in a temporary classroom. Two new classrooms and an administration building were completed in 1967 and that allowed the sixth graders to return. The seventh graders returned two years later.

The South Fork district has been continually improving and expanding its facilities since the early 1970's. A new cafeteria and two classrooms were added to the campus in 1972, then two more classrooms in 1975. In 1984 the district moved into a new kindergarten facility and that

same year two portables were moved onto the site. The last permanent building, a combination bus barn, storage area, and faculty room, was added in 1987. The two classrooms and administration facility that had been completed in 1967 were refurbished and updated in 1990 and more portables were added in the years between 1987 and 1997. A middle school, departmentalized and offering classes in math, science, language arts, social studies, and physical education to students in grades six, seven and eight, was created in 1980. At present the South Fork School has twenty-two classrooms.

In the spring of 1998, after some ten years of planning, voters in the South Fork district gave their approval to a \$1.1 million general obligation bond. Funds from the sale of those bonds, along with \$450,000 from the district's Special Reserve Building Fund and a \$565,000 Community Development block grant, were used to build the new South Fork Middle School and community center complex on a 26 acre site at the base of Nichols Mountain overlooking the Kelso Valley. The school opened in January of 2001. Additionally, the district had earmarked \$50,000 for the construction of a new gymnasium on the site and it became operational in March of 2001. Money for the gymnasium, generated primary through the participation of South Fork students in the annual walk-a-thon, had been accumulating in a special Gymnasium Fund for the prior fifteen years.

Since 1952 the following superintendents have headed up the South Fork district: Ruth Barlow (1952-1965), Winifred Henderson (1965-1978), Earl Gordon (May, 1978 to June, 1979), Edward Keeley (July, 1979 to June 1983), Gary Bray (July, 1983 to September, 1988), Larry Holochwost (1988 to 2002), and Dr. Wesley Thomas (2002-2004). During the 2004-2005 school year, the county schools office provided administrative services for South Fork while the district sought a replacement for Thomas. Robin Shive, the current superintendent, was appointed to that position in 2005. In 2008, Sherry Nichols was named superintendent. ■





# STANDARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

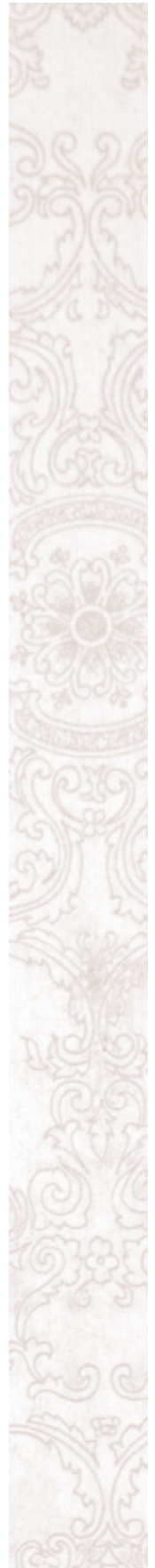
The **Standard School District** was formed in 1909 from territory formerly in the **Beardsley** and **Aztec** school districts. The district serves an area of approximately 34 square miles and all four schools operated by the district are located in the unincorporated community of Oildale.

Early settlers in what would eventually become Oildale were sheepmen, attracted to the area by the rich grasslands. Gradually, as canals were dug and water became more accessible, sheep raising gave way to farming, primarily orchard crops, grapes, and melons. Large tracts of land came under cultivation but the individual farms, which were relatively small, generally 40 to 60 acres, were worked by their owners. But interest in farming waned and was largely abandoned in the Oildale area with the discovery of oil in 1899 that led to the development of the vast Kern River oil field.

It was well known as far back as the 1860s that there were petroleum and asphalt deposits in Kern County since there many spots where heavy, sticky crude could be found slowly seeping to the surface. One of the most noteworthy of these seepages, as it turned out, was located on Tom Means' ranch close by the China Grade bridge.

In the early spring of 1899, James Elwood, the proprietor of a Bakersfield wood yard, went to Tom Means seeking an agreement to cut wood in shares on Means' property. Instead, the rancher suggested that they consider a more lucrative venture, then showed Elwood an oil seepage on the north bank of the river. A lease was arranged and Elwood agreed to hand dig a well to see if there was oil in quantity below the surface. He enlisted the help of his father, Jonathan Elwood, a farmer living near Sanger and after doing some prospecting near the seepages, the two Elwoods began digging the well. Oil sand, accompanied by offensive gasses, was found at a depth of about 50 feet. They continued digging for another 25 feet but, at that point, they were all but overwhelmed by the gasses so digging was halted and the well abandoned. But Discovery #1, which the Elwood well came to be called, clearly demonstrated that oil was present here and that it was reasonably close to the surface. Discovery #1 was counted a success without ever having produced a barrel of oil!

Using more sophisticated drilling equipment, work began to determine the commercial potential of the discovery. Milton McWhorter, an experienced oil man, "*proved up the find*" by drilling the first of several





AZTEC SCHOOL

wells in May of 1899. A host of speculators were immediately attracted to the area and, by the end of 1900, several hundred producing wells had been drilled in what was now a booming oil field.

By 1903, many of the large oil companies had moved in and, within a very short time, the petroleum industry, employing

hundreds of people, dominated both the economy and activities of the region. Workers and their families, most of them from eastern oil producing states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky, arrived in droves to work in the new field. They soon numbered in the thousands, most of them living in company housing on the oil leases.

About 6 miles northeast of Bakersfield, in the middle of the oil fields, a trading center called Oil Center was established to service the needs of these families. In the fall of 1900, the Southern Pacific Railroad opened a branch line to Oil Center, usually a sign that a community, at least in the eyes of the railroad, was likely to prosper. A post office was opened in May, 1901 and a branch of the Kern County Library began operating shortly thereafter. Soon, a number of businesses, including a general store and a very popular pool and billiards parlor, had opened their doors in Oil Center.

With many young families moving into the Oil Center area, the need for schools soon became a major concern. The **Aztec School District** was formed in 1901 and a school opened the same year. Within ten years, two other districts had been established: the Toltec School District in November of 1910 and the Petroleum School District in September of 1911. All three of these districts were small in terms of territory and their schoolhouses, while situated in different sections of the same township, were nonetheless in close proximity to each other. Aztec School was located on the southern border of section 32, Toltec almost directly in the center of section 30, and Petroleum in the very southwest corner of section 34, township T28S R28E.

Almost all supplies and materials for drilling operations, as well as some supplies needed by the workers and their families, were hauled to the oil fields from Bakersfield and the road between Bakersfield and Oil Center became heavily traveled. A settlement called Waits grew up

along a portion of that thoroughfare situated just north of the Beardsley Canal. Waits took its name from Hiram L. Waits, a real estate broker, who, in 1900, had sold a mile-long strip of land for the railroad to the oil field interests. Southern Pacific Railroad named one of their stations after him and the area around the station also bore his name. Waits proved to be an convenient way station and soon boasted of a drugstore, a number of grocery stores, a dry goods store, a livery stable, and three roadhouses.

One of the roadhouses was owned and operated by John Hughes, an early entrepreneur referred to in one account as "*the unofficial mayor of Waits*", in another as the "*genial host of The Tavern*", a popular watering hole. But his interests extended beyond the bar business. Hughes, along with several other Waits businessmen, began subdividing nearby farmland and were pleasantly surprised to discover that the demand for lots exceeded all expectations. Waits was soon viewed as not just a place to stop but rather a place to live.

In 1916, a new post office, designated the Oildale Post Office, was opened in the little community but the railroad station was still called Waits so there followed a brief period of lingering confusion before Oildale became the accepted name.

The Standard district's first school was built on a five acre site in Oil Center that had been donated by the Standard Oil Company. The schoolhouse was on the north side of Oil Center Road (now called China Grade Loop) between Barnett and Manor streets, about a half mile east of North Chester Avenue. The schoolhouse, a large frame structure of two rooms with a wide veranda extending from each of the four sides, was not yet finished when school opened that first year. Classes were held even though the building was still without a roof and with the doors and windows not yet set in place. The roof, once added, featured a cupola that housed the school bell.

Average daily attendance that first year was 27 students. In 1912, a second building was added to the campus to serve as a music room but that plan was soon abandoned and it became the primary building.

Most of the students who attended Standard School in those early years lived in camp housing provided by the large oil companies, principally Standard, Union, and Associated. They brought their own food and water and, if they lived in Waits, they had to travel a considerable distance by

foot each day.

Before long it was obvious that the district would soon be unable to accommodate their growing student body at the school in Oil Center. In 1918, following an election to ascertain the wishes of the people, the district purchased a five-acre site in Oildale (formerly Waits) from the Pacific Oil Company. The new site was bounded on the west by North Chester Avenue (then called Boulevard Avenue) and on the south by Ferguson Avenue, a location much closer to those students living in Oildale. The two (some sources say three) buildings from Oil Center were then picked up and moved to the new location and that original property returned to Standard Oil Company.

The site in Oildale was expanded in 1923 with the purchase of ten adjoining acres to the north and east, then again in 1939 with the acquisition of property immediately to the east.

---

**Note:** Included in the Addendum is a poorly reproduced but still very readable document titled *"The Standard School District, a Brief History"*. It is dated 1941 and was compiled by a long-time teacher in the district, Josephine Knowles. Mrs. Knowles speaks to the early development of the district in great detail and provides some interesting insights and sidelights.

---

In 1927, the district built a separate nine-classroom primary school. In the document referenced above, Josephine Knowles noted that, by 1941, eight more classrooms had been added to that primary school and that three more were under construction.

District facilities were further expanded in 1937 with the construction of a large auditorium. It had a seating capacity of 850 people and, like many school buildings of that era, was built as a W.P.A. project, with the federal government paying 45% of the cost. It had such ultra modern features as two 35mm motion picture projectors, vita-phone sound equipment, an intercom phone system, public address system, acoustic plaster, air-conditioning, a counter-weight system for controlling curtains and scenery, an electrically controlled fire protection system, and fully equipped dressing rooms.

The Standard district's three elementary schools - Standard, Highland,

and Wingland - are K-5 schools and Standard Middle School serves students in grades 6-8. The present Standard Elementary School opened in the late 1940s and seven new classrooms were added in 1951. Highland Elementary opened in 1954 and Wingland in 1957. All district schools were upgraded and modernized in the 1990s.

The district's original Oil Center school building had to be demolished as it failed to meet safety and other code requirements. The second building was donated to the Kern County Museum.

---

**Note:** Consolidation of school districts in the Oildale area began in 1932 when the Toltec and Petroleum districts became a part of the Aztec School District. Aztec remained an independent district until 1966, at which time it was absorbed by the Standard School District. Standard's growth pattern can be seen in the sampling of average daily attendance figures that follow: ADA for 1922-23 was 277 students; for 1930-31, 429 students; for 1938-39, 783 students; for 1948-49, 1,413 students; for 1953-54, 1,727 students; for 1962-63, just over 2,000 students; for 1972-73, 2,020 students; for 1982-83, a significant drop to 1,726 students; and for 1992-93, 2,476 students. Enrollment in 2007 stood at just under 3,000 pupils.

---

The influence of the petroleum industry on the Oildale area continues right up to the present. Even though more than a hundred years have passed since the Kern River oil field was discovered, many of the students who attend school in the Standard School District are from families who work in the oilfields or in oil-related industries.

Bryce Rathbun served as superintendent of the Standard district from March, 1951 to July 30, 1979. His successors have been: Robert Mergler (August 1, 1979 to July 1, 1987); Dr. Edward Moon (July 1, 1987 to June 29, 1991); Dr. Marty Butt (July 1, 1991 to February 27, 1998); Dr. Scott Meier (March 2, 1998 to June 30, 1999); and Dr. Erich Kwek from July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2007. Kwek was replaced in 2007 by an interim superintendent, Dr. Danny Whetton. Whetton was replaced by the present superintendent, Kevin Silberberg. ■



STANDARD SCHOOL



# TAFT CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

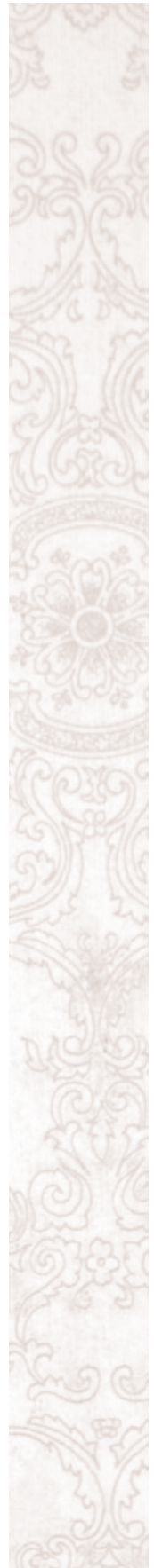
In May 1908, prompted by a booming oil business and the subsequent need to move westside crude to market, the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads began construction of the Sunset Western Railway. The Sunset Western line originated at Pentland Junction, 4.3 miles east of Maricopa, then made its way northwest through the heart of the Midway oilfield for seventeen miles before terminating at Shale, just north of a siding that would later become the town of Fellows.

In terms of the time required to travel back and forth to work, it would not have been practical in those days to work in the Midway field and live in Maricopa or McKittrick, the only established communities in the area; consequently, it was not long before a few dwellings and businesses began to appear along a portion of the railroad some nine miles north of Pentland, on a site that would one day develop into the city of Taft.

In 1904, a settlement had developed on part of E.J. Boust's property near Tenth and B streets in what is now Taft Heights. It consisted mostly of saloons, hotels, and brothels, and was called Boust City. By 1908, a number of other businesses had opened their doors in Boust City, although one cannot discern much that was new in the nature of their services. Included were: Al Thackery's Saloon, Eating and Rooming House; Bert Tibbett's Rooming House and Restaurant; Sampson and Jones Saloon; Milton and Martin's 35-room, 2-story hotel and bar; Mosier and Johnson's Saloon and the H. F. Dover and George Wilson Saloon. The population of Boust City at the time was 100-150 people.

In 1909, the railroad won the approval of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to establish a townsite north of the railroad tracks and began by laying out Main, Center, and North streets between Second and Sixth streets. The seven square block area was called Moron by the railroad, a name that proved to be less than popular among the citizenry for obvious reasons and when the post office opened in April of that year the name of the town was officially changed to Taft, in honor of President William H. Taft.

By 1910, Taft had two newspapers, The Midway Driller and The Midway Courier, a sure indicator of just how fast the town was growing. It nonetheless was not growing fast enough to sustain both newspapers and within a year the two had consolidated their operations and kept The Midway Driller name.



On November 7, 1910, an election was held to determine whether or not Taft should be incorporated. Oddly enough, the area considered for incorporation included only the approximately 800 residents who lived in section 13, excluding the other 800 residents who lived south of the railroad tracks, in South Taft and in Boust City. There was little opposition to the measure and it passed by a vote of 212 to 18. In just two years, the tiny settlement surrounding what had been little more than a railroad siding had grown into the city of Taft.

Initially, Taft was plagued by an insufficient supply of domestic water and what little was available had to be supplemented with water hauled in from Bakersfield in railroad tank cars. By 1911, however, that problem was solved when the Western Water Works began delivering water to Taft via a 14 mile pipeline from their wells near the Kern River.

By 1912, Taft was a black gold boom town. A host of businesses had opened their doors to serve the growing population and automobiles, chugging up the dirt roads, soon became a common sight.

---

**Note:** As automobiles became more popular, so too did automobile road racing. One account describes such a competition held on Washington's Birthday in 1912. The first leg of the race was from Bakersfield to Maricopa, and from there continue on to Taft, then McKittrick, Buttonwillow, and back to Bakersfield. Thousands of spectators lined the roadways. Drivers and their mechanics were required to go twice around the circuit, most of it on dirt roads, a feat described by one driver as a "*two hundred and twelve mile grind*". A Ford and a Buick were counted among the competitors but the other cars had names that are less familiar to us today, names such as Nyberg, Mitchell, Pope-Hartford, Flanders, Stutz, National, Reo, Kline Kar, and Knox.

---

Taft's first school district was called the **Conley School District**. It was formed in February of 1909 and named for John W. Conley, a holder of extensive oil property in the area. Early on, the district was characterized by extremely rapid growth. In its first year of operation, 1909-10, the average daily attendance was 48 pupils but just one year later enrollment had almost tripled, to 137 pupils, and vigorous growth continued. By 1925-26, the district was serving 1,832 pupils.



The first Conley School classes were held in a small frame shack near Boust City, the early name for Taft Heights. That school burned down the first year and classes were held for a time in a section of the old pavilion on Crystal Street between Asher and Shattuck avenues. A makeshift tent then served as the school house for a while. In 1910, the district built a two-room schoolhouse to serve its youngsters, then two years later, in 1912, passage of a \$50,000 bond issue allowed the district to build a more substantial two-story brick building with eight classrooms and an assembly hall.

That same year two small rural schools were added to the Conley district: the two-teacher Hill School, so called because it was located on 25 Hill, and the North American School, located west of Taft Heights,. The North American school held classes in an abandoned lease house and was in operation for just two years before being replaced by the Bedrock School, a \$2,500 one-room school constructed west of town on Union Oil Company's Bedrock lease.

It's interesting to note that the Conley district board of trustees, apparently concerned that the quality of their educational program would suffer as a result of the district's rapid growth, established a policy limiting class size to fifty pupils. The new policy was reported in *The Midway Driller* and stated in part:

Of course this policy has cost more money than would be required if a narrower spirit prevailed and the teachers were compelled to take care of from 70 to 90 pupils.

The board's concern was shared by the citizenry who, in 1920, passed a \$360,000 bond issue, the proceeds to be used for the construction of additional student housing. The district was able to complete several capital projects as a result of the successful bond election, including the construction of two new schools, Roosevelt and Lincoln.

The Conley district acquired an additional 36 square miles of territory in 1920 when they absorbed the Signa School District. The Signa district, located directly east of Taft and north of Maricopa, had been formed in November of 1919 but never operated a school and was annexed to the Conley district in February of the following year.

In 1932, voters in the district opted to change the name to **Taft City**

**School District.** No boundary change was involved in the formation of the new district but becoming a city school district gave the school board greater independence from the actions of the county board of education and thus the freedom to develop a separate course of study as well as the opportunity to adopt supplementary textbooks. Additionally, the city school designation gave the trustees the right to name new board members to fill interim vacancies.

The superintendent of the “*new*” Taft City School District was James A. Joyce. Joyce had served as superintendent of the Conley School District since 1922 and continued as superintendent of the Taft City School District until his retirement in 1947.

In its first year of operation, 1932-33, the Taft City School District served 1,683 students in six schools. The district experienced declining enrollment for the next ten years and by 1942, shortly after the start of World War II, was serving just 1,129 students. The years following the war saw a huge increase in enrollment, however, and by 1957-58 enrollment had risen to almost 2,500 students. From that time to the present, enrollment in the district has experienced no significant fluctuations. The 1961-62 average daily attendance was 2,315, it dipped to 1,981 in 1971-72, was 1,965 for the 1981-82 school year, and had risen slightly, to 2,174 students by 1991-92. The 2007 enrollment stood at 2,080 students.

The devastating earthquake of 1952 damaged many of Taft’s schools. The following year, district voters approved a \$1,400,000 bond issue and the proceeds were used to replace those buildings which had been destroyed. Capital projects completed with those funds included the replacement or refurbishing of the Roosevelt School, the south wing and the two-classroom north wing of the Lincoln School, the Lincoln School cafeteria and gymnasium, Parkview School, and Taft Primary School.

In June of 2001, 80.7% of the voters in the Taft City School District voted in favor of a \$20 million bond issue. Funds from the sale of those bonds are being used to modernize existing school sites, all of which are at least 40 years old and some much older.

Modernization plans included the upgrading of electrical, plumbing, fire alarm/communication systems, plus those site improvements required to meet the standards set in the Americans With Disabilities Act. The district also planned to use these bond funds to improve their

technology systems and to modernize windows and lighting to make buildings more energy efficient. The successful bond election also qualified the district for \$4 million in state modernization funds.

For a few years, beginning in 2007, Taft City School District provided administrative and business services for the tiny Elk Hills School District in Tupman. The principal of the Elk Hills School was an employee of the Taft City School District and Michael Harris, the Taft superintendent at the time, served as the Elk Hills district's chief administrator on a part time basis.

Like most cities in the San Joaquin Valley, Taft has experienced a significant influx of Hispanic families and, consequently, a significant increase in the number of Hispanic students being served by the school districts. In 1996, there were 382 Hispanic students enrolled in the Taft City School District. By 2000, that number had grown to 515 and represented almost a quarter of the total student population. Today, about one-third of the district's students are of Hispanic origin.

As previously noted, James Joyce served as district superintendent of Conley School District from 1922 to 1932, then continued as superintendent of the newly formed Taft City School District from 1932 until his retirement in 1947. He was followed by E.J. Lindstrom (1947-49); Milton Ross (1949-59); Dr. Ross Harrington (1959-63); Dr. Claude Norcross (1963-68); Dr. James Crandall (1968-69); F. Gordon Cairns (1969-77); Bill L. Williams (1977-79); Edward L. Moon (1979-87); Floyd W. Davis (1987-90); George Bury (1990-96); Michael Harris (1996-2007); Michael Brusa (2007-2009). Adolph Wirth served as an interim superintendent until the position was filled by Ron Bryant. ■



# VINELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

The present-day **Vineland School District** is comprised of two schools: the Vineland School, which serves students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade; and Sunset School, which serves students in grades five through eight.

The Vineland district was formed in May of 1890 as a one-school district and during its first year of operation had an average daily attendance of fourteen pupils. Enrollment in the district remained quite small until after 1920 when the beginnings of large scale agricultural development attracted migrant farm workers to the area. By 1929-30, average daily attendance in the district was 225 students and ten years later, in 1939-40, ADA stood at 309 students. In 1944, Vineland absorbed the Weedpatch School and enrollment in the district jumped to over 600 students. Average daily attendance remained stable over the next ten years, finally topping the 700 mark in 1969-70. Enrollment fell off considerably in the 70's, however, and by 1978-79 had slipped to just slightly over 500 students. Mild to moderate growth returned in the 80's and 90's and since 1995-96 the average daily attendance has held steady at just over 800 students.

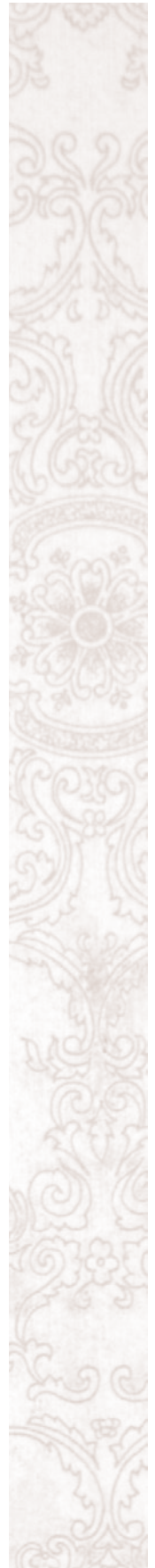
---

**Note:** The Vineland district experiences a temporary jump in enrollment each spring as better than one hundred "*short term*" students, children from families of migrant workers, are added to the rolls. These families, during the time that they are employed in the area, live in the nearby Sunset Labor Camp.

---

As noted above, the Weedpatch School was absorbed by the Vineland School District in 1944. Weedpatch School opened in September of 1940 as the Arvin Federal Emergency School, a federal migratory school created by the then county superintendent of schools, Leo B. Hart, to serve the children from a large migrant labor camp that had been established in the area.

The events leading to the development of the Arvin Federal Emergency School have been chronicled by local historian, Jerry Stanley, in his book, *Children of the Dust Bowl*, published in 1992. Because the circumstances surrounding the origin and development of that school are so unique,



some of the details, taken from Stanley's account, have been summarized in the following paragraphs.

In 1936, in the midst of the Great Depression, the Farm Security Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, began building 12 farm labor camps in the San Joaquin Valley. The farm labor camps offered housing to unemployed Dust Bowl immigrants until they could find work. One such camp was called the Arvin Federal Camp. Located between Arvin and Weedpatch and situated on Weedpatch Highway, it was more commonly referred to simply as "*Weedpatch Camp*" by the families who lived there.

The "*Okie*" children from the camp, often shabby in appearance due to the dire poverty in which they were forced to live, were not given a warm welcome in the nearby public schools and, in fact, were often poorly treated there. Leo Hart, who had been elected county superintendent of schools in 1939, was aware of the problem and determined to find a way to provide for the special needs of these youngsters. He began his efforts by leasing a 10 acre site adjacent to the labor camp and, using the two old condemned buildings on the property to house the "*fifty poorly clad, undernourished, and skeptical youngsters*", started the Arvin Federal Emergency School or, as it came to be called, the Weedpatch School.

Renovation of the two buildings and construction of additional facilities was accomplished exclusively by the children and their teachers. They learned the art of making adobe bricks and also how to make shelves, chairs, and even desks. They dug ditches for water lines and even dug a swimming pool, the first public pool in Kern County.

Once it became operational, students at the Weedpatch School were offered a curriculum far different from that of other public schools in the area. They learned everything from the practical aspects of agriculture and animal husbandry to airplane mechanics and the cobbling of shoes. In chemistry class, the girls learned to make face cream and lipstick.

During its first year of operation, from September of 1940 to May of 1941, about 200 students attended Weedpatch School. Its success, due largely to the unique curriculum and a dedicated staff, gained a great deal of favorable attention and before much time had passed, once-hostile members of the community began to express interest in having their own children attend Weedpatch!

The declared emergency that had given birth to Superintendent Hart's creation could, by law, last no more than five years, however, and so Arvin Federal Emergency School was forced out of existence in 1944 and was absorbed by the Vineland School District. The earthquake of 1952 destroyed all but one of the original buildings on the Weedpatch site but the school was rebuilt and then renamed Sunset School.

Since 1990 Vineland has added thirty-one new portable buildings to its facilities for use as classrooms and libraries, and for music instruction. A new district office was built in 1991. Additionally, both of the Vineland campuses were recently upgraded and modernized, the project funded largely by the state's school modernization program.

Like most California school districts, Vineland maintains the number of students in primary classrooms at twenty or less to help insure early school success. The district places a strong emphasis on technology and recently received a four-year technology literacy challenge grant which will serve to boost their efforts to integrate technology with the core subject areas. Neighborhood Partnership and Healthy Start grants are also being utilized to meet student and community needs by bringing agency services to district campuses.

Glen Walsh served as superintendent of the Vineland School District from 1955 to 1972. He was succeeded by Glen Worrell who held that position for the next twenty years, ending his tenure in 1992. Stephen Greenfield replaced Worrell and served as superintendent until June, 2005. Adolph Wirth was appointed to succeed Greenfield and began his service on July 1, 2005. He served in that capacity until 2009 at which time the position was filled by Emma Pereida-Martinez. ■



VINELAND SCHOOL





# WASCO UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

In 1898, the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railroad established a depot some 25 miles northwest of Bakersfield and named it Dewey, and later Deweyville, in honor of Admiral George Dewey, a hero of the Spanish American War. Soon a small trading center that included a grocery store, a blacksmith shop, and two saloons grew up around the depot. A post office was established in October of 1899 with the rail agent, Arthur Weaber, serving as postmaster. The opening of the post office led to the discovery that another town called Dewey already existed and the name of the little village was renamed Wasco the following year.

It is generally agreed that the town's new name was suggested by Jimmy Bonham, the foster child of a local family and, by birth, a member of the Wasco Indian tribe of Oregon. But there is scant agreement among those who offer opinions as to the English translation of "*wasco*." Some say it means "*hot*", which would be appropriate given the climate of the region, but it may also mean "*a large body of water*", or even "*a cup or small bowl made of bone*."

The Wasco Colony was founded in 1907 through the efforts of the Kern County Board of Trade. The Board of Trade persuaded M.U. Hartcraft, head of the California Home Extension Association, a Los Angeles based land agency, to purchase nine sections of land from the Kern County Land Company for development. The agency purchased the land, amounting to three square miles, and began a nationwide advertising campaign promoting the sale of both village lots and farm lots in the Wasco Colony. The land was sold at auction in the association's office in Los Angeles on February 6, 1907. Raw land sold for \$50 to \$100 per acre and "*improved*" property for as much as \$200 per acre. In the summer of 1907 more than two hundred families arrived to take up residence in the colony, most without ever having seen their parcels beforehand. Almost immediately the availability of water became a major concern since the purchase price of the property did not include water rights. Disappointed, many settlers simply gave up and returned home and those who opted to stay found life very difficult for the next several years.

In spite of the hardships, however, Wasco soon became a thriving community and there was even talk of incorporating. The matter was put before the voters in 1922 but many residents, concerned about the effect incorporation would have on their property taxes, strongly opposed the





ALFRED M. HARRELL

measure and it was overwhelmingly defeated. Subsequent incorporation elections were held in 1923 and 1924 but they too were defeated. The matter lay dormant for the next twenty years and it would be December of 1945 before Wasco voters consented to incorporation and the formation of a municipal government.

Two school districts had been established in the area some years before the depot and little village of Wasco even existed. The **Shamrock School District**, formed in 1880, was huge, at least in terms of territory. Its boundaries ran from the Kern County line on the west to a point 18 miles beyond Wasco on the east, and from the Kern County line on the north to Lerdo Highway on the south, an area of more than 1,300 square miles. The Shamrock schoolhouse was located on the south bank of Poso Creek at the junction with Whistler Road. In its first year, 1880-81, Shamrock had an average daily attendance of 16 students but by 1904 that number had fallen to just 10 students and the district was faced with the possibility of having to close its doors.

---

**Note:** Alfred Harrell, who would later serve at the county superintendent of schools and also as publisher of *The Bakersfield Californian*, taught at the Shamrock School from 1883-1885.

---

**The Delta School District**, with territory wholly within the boundaries of the Shamrock district, had been formed on May 2, 1892. Following a successful \$4,000 bond election in October of that year, the district built a schoolhouse at the corner of Kimberlina Road and Central Valley Highway, now the site of the offices for the Wasco-Shafter Irrigation District.

Much like the Shamrock district, Delta began with a handful of students and did not grow. The average daily attendance in 1882-83 was 8 pupils and in 1903-1904 just 6 pupils. The shared problem of low and declining enrollment prompted the two districts to consolidate in the fall of 1904. That union resulted in the formation of what would be called, at least for the next few years, the Delta-Shamrock School District. Classes were held in the Delta schoolhouse which was located north of present day Highway 46 and west of the Root Ranch. In 1906 the schoolhouse was moved to the Wasco townsite. The following year, with the schoolhouse

no longer remote from the center of the community, the district was renamed the Wasco School District. A moderate increase in enrollment followed and the district recorded an ADA of 29 students for the 1908-1909 school year.

Karl Clemens was hired in 1914 to teach at the Colony School, a one room school about 3 miles southwest of the townsite. In January of that year he was appointed teacher/principal of the Wasco School and soon thereafter was named district superintendent. Mr. Clemens proved to be an outstanding educational leader and soon became a highly regarded member of the school community. He would serve the district with great distinction for the next thirty-eight years, finally retiring in 1952.

---

**Note:** There is little to be found regarding the origin of the Colony School. A brief note did appear in the December 16, 1911, edition of the Wasco News that told of a "*Fine grammar school to be built here in mission style.*" It is at best speculative but the date suggests that the note may have been referring to construction of the Colony School.

---

The **Elmo School District**, formed in 1918, was in existence for but one year. Its territory had been taken from that portion of the Hamlin School District that lay south of Poso Creek. The Hamlin schoolhouse was situated on the north side of the creek and children who lived on the south side found it difficult to get to school during those months when the water was high. Building a school on the south side of the creek seemed the best solution to the problem. But it became apparent during the new district's first year of operation that it would be much more convenient to have the Elmo students attend school in Wasco and a petition was presented to the board of supervisors requesting that the Elmo and Wasco districts be joined. The board's approval of the request for consolidation resulted in the formation of the **Wasco Union School District**.

In its first year of operation, 1919-1920, the newly formed Wasco Union School District had an average daily attendance of 222 pupils, a number that would more than double in the next ten years. In 1920, the district opened a twelve room school on Seventh Street between Griffin and Broadway. That facility provided adequate housing for just a few years

before becoming overcrowded. In 1928, the district completed the first phase of the Wasco Union Grammar School. It opened with just two classrooms and, according to architectural records, was built at a cost of \$22,679, or \$3.90 per square foot. Four classrooms were added in 1929 and three more in 1937. In 1962 the school was renamed Karl F. Clemens School in honor of the long time superintendent.

The Thomas Jefferson School was built in 1938. It opened with 6 classrooms but more were added in the following years. In 1958, twenty years after the opening of Thomas Jefferson, the Palm Avenue School opened its doors. Initially the Palm Avenue site included only classrooms but a cafeteria and offices for the administration were added in 1963.

District enrollment continued to grow at a reasonably steady pace and average daily attendance for the 1961-62 school year was just short of 1,900 students. Some feel for the district's pattern of growth during a thirty-five year period be discerned from the following P-2 enrollment figures, given in five year increments: 1969-70 (1,819); 1974-75 (1,576); 1979-80 (1,369), 1984-85 (1,812); 1989-90 (2,371); 1994-95 (2,497); 1998-99 (2,410); and 2004-05 (3,101). By 2006, with an annual growth rate of approximately 5%, district enrollment had risen to nearly 3,300 students.

In 1982 the district built a new administrative office facility on a site just south of the Karl F. Clemens School. Additional major capital projects were to follow. 1987 saw modernization and the addition of a new library at the Clemens School, remodeling of the science room and the addition of a new library at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, and a new library at the Palm Avenue School. In 1991, Thomas Jefferson Junior High underwent modernization and the district completed Phase I (12 classrooms and an office facility) of the John L. Prueitt Elementary School. A bond election in 1992 attempted to raise \$2,250,000 for the completion of that campus but the issue failed to pass by the required two-thirds majority.

A new gymnasium, funded by a federal grant and costing in excess of \$1 million, was added to the Thomas Jefferson campus in 1997. Modernization of the Palm Avenue School was completed in 2001.

The Wasco district operates five schools - four elementary schools and a middle school. The fourth elementary school opened its doors in the fall of 2007 and was named in honor of Teresa Burke, member of a pioneer

Kern County family and a highly esteemed teacher and administrator who served the Wasco district for 38 years.

The Wasco district began experiencing significant increases in enrollment in the early 1990s and securing funding for additional student housing and campus improvements has necessarily been a major focus. In June of 2001 voters approved a \$6.6 million bond for capital improvements and, subsequently to that, the district qualified for \$12 million in critical hardship funds, those monies to be used exclusively for the construction of the Teresa Burke School. Additional grants have allowed the district to provide air conditioning at each of the school sites and also to add a multipurpose room, an office, and two new classroom wings to the campus of the John L. Prueitt School.

The district also sought state matching funds to purchase another school site and to complete other construction and site improvement projects.

Since the retirement of Karl Clemens in 1952, district operations have been guided by six different superintendents: John Prueitt (1952-77), Dr. Tom Blum (1977-1980), Dr. Doug Fletcher (1980-1983), Allen Walker (1983-1989), Dr. James Forrest (1989-1993), and Gary Bray (1993-2009). The present superintendent is Dr. Paul Chounet. ■



# EL TEJON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The unification of what had been the **El Tejon Union School District** was approved by district residents in 1988.

Students in the El Tejon/Frazier Park area had for many years been transported to either Maricopa High School or Bakersfield High School for grades 9 through 12 and this long, sometimes hazardous trip for their high school youngsters prompted local voters to approve the unification proposal which would require, of course, construction of a new high school for the district.

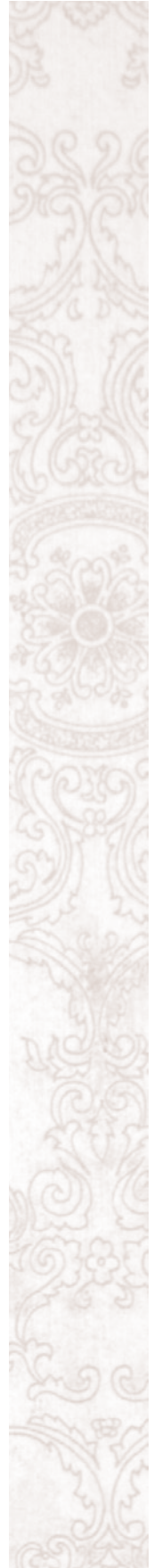
District schools now include Frazier Park School, which serves students in grades K through 3, El Tejon School, a middle school for grades 4 through 8 and Frazier Mountain High School, opened in 1995 to serve students in grades 9 through 12.

The El Tejon Union School District was formed in 1951 by the union of the **Lebec** and **Pershing** school districts and was named for Rancho El Tejon, one of the original Mexican land grants made in 1843. Two other school districts, **Godey School District** and **Rose School District**, had also once served students in that area of the county but both had lapsed around the turn of the century. A third antecedent school district that became part of El Tejon was the **Lockwood Valley Joint School District**, located in Ventura County but administered by Kern County in its early years. The Lockwood district was for a time transferred to Ventura County but then lapsed in 1946.

The **Godey School District**, formed in 1891, was named for Alex Godey, a noted guide on John C. Fremont's expeditions, who had settled at the Pueblo de San Emigdio. The territory served by the Godey district was quite large, covering some 361 square miles. It included all of the present El Tejon Unified School District and sizeable portions of the Arvin and Maricopa school districts. It lapsed in 1894 and consolidated with the Rose district to the east.

The **Rose School District** was named for Rose Station, in earlier days a stagecoach stop near the bottom of the Grapevine. Enrollment having fallen to just eleven students in 1899, the Rose School District lapsed the following year and was absorbed by the Lebec district.

The **Pershing School District** was formed in December of 1918 from territory formerly in the **Lebec School District**. The Pershing School, located some three miles south of the present El Tejon School, opened





PERSHING SCHOOL

with an ADA of 13 and by 1949-50, some thirty years later, that number had risen to 136. At different times the Pershing district also operated two other schools: the Grapevine School at Grapevine (1925-1933) and the Emidio School at the Emidio General Petroleum Station (1921-22).

The **Lebec School District**, located in Frazier Park, came into being in 1898 and that year had an average daily attendance of seven pupils. It remained quite small

throughout its existence, with a recorded ADA of just forty-three students in 1947-48. When the Lebec and Pershing school districts joined in 1951, Lebec School continued to operate but its name was changed to Frazier Park School.

Current ADA of the **El Tejon Unified School District** is just over 1,100 students. Approximately 2/3 of those students are enrolled in the elementary and middle schools, the remaining third in the high school. Population of the area continues to increase as seasonal homes are converted to year-round housing and new homes are constructed. That, of course, presents the district with the need to make a continuing effort to provide classrooms for a growing student population. El Tejon School has recently added nine portable classrooms and a library while Frazier Park School has added nineteen portable classrooms plus a multi-purpose room.

A number of superintendents have served the El Tejon district in the last four decades. Clay Orohood was superintendent from 1960-1970. Orohood was followed by Gary Mulhoffer (1970-73), Jack Stanton (1973-76), Bob Friday (1976-85), Bud Burrow (1985-88), Laverne Carlson (1988-89), Richard Detton (1989-93), Gary Fuller (1993-97), Rommie Lewis (1997-2000), Dean Bentley (2000-2003), John Wight (2003-2006), and Shelly Mason (2006-2008). In 2008 Danny Whetton served as superintendent until the hiring of Katherine A. Kleier in 2010. ■



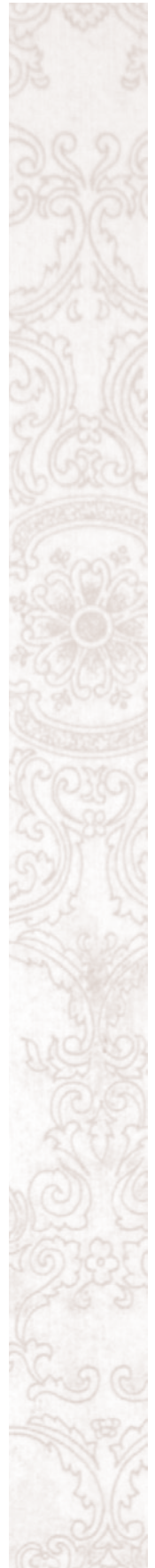
# MARICOPA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

During the oil boom of the early 1900s, a number of vibrant communities - Lost Hills, McKittrick, Reward, Fellows, Taft, and Maricopa - sprang up along the base of the Temblor Range on Kern County's western fringe. Out of all those often wild and woolly little oil towns, only Taft, with an economy not wholly dependent on oil, was able to survive the bust that followed the boom. As for the others, once oil production began to wane, so too did their prosperity. Reward is a good example; at one time a fair sized community a mile or so west of McKittrick, it has simply disappeared. So, too, has the Olig School that served the Reward youngsters. There is, in fact, scant physical evidence that it ever existed. Lost Hills, McKittrick, Fellows, and Maricopa, while bearing little resemblance to the towns depicted in photographs and historical records from their boom years, have somehow managed to avoid the fate suffered by Reward. Although their commercial districts are almost non-existent - mere shadows of what they once were - the school districts that serve these communities nonetheless continue to offer strong, modern educational programs for their youngsters. Nowhere is that more apparent than in Maricopa.

Originally known as Sunset Town because of its proximity to a siding on the Sunset Western Railroad, Maricopa was the surviving member of a trio of little settlements - the other two being Pentland and Hazelton to the east - that grew up along the railroad.

Officially founded in 1906, the Maricopa townsite had been laid out as a real estate venture by the Gate City Oil Company, a large landholder in the area. A twenty acre parcel, set aside from their holdings, was surveyed and divided into 140 lots, each 25 feet across and 100 feet deep. Lots could be purchased for as little as \$150 while others, no doubt in more desirable locations, were priced as high as \$850.

Maricopa attracted worldwide attention on March 10, 1910 when an oil well - officially designated Lakeview #1 but known forever after as simply "*the Lakeview Gusher*" - "*blew in*" during the drilling operation and began spewing oil over the countryside, reportedly as far away as Cuyama, more than twenty miles to the west. The well flowed out of control for the next eighteen months and during that time, produced about nine and a half million barrels of oil, about half of which was recovered, the rest lost due to seepage.



With relatively little demand for oil at that time, such a huge quantity coming onto the market in such a short period of time soon drove the price of oil down to fifteen cents a barrel and many wells were shut in because owners could not afford to produce them at that price. But the market recovered and drilling activity on the west side was soon moving along once again at a furious pace. As for the Lakeview Gusher, its mighty eruption stopped abruptly on September 9, 1911. Over time, many attempts were made to rejuvenate it but all failed and the well never produced another barrel of oil.

But by that time hordes of workers and fortune seekers, along with a host of businesses had been attracted to the Maricopa area. Confident of continued growth and prosperity, the townspeople voted in 1911 to incorporate their bustling little community. About a quarter of the new city was destroyed by fire that year but the structures were quickly replaced. Since most of the buildings were of wood frame construction, fire was a constant threat. Fire destroyed large portions of the town in 1922 and again in 1929, but each time new buildings rose from the ashes.

Maricopa was near the height of its glory by 1914 and moving rapidly toward becoming a city of no small consequence. Oil, of course, was the principal source of its prosperity but it was the railroad that allowed that prosperity to be sustained.

---

**Note:** There was a long-running dispute between the townspeople of Maricopa and the Southern Pacific Railroad concerning the name of their railroad station. At one time the Southern Pacific had maintained a station, called Monarch Station, on the Sunset-Monarch oil lease, about a mile from Maricopa. The stop was eventually moved to Maricopa but Southern Pacific insisted that it continue to be called Monarch Station. After considerable debate and negotiation, the railroad company finally agreed to a name change and Monarch Station became Maricopa Station in October of 1913.

---

Driving through Maricopa today, it is difficult to imagine that ninety years ago it was bigger than Bakersfield with a population - at least according to some sources - of better than 30,000 people. Regardless of the accuracy of that figure, there is little doubt that it had grown to be a town

of some consequence. It could, after all, boast of having an opera house, two banks, drug stores, grocery stores, general merchandise stores, a dairy, a plumber, a photographer, even an airport. New arrivals looking for accommodations had the choice of staying at any of Maricopa's seven hotels, one of which, the Lakeview, provided tonsorial services in a five chair barbershop. Residents with leisure time could spend it at the roller skating rink, the race track, or watching a bout at the boxing arena. One could also enjoy vaudeville performances at the Majestic Theater. For those who preferred activities of a darker nature, there were countless bars and what was purported to be the largest red light district in the state at that time.

---

**Note:** Oil booms were no different than gold strikes in the respect that such a large concentration of men always attracted a host of prostitutes. According to one account, two houses of ill repute, called the canyon resorts, operated for some time in the hills above Maricopa. Representatives of the district attorney's office raided the operation in 1912 and scattered the occupants, most of whom just took up residence in town.

---

The first school opened in Maricopa in 1906 but it was held in what was apparently a primitive structure, not approaching what would be considered a proper schoolhouse. It was described by one teacher as "*nothing but a very rough shanty*". Thirty-six students were in attendance that first year.

The first school of consequence in the Maricopa area was the Paleto School. The **Paleto School District** had been formed in 1888 with the original schoolhouse situated east of Highway 166 on what is now Cerro Noroeste Road. The district was established to serve children of some sixteen or seventeen stock raising families who had moved into the Paleto Hills, east of the Cuyama Valley, in the 1880s. Absolom Stubblefield and his family were among those early settlers and some of his descendants still reside in the area. Alberta Stubblefield, whose husband, Bill, is the grandson of Absolom, has served on Maricopa school board for many years.

The **Maricopa High School District** was formed in 1915 and the school

opened that same year with thirty-two students in attendance. They were housed in a new facility, built at a cost of \$11,250, which included two recitation rooms, an assembly hall, and housing for the principal and the teachers. This building would be used until 1925 when a new \$60,000 high school was built just across the street. The old structure continued in use as a junior high school.

The Paleto district experienced a dramatic influx of students as hordes of oil workers and their families moved into the area. From 1906 to 1912 the average daily attendance grew from 36 to 242 pupils and reports from the time indicate that the district suffered all the difficulties generally associated with such rapid growth. In fact, conditions related to housing and sanitation were so desperate that district operations were the subject of an inquiry by the Grand Jury in 1912.

By 1916-17, the Paleto School had grown to be the third largest elementary school in the county. Growth then began to level out and district enrollment peaked at 419 pupils in 1920-21.

The oil boom lasted well into the 1920s and all the while people continued to pour into the area. A 1918 newspaper article told of how the town's prosperity and burgeoning population had attracted - in addition to the aforementioned businesses and enterprises - two doctors and a dentist, five churches, a library, and even a weekly newspaper, *The Maricopa News*.

According to one source, it was about this time that the Paleto district, in order to alleviate the overcrowded conditions, levied a direct tax of \$8,000 and built another school. While it is not clearly stated, this second school was no doubt located in Maricopa. No records were found to indicate just when the Paleto elementary student were moved to Maricopa but the *Directory of the Public Schools for Kern County* for the 1932-33 school year lists a Maricopa School, including a kindergarten, in the Paleto district. The district offices are also shown to be in Maricopa at that time. Further, that directory lists a second district school, located in Pattiway and referred to simply as Old Paleto. Although unconfirmed, it's likely that, with the opening of a school in Maricopa, the original Paleto School was re-designated Old Paleto and that it continued to operate as a one-room school until abandoned altogether four years later, in 1936. During that period, all grades at the Old Paleto School were taught by Nettie Hudson.

High school classes were held at the Paleta School until 1927 at which time those students began attending school in Maricopa.

In January of 1936, the Maricopa High School District and the Paleta School District, because they had coterminous boundaries, were required by law (Ed Code Sec. 2.2000-2.2011) to form a unified school district, the first of its kind in Kern County. Once the new district, **Maricopa Unified**, became operational, the Paleta district ceased to exist. Two other small school districts played a minor role in the development of public education in the Maricopa area. The **San Emidio School District**, with a school located on the San Emidio Ranch some 12 miles east of Maricopa, had been formed in 1878. The district's highest enrollment of 12 pupils occurred that first year. By 1904-05, only four students were in attendance. San Emidio lapsed the following year and was absorbed by the Paleta district. The **Apache Joint School District**, formed in 1920, was adjacent to the Paleta district and served students in both Kern County and Ventura County. The Apache schoolhouse, however, was located in Ventura County and since all the Apache students also resided in that county, the district was administered by the office of the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools. In 1953 the Apache district was absorbed by the **Cuyama School District** in Santa Barbara County.

When first formed in 1936, Maricopa Unified had an average daily attendance of 178 elementary pupils and 119 high school pupils. In 1961-62 the district served a total of 369 students, 257 in grades K-8 and 112 in grades 9-12. By 1974, enrollment had grown to 638, 204 students in grades K-8 and 434 students in grades 9-12. A period of declining enrollment followed. By 1986-87, enrollment had fallen to 486 students, 241 in grades K-8 and 245 in grades 9-12. The steady decline continued, then took a big plunge with the opening of Frazier Mountain High School in 1996.

---

**Note:** For many years high school students residing in the Frazier Park area were given the option of attending either Maricopa High School or Bakersfield High School in the Kern High School District. With the formation of El Tejon Unified School District and the opening of Frazier Mountain High School in 1996, that option was removed. The result, of course, was a significant loss of enrollment in Maricopa High School.

---

Maricopa experienced some growth following the opening of the high school in Frazier Park and the district's total enrollment figures have varied but little in the past ten years. In 2007, 269 students attend the elementary school and 100 students are enrolled in the high school.

The earthquake of 1952 rendered Maricopa High School unsafe for occupancy and a modern new plant was constructed directly south of the townsite. This is a common campus for both the elementary school and the high school.

Maricopa Unified School District's territory, which includes the town of Maricopa and the surrounding agricultural and oil field areas, today has a population of about 1,300 people. The majority of families who reside in the district fall into a lower socio-economic bracket and almost 3/4 of the students in the district are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Approximately 25% of district students are Hispanic.

The Maricopa district offers a modern curriculum with an emphasis on the integration of literacy skills. The use of technology as a tool for developing reading and writing skills is emphasized at all levels. There is a continued emphasis, however, on traditional instruction and this, bolstered by a number of supplementary and specially funded programs, translates into a quality learning environment for Maricopa students.

In addition to the standard curriculum, many of Maricopa's high school students participate in district offerings made available through the West Side Regional Occupation Program, a joint-powers agreement between Maricopa Unified and the Taft Union High School District. A host of courses are offered, one of the most popular being Food Preparation and Service, a program designed to give students entry level job skills to prepare them for possible employment in the food service industry. The district operates a restaurant on campus which affords students in this program experience on a practical level. The meals are prepared and served by students to staff members as well as residents of the community. A comprehensive summary of the West Side Regional Occupation Program is appended to this document.

In the past 50 years the Maricopa Unified School District has been under the direction of the following superintendents: Donald Moore (1957 to 1967); Clyde

Clyde Johnston (1968-1977); Fred Pitts (1977-1978); William Meese (1978-1988); Richard Tucker (1988-1990); Dean Crechriou (1990-1993); Pamela Sanders (1993-1998); Barry Lindaman (1998-August, 2006) and Max Friedman, September(2006-January,2007). Friedman was followed by two interim superintendents, Ron Friehe and Dr. Billie Kinsinger before the appointment of the present superintendent, Terry Wolfe. ■





# MCFARLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

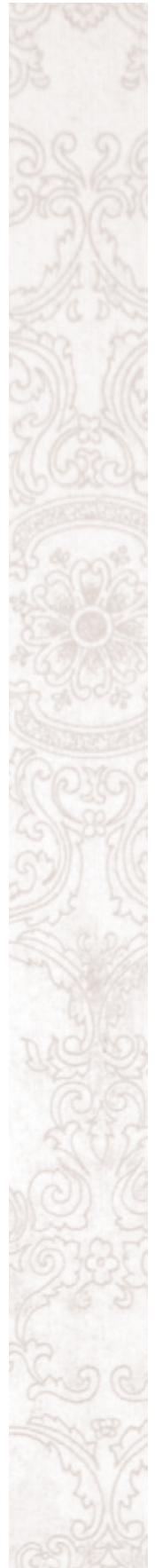
The first white settlers in the McFarland area were homesteaders who arrived shortly after the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862. The availability of an adequate supply of water was an immediate concern for these early farmers but they soon discovered that the water table was quite high and that wells between 15 and 40 feet deep yielded a plentiful supply. They were also able to irrigate with water from Poso Creek.

In 1874, the Central Pacific Railroad extended its tracks from Delano to Sumner, east of Bakersfield, and in the process built a siding a few miles south of Delano that came to be called Hunt, or Hunt's Siding, and, sometimes, Lone Pine. Settlers soon began arriving in the area around Hunt's Siding to claim twenty or forty acre parcels that had been acquired through a real estate syndicate in Los Angeles. Within a few years some fifty families and a host of stock pens were clustered around this remote railroad siding, forming a community that came to be known as the McFarland Colony. Initially there was but little commercial development in the colony and for several years the nearest source for supplies was the general store at Famoso, six miles to the south.

The principal occupation among McFarland's early settlers was, of course, farming, and, odd as it may seem almost one hundred years later, the cultivation of roses on a commercial scale was one of the more popular agricultural ventures. A reported 180,000 cuttings were planted in 1909.

McFarland was named for James Boyd McFarland, a school teacher in Zanesville, Ohio, before coming to California around the turn of the century. He first settled in Anaheim where he operated a walnut orchard and it was during this time that he became interested in real estate development. He visited northern Kern County in 1907 and was impressed with the way crops grew in the area around Hunt's Siding. Shortly thereafter he moved to Kern County and enlisted the services of William Laird, a prominent real estate businessman in Bakersfield. With Laird's help, McFarland purchased the property and laid out the townsite that would soon come to bear his name.

In March of 1909, the original McFarland townsite map was filed with the Kern County Records Office and, with that, what had been Hunt's Siding became the town of McFarland. By 1914 the new little town had one hundred pumping plants, a new railroad station, a



creamery, an ice plant, two churches, a school, and a population of some three hundred souls.

McFarland was a talented man with diverse interests. Taking advantage of the shallow water table, he became one of the first individuals to raise alfalfa using an irrigation system. He also had a dairy, raised Percheron horses for sale, and operated a saw mill near Davis Station on Greenhorn Mountain. Later he helped organize the McFarland Water Company and, in 1933, was a force behind the development of the Friant-Kern Canal. McFarland was a busy and active developer of real estate in his little city but still found time to serve as a member of the Kern County Board of Supervisors and the Grand Jury. He also was instrumental in the growth of the county's library system and aided in the development of Kern General Hospital.

The little town of McFarland experienced rapid growth during the thirties and, by 1937, had 1,200 residents. That number more than doubled with the end of World War II and the return to civilian life of a host of men from the military. The townspeople voted to incorporate in 1957 and by 1960 the new city's population had grown to almost 3,700. There were over 4,000 by 1970 and nearly 6,000 by 1984. McFarland's population in 2006 stood at more than 12,000.

One of the first school districts to be established in the McFarland area, and the one destined to evolve into the present **McFarland Unified School District**, was called the **Lone Tree School District**. Formed in 1889, the first Lone Tree schoolhouse was built on the corner of Elmo Highway and Browning Road. It was later moved to a site about one mile north of present day McFarland and west of the Southern Pacific tracks, on Garzoli Avenue and Peterson Road. The school was named Lone Tree simply because at the time a solitary eucalyptus tree was the only land mark on the plains between Delano and Bakersfield. The little oasis was a welcome sight during the hot, dry months and the schoolhouse was built next to the large tree so as to take advantage of the shade that it offered.

Lone Tree began with about ten students and remained quite small for the first twenty years of its existence. The reported ADA for the 1908-09 school year was 27 pupils but with the establishment of the McFarland colony in 1908, Lone Tree's enrollment began to climb and, by 1917, one hundred twenty-two students were in attendance. That same year the

name was changed to McFarland School District.

An article from an April, 1914, edition of *The Bakersfield Californian* described the McFarland elementary school in these words:

McFarland district grammar school is the pride of the colony as it is a brick structure of modern architecture, neat and commodious in every way, an attractive place where the youth of the district have the best of opportunities for schooling. Built at a cost of \$11,000, it contains four rooms with arrangements for converting the second floor into an auditorium. Four teachers are employed and 100 pupils are enrolled.

**The McFarland Union School District** was formed on April 26, 1921, with the consolidation of the McFarland School District and **Stiles School District**. The Stiles district had been formed in February of that year and had elected a board of trustees but no school was ever built nor classes held prior to the unionization. Just months after its establishment, the McFarland Union district expanded its boundaries again through the annexation of two other small districts in the area - the Robertson School District on May 31, 1921, and the Homestead School District two months later, on the first day of August. A few years later, in May of 1930, the McFarland district once again expanded its territory with the annexation of the Cleveland School District.

The **Robertson School District** had been formed in 1888. The schoolhouse, which later burned down, was located at the intersection of Phillips and Zachary roads, about five miles southeast of McFarland. In its first year, 1888-89, the Robertson School had an enrollment of twenty-two students, the most it would have during its brief existence. Average daily attendance dropped to twelve students in 1920-21 and the following year Robertson was absorbed by McFarland.

The **Homestead School District**, which included territory covering the western half of the present McFarland Unified School District as well as small portions of the present **Standard, Beardsley, and Delano Union** districts, had been formed in February of 1912. In its first year, 1912-13, Homestead had an average daily attendance of seven pupils. Enrollment in the district peaked at twenty-one students in 1914-15 but by 1920 had fallen to just five students. It was declared lapsed at that time and joined

the McFarland Union School District the following year.

The last of McFarland's antecedent districts was the **Cleveland School District**. Formed in 1889 and named for an early settler in the area, M.W. Cleveland, the Cleveland district schoolhouse was located just east of Famoso Junction, the tiny settlement where Highway 46 intersects with Highway 99. The original school was destroyed by fire in 1909 but replaced the following year with a brick structure which, although not occupied during that entire time, remained standing for more than 90 years. In its first year, 1889-90, the Cleveland district had an enrollment of sixteen students. Enrollment peaked at twenty-one students in 1920-21 but had fallen to just fifteen students in 1929-30, the year before it, too, became a part of the McFarland Union School District.

Hoping to generate funds for construction of a new elementary school, the McFarland district held a bond election in 1959 but the issue failed to pass. Four years later and now seriously in need of more classroom space, the district once again sought funding for the construction of a new school through a special election, a measure that passed by the narrowest of margins. The funds were used to build the Browning Road School at the corner of Browning Road and Perkins Avenue.

Efforts to form a unified school district in McFarland began in earnest early in 1974 at a time when the State Department of Education was in the process of developing a plan for the unification of all school districts in Kern County. McFarland High School had first opened its doors in 1929 and was, at that time, a part of the Kern County Union High School District.

Final approval of McFarland's plan for unification rested with the State Board of Education and district trustees asked for the support of the State Department of Education in the form of a recommendation to the State Board favoring the McFarland unification plan. That support was not forthcoming, however, and unification was forestalled. Nonetheless, the McFarland trustees felt that the community should be allowed to determine the educational needs of all its youngsters, grades K through 12, particularly since their large and growing Hispanic population presented educational challenges best addressed at the local level. A hearing on the district's unification proposal was delayed pending the outcome of a lawsuit challenging state's authority to require a county

master plan for school district organization, a matter that was resolved in August of 1977. On September 20, 1977, the Kern County Committee on School District Organization agreed to submit McFarland's unification proposal to the State Board of Education but the matter would not be given formal consideration by that board until July 13, 1978. The State Board of Education, overruling the staff of the State Department of Education, voted to approve the plan. In a special election held on March 6, 1979, the school reorganization proposal was approved by local voters, the final step required for unification. A second election was then held in June of 1979 to choose trustees for the newly formed district and the McFarland Unified School District began full operations on July 1, 1980.

The average daily attendance that first year as a unified school district, 1980-81, was 1,785 pupils.

Since the unification of the McFarland schools in 1980, McFarland High School has gained prominence as a cross county powerhouse. Coached for many years by Jim White, a physical education teacher at the middle school, the McFarland runners won their first league title in 1980 and went on to duplicate that feat 17 of the next 19 years. They were named valley champions eleven times and won five Master's Championships. Competing in Division IV, McFarland won the state championship in 1987, the first year the meet was held, and have since won it five more times.

The McFarland district operates two K-5 elementary schools, a middle school for grades 6-8, a comprehensive high school, a continuation high school, an independent study program, and a 40 acre school farm adjacent to the middle school. A successful \$9.8 million bond election was held in 1992 with most of the revenue, \$8 million, going toward construction of the middle school. The remainder was used for the modernization of the high school and the Browning Road School.

Like most communities in Kern County, the city of McFarland, with a population in 2006 of better than 12,000, is growing at an ever increasing rate and, not surprisingly, school enrollment continues to grow at a similar pace. Average daily attendance in 1997 was 2,478 students and while the growth rate then remained relatively flat for the next four years, enrollment began to increase by 100 or more students each year beginning in 2001. Closing enrollment for the 2005-06 year was 3,093

but the district projects a P-2 enrollment of close to 3,500 students for the 2009-10 school year. The number of new housing starts in the district has prompted some officials to predict a doubling of the current enrollment in the next ten years.

McFarland's school population in 2006, as reported on the CBEDS survey, was 95% Hispanic. Nearly half of the district's total enrollment, 1,438 students, were identified as migrants and thus eligible to participate in the district's Migrant Ed Program. Over nine hundred opted to do so. Funded by the federal government and administered by the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, the Migrant Ed Program offers supplementary support designed to help these students progress and succeed in school.

In March of 2004, McFarland voters approved Bond Measure B. Measure B generated \$8.3 million in local revenue and made the district eligible for an additional \$7.7 million in state matching funds. \$5.5 million of that bond money was earmarked for construction of a central kitchen. The central kitchen was planned for a 19 acre site and expected to be operational in the winter of the 2007-08 school year.

Bond money also was earmarked for construction of a new elementary school on the corner of Garzoli and Perkins Roads. The school was planned for a 12-acre site that was purchased with \$203,000 in developer fees. Developer fees (The district collects \$2.63 per square foot on all new residential construction and \$.42 per square foot on all new business/ industrial construction) were also used to purchase three acres of additional playground space at the Browning School.

Well-aware that the 17 acre McFarland High School campus is too small and its buildings too outdated to continue providing adequate services for its growing student population, the district began planning for a new high school. It will be built on a 40-acre site.

Wallace Brierley served as superintendent for the McFarland Union School District for 27 years, from 1948 until his retirement in June of 1975. He was replaced by John Prieskorn who served from 1975 to 1979. Prieskorn was replaced by an interim superintendent, Dr. Merland Despain, who served from July of 1979 until January of 1980. Since that time the district has been served by the following superintendents: Mitch Gilbert from January of 1980 to June of 1985; Ron Huebert from

1985 to 1992; Dr. Jim Perry as acting superintendent from June of 1992 to September of 1993; Dr. Curt Kennedy as interim superintendent from September of 1993 to June of 1994; Edward Agundez from 1994 to 1997; Perry again as acting superintendent from June of 1997 to March of 1998; Dr. Sadeie Nishitani from March of 1998 to January of 2001; and Dr. Roberto Cardenas from January of 2001 to March of 2004. David Bailey, the district's assistant superintendent for business, then served as interim superintendent from March until June of 2004, at which time he retired and was replaced by another interim superintendent, Dr. Daniel Knapp. Knapp was replaced in December of 2004 by Jim Schiffman who served until June of 2006. While the district searched for Schiffman's replacement, the position was filled by an interim superintendent, Tom Valos, from the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. The present superintendent (2007) is Gabriel McCurtis. ■





# MOJAVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The little town of Mojave began as a construction camp for the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1876. Originally a division point for the railroad, Mojave was later designated a shipping point and the first freight depot opened there on April 20, 1876.

The railroad brought prosperity to the area in the form of outside businesses and the little station town began to thrive and grow. One source described Mojave in 1886 as having - in addition to the depot - a hotel, a general store, a freight warehouse, a roundhouse with room for 15 locomotives, a large livery stable, several saloons, a few private dwellings, and the Harvey House.

---

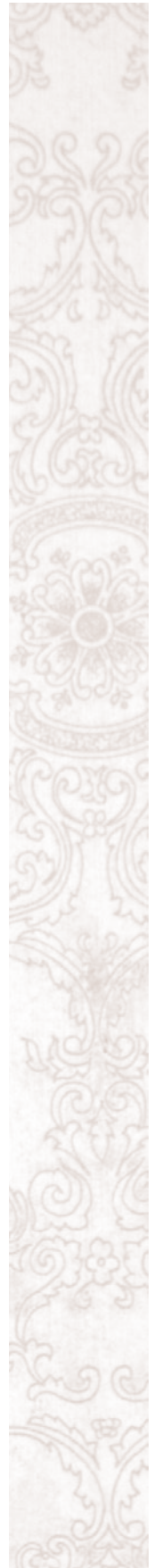
**Note:** Until about 1920 there were no dining cars on passenger trains and the food at depots was poor at best, usually just beans and beef. Fred Harvey contracted with the railroad to build a chain of restaurants - called Harvey Houses and staffed only with young unmarried women - at certain stations along the way. Since there were but few young unmarried women in the area at that time, many of the Harvey girls left their jobs as waitresses to become wives and mothers. It's likely that a number of Mojave families can boast that grandmother or great grandmother was a Harvey girl.

---

From 1884 to 1889, Mojave was also the terminus and supply point for the famous twenty-mule teams that hauled loads of borax over the 165 mile wagon road from the Harmony Borax Works in Death Valley. The huge borax wagons were, in fact, manufactured in Mojave by J.W.S. Perry and sold for about \$900.

More people - in this case, prospectors - were attracted to the Mojave area in 1894 when gold was discovered on Soledad Mountain some four miles to the south. The little community of Goldtown sprang up there and served as a center for mines with such names as the Elephant-Eagle, the Asher, the Yellow Dog, and the Golden Queen.

In 1907, Mojave experienced another increase in population when it was designated one of the headquarters for the construction crews building the Los Angeles Aqueduct, a major canal that transports water from the Owens Valley to metropolitan Los Angeles. The crews stayed in Mojave only until the project was completed in 1913,



The **Mojave School District** was established in 1884 but the district that presently serves the community, the **Mojave Unified School District**, was not formed until January of 1953, the end product of an unusual evolution involving a number of school districts.

In 1884, its first year of operation, the Mojave School had an average daily attendance of 13 pupils. The schoolhouse, located at K and Cerro Gordo Streets, was a one room frame structure that also was used for church services and funerals. About 1905, this school was replaced by a two-room brick structure. The site on which this school was built would later be occupied by the county library.

---

**Note:** In terms of dates and construction details, there is little agreement between sources as to the manner in which the Mojave district's school facility evolved. What appear to be the most reliable sources were used to provide this historical perspective but the reader is cautioned that some discrepancies may exist.

---

By 1921, in order to accommodate a growing student population, the district built and opened a new school on J Street. It was a brick structure that consisted of two large classrooms, an auditorium, a library, and a teachers' lounge. Some years later, having been abandoned as a schoolhouse, this structure was remodeled and renamed the Forestry Building and, as such, served as home to the area's county offices and a fire station.

In 1923, the **Castle Rock School District**, a small district located some thirteen miles northeast of Mojave, lapsed and was annexed to the Mojave district. Four years later, in 1927, the Castle Rock school building was moved on to the Mojave School campus to provide additional classroom space.

Another small district, **Soledad**, located about four miles south of Mojave near the famous Silver Queen mine, lapsed in 1926, attendance having dropped to just six pupils. Two years later it, too, was annexed to the Mojave district.

These annexations, plus some growth within the district, resulted in a steady increase in enrollment and within a few years additional classroom space was sorely needed. In 1939, the district opened a new

school that was comprised of seven classrooms, an auditorium, a cafeteria, and administrative offices. This newest Mojave School was purposely built on the eastern edge of town in an effort to eliminate, or at least reduce, the distraction presented by noisy highway and train traffic. In 1940, a gymnasium and a pool were added to the campus. By 1944-45, district enrollment had climbed to 227 students and, in 1949, five more classrooms were added.



GARLOCK ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

The next four years would be witness to a number of changes and consolidations plus a dispute over where to build the area's next high school. In the end, that dispute would result in the formation of the **Mojave Unified School District**.

At about this time, two tiny school districts in the Red Rock/Cantil area, the **Landers** and **Saltdale** districts, also become a part of Mojave Unified, albeit by rather circuitous routes.

**The Landers School District**, with a student population that was made up mostly of Indian children, was located in an isolated area on the east side of Piute Mountain. The Landers district lapsed in 1945 and was annexed to South Fork Union that same year. In 1953, it was re-annexed, this time to the Red Rock School District in Cantil, some twenty miles northwest of Mojave.

---

**Note:** According to *"Kern County Place Names"*, a publication of the Kern County Historical Society, Cantil in Spanish means *"steep rock"* and, in Mexico, a rattlesnake is sometimes called a cantil.

---

The **Saltdale School District** was formed in 1920 but no school was ever built nor teacher hired. It was suspended for lack of pupils in 1921 and merged with the **Garlock School District**. In 1951, the Saltdale territory was annexed once again, this time to the Red Rock School District. The consolidation cycle ended two years later when the Red Rock district was annexed to newly-formed Mojave Unified.

In January of 1963, the board of trustees of Mojave Unified authorized a bond election that, if approved, would have generated \$650,000 for the

improvement of existing facilities and the preliminary planning for an additional high school. The election was held in April of that year but failed to pass. Pressure to seek funding for new construction remained high, however, and California City residents, whose children were being bused each day to Mojave, threatened to withdraw from the district unless new schools were built in their community.

Another \$650,000 bond election, this one successful, was held in February of 1964. A portion of those funds were used to add and upgrade classrooms at existing schools but most went to construct the Robert P. Ulrich Elementary School in California City. Many years would pass before the district would have the resources for a new high school in California City.

Two revenue measures were put before district voters in March of 2001. The first, a \$11 million general obligation bond for California City residents only, would have allowed the district to build a new high school plus another elementary school in that community. The other measure, a district-wide \$25.50 parcel tax, would have provided funding for the modernization of existing facilities as well as additional assistance in the area of new construction. By a very narrow margin, both measures failed to pass.

Just one year later the district tried again to secure passage of two funding measures, one being the \$25.50 district-wide parcel tax that had failed to gain approval the previous year, and the other a \$16 million bond measure for California City residents only. If approved, funds from the sale of the bonds would be earmarked for construction of a new high school plus an additional elementary school. Both won voter approval.

Seventy percent of the parcel tax revenue, which generated \$1.47 million each year for five years, went to California City and was used to upgrade the Ulrich School and also to support construction of newer schools in that community. Mojave's portion of the parcel tax revenues, which amounted to \$451,000 each year, was used to upgrade and modernize district schools in Mojave. Plans also called for upgrading the Red Rock Community Day School in Cantil but that project has been delayed. In December 2003, the board approved the expenditure of \$254,000 for the purchase of a 65 acre site for a new high school in California City and, although the construction funds were available, the

project was delayed for some time awaiting final plan approval by the state. The first phase the new California City High School, completed in 2007, was limited to classrooms and the cafeteria. The new elementary school, built on a site adjacent to the California City Middle School, is called Hacienda Elementary School.

Typical of school districts in eastern Kern County, Mojave Unified occupies a huge geographical area, some 970 square miles, but district schools are concentrated in just three areas. They include: one high school in Mojave; one continuation high school, also in Mojave; two middle schools, one each in Mojave and California City; two elementary schools, one each in Mojave and California City; two community day school classes in Cantil; and the Douglas School, an independent study program for students in grades K through 12. As noted earlier, two new schools - a high school and an elementary school, both in California City - came on line in 2007.

District enrollment in 2006 was approximately 3,000 students but by 2009 had fallen to just over 2,700.

Robert Ulrich, after whom the elementary school in California City is named, was superintendent of the Mojave district for fourteen years, ending his tenure in 1965. He was followed by Dr. Clifford Jordan (1965-66), Garlan Frix (1966-1978), Harold Hunt (1978-1981), Lynn Davies (1981-1984), Edmond Baldwin (1984-1995), and Wallace McCormick (1995-2000). Larry Phelps was named superintendent in August of 2000 and held the post until his retirement in 2010. The current superintendent is Aaron Haughton. ■



# MUROC JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Muroc Joint Unified School District**, located in eastern Kern County's Mojave Desert, provides educational services for some 2,000 students in grades K through 12. The district is huge in terms of area, some 578 square miles, and serves the communities of Boron, North Edwards, and Edwards Air Force Base. Muroc has been designated a "joint" school district since 1980 when district boundaries were extended eastward into San Bernardino County to include the tiny crossroads community of Kramer's Corner. The handful of students who live in and around Kramer's Corner were in the **Hinkley School District** and so had been obliged to attend school in Hinkley, twenty-one miles to the east. They now travel just seven miles to Boron.

---

**Note:** From 1882 to the early 1930s, Kramer was a small but active community of about 150 people. It had stores, a hotel, a school, and a railroad depot. The railroad ran north from Kramer Junction to the Randsburg area where cars were loaded with ore before making the return trip and connecting to the main line. The railroad was abandoned and the tracks removed in the early 1930s when mine production began to fail. The railroad's elevated right-of-way, running parallel to Highway 395, is still visible a few hundred yards to the east.

---

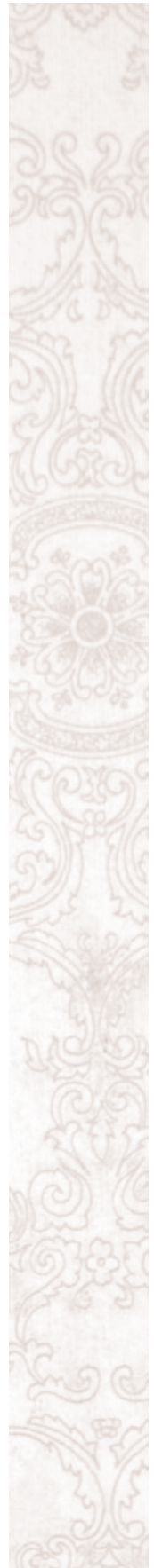
Currently (2008), the Muroc district operates four schools on Edwards Air Force Base (two elementary, one middle school, and one comprehensive high school); two schools in Boron (one elementary school and one junior/senior high school); and one alternative high school, which is located in North Edwards. It is well worth noting that each school in the district has received recognition as a California Distinguished School.

---

**Note:** The number of schools in the Muroc district and the manner in which they are configured was expected to change in the 2008-09 school year due to declining enrollment. Details of those changes are presented in another section of this history.

---

Like a number of other Kern County towns, the first settlement in the Boron area began as a railroad siding or, more accurately, as two railroad sidings. The sidings, established by the Santa Fe Railroad in 1882, were



comprised of loading platforms, a water tank, a pump house, and four section houses - at what was then called Yucca. Yucca later would be re-named Rogers, then Rodriquez. By 1907, Rodriquez had been shortened to simply Rod. Further name changes would follow with the arrival of the Corum brothers.

Ralph and Clifford Corum arrived in Rod in 1910 under an arrangement that would pay them a bounty for all new settlers that they were able to attract to the area. Clifford did the recruiting while Ralph cleared the land and dug water wells. Clifford's wife, Effie, was likely Rod's first schoolteacher. Alfalfa proved to be a profitable crop and what had been a desert wasteland soon became a thriving oasis complete with schoolhouse, a church, a general store, a post office, a town baseball team, even their own orchestra. Having accomplished all that, it was determined by the townspeople that Rod was a less than fitting name for their little community and opted to rename it Corum after its founders. They were advised by the post office, however, that there was already another California town named Corum so they merely reversed the order of the letters and their little community became known as Muroc. It would remain Muroc for the next 27 years.

The first school available to youngsters in the Muroc area opened in 1911 as a part of the **Tehachapi School District**. Classes were held for students in grades one through eight in a small building provided by the Corum family.

In 1914, Muroc formed its own school district. Responding to a petition presented by parents in the Muroc community, along with a recommendation to approve from R.L. Stockton, Kern County Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Supervisors approved formation of the Muroc School District on February 7, 1914.

A meeting of the district's trustees (They labeled themselves "*The Board of Directors*") held on May 2 of that year, was devoted to reaching agreement on a "*set of particulars*" for a bond election by which they hoped to raise \$3,600 for a new schoolhouse. The minutes of that meeting specified that the election would be held one month hence, on June 2, and that notices advising the community of the upcoming election would be posted in specific locations, and the information would also be published in the nearest newspaper of general circulation which, in this



case, was the Tehachapi Tomahawk. The ballot stated that the purpose of the bond election was *“to raise money for purchasing public school lots, for erecting a public school building with furniture and necessary apparatus, and for improvement of the school grounds.”* The bond issue was approved overwhelmingly by a vote of 18 to 1.

In a meeting held on July 28, 1914, the board considered teacher applicants and hired Miss Ruth Merriam (or Miriam) and agreed to pay her \$600 for the coming year. Average daily attendance for that first year was eight students.

As originally configured, the Muroc district was laid out in the form of a rectangle that ran 26 miles from east to west and 12 miles from north to south. On February 9, 1916, the Board of Supervisors approved the addition of 48 square miles of territory to Muroc’s northeast corner. Other such boundary adjustments would follow.

While old maps are at variance as to the precise location of the Muroc district’s first school, it is clear that the school site was adjacent to the railroad as it was aligned at that time. One map shows the schoolhouse just south of the railroad tracks near the northeast corner of section 36, T10N, R10W. Another shows it in the very southeast corner of an adjacent section, section 25, and just north of the railroad. Either location would have been just over six miles south of present Highway 58 and a little more than two miles east of the present day Flight Test Center Museum. That original schoolhouse was in use from 1914 to 1952. During the district’s formative years, board meetings were devoted largely to finding and keeping teachers. No doubt aware that enticing teachers to such a remote desert area was going to be a constant concern, it appears that the trustees tried to make the school environment more inviting by planting shade trees. Minutes from a meeting held in February of 1916 indicate that they agreed to order five hundred yearling locust trees *“for enclosing the school grounds”*.

The beautification project likely held some appeal but there were other considerations that made it difficult for the district to hire a teacher who would stay longer than a year. Offers were sometimes refused because the salary came with a proviso that the teacher must also serve as the janitor, performing those tasks required to keep the room clean and tidy. In the summer of 1920, two representatives from the district were sent to



LAWRENCE CHENOWETH

the Los Angeles Normal School to recruit a teacher, hoping to entice the candidate by offering a salary of \$135 per month plus an additional \$10 per month for janitor work. On that occasion they were successful and hired a Miss Isabelle Helm. There is no indication of the length of her tenure, however.

With only one school serving such a huge geographical area, no doubt just getting to school was difficult for many students. Aware of the need for regular attendance, the board of trustees devoted their meeting of July 10, 1921, to discussing the need to provide bus transportation for those Muroc students who lived some distance from school. It is clear from the language in the minutes from those early meetings that what the Muroc trustees may have lacked in sophistication they more than made up for by attending to district business in a very efficient, no-nonsense manner. That direct approach was manifest at this meeting when the clerk was directed by the board president to *“write Chenoweth and obtain all information regarding this subject”*, Chenoweth being the county superintendent of schools at the time.

The district experienced two events in 1930 that had considerable impact on its development. The first had to do with a change in district boundaries. A movement to add the township designated T11N,R9W, an area of 36 square miles, to Muroc’s northern boundary had surfaced in 1928 and, following the recommendation of then superintendent of schools, Herbert Healy, was finally approved by the board of supervisors in December of 1930. The territory had been in the Mojave district but the parents who initiated this request, Mojave School District residents, had their children attending Muroc School because of its proximity to their homes. In the end, the area of the Muroc district did not change, however, since the new territory they had gained to the north was offset when they were required to cede a 36 square mile parcel in their southwest corner to the Rosamond School District, now Southern Kern Unified.

The other significant 1930 event was the passage of a resolution by the board calling for a bond election, funds to be directed toward construction of a school in Amargo, the early name for Boron. Originally a mining camp, the community of Amargo was established in 1926 when a new form of borax was discovered by the U.S. Borax and Chemical Corporation. The name, Spanish for *“bitter”* or *“sour”*, was the same name

borne by the nearby railroad siding. When a post office was established in 1938, the community was renamed Boron after the chemical element in borax.

The bond measure was approved by the voters and bids were opened in September of that year. The winning bid, submitted by F.H. Dequine of Wasco, was for \$6,898. Construction was soon underway but it would be a year before the new schoolhouse was completed and ready for occupancy. In the interim, classes were held in a large tent which, unfortunately, proved to be no match for the strong desert winds. Records indicate that the tent blew down three times before it could complete its one year of service as a temporary classroom.

The doors to the new school, named the Gephart School in honor of George Gephart, an early settler in Amargo area, were opened in 1931. The school, on a five acre site that had been donated by Oscar Swanson, was about 3 miles north of present day Highway 58, and approximately 4 miles west of the Pacific Coast Borax Company's mining operations.

By 1957, the Gephart School had grown to 511 students and the district opened West Boron Elementary School the following year to help alleviate a burgeoning student population.

---

**Note:** The Gephart School ceased operations in the 1980s and thereafter served as a warehouse and storage area. It was destroyed by fire in 1994.

---

To accommodate their high school aged students in the Boron area, the district opened Boron High School in 1959.

Prior to 1950 there was no high school in the Mojave/ Muroc/Boron area. High school students in those communities were served by the Antelope Valley Joint Union High School District and were transported each day to Lancaster for classes. In 1950, the territories of the Mojave and Muroc school districts were combined to form the Mojave Desert Union High School District. During its first year of operation, fifty-six freshmen from Mojave, Muroc, and Boron attended classes in temporary barracks buildings at Edwards Air Force Base while consideration was being given to construction of a permanent facility.

The need to establish a permanent high school facility prompted an

election in 1951 to determine whether the new school should be located in Muroc or Mojave. Muroc was chosen by the voters but the election was contested and as a result of that dispute, the bond issue to build the new school was defeated. This disagreement led to considerable rancor in the Mojave community and ill feelings prompted Mojave to withdraw from the Desert Union district and to form its own high school district.

In both Muroc and Mojave, the newly formed high school districts had boundaries that were coterminous with those of their respective elementary districts. Under those circumstances, the law requires that the high school and elementary school districts be combined to form a unified district. Thus, in December of 1952, the Muroc Unified School District (later "*joint unified*" because part of its territory now extends into San Bernardino County) was established and the Mojave Desert Union High School District ceased to exist.

In Mojave, voters approved a plan for the establishment of a unified school district in their community and the formation of the Mojave Unified School District followed in January of 1953.

With the expansion of Edwards Air Force Base, the Muroc/Boron area began to experience rapid growth. Payne Avenue School was opened on the base in 1952, followed closely by Bailey Avenue School in 1953 and then Desert High School in 1954. Additional classroom facilities were added in 1966 with the opening of Forbes Elementary School on base and Richard B. Lynch Elementary Schools in North Edwards. (Both these schools have been closed for some time due to declining enrollment.)

Because of the proximity of a federal military installation, Muroc is eligible for Federal Impact Aid for those students who attend school on base. The district receives approximately \$5,000 for each student who resides on base and about \$800 for each student who attends school on base but is from a military family that lives off base. Students from civilian families who live on base generate an additional \$120 per student. Members of Muroc's board of trustees are not elected at-large. Two are elected from the Boron area, one from North Edwards, and two from Edwards Air Force Base. There have been times when the board's representatives from the base have been active duty members of the military. Only enlisted personnel may do so, however, as officers are prohibited from running for an elected position. There is also a liaison

officer from the base who works closely with the district on matters related to school operations.

The Muroc district experienced significant growth during the 1950s and 1960s as evidenced by the number of schools built during those years. Average daily attendance in 1953-54 was 1,114 students. That figure more than doubled, to 2,974 students by 1961-62, and appears to have peaked in 1970-71 at just over 4,400 students.

By 1975-76, however, the P-2 enrollment figures indicate that enrollment had fallen to 3,305 students. By 1980-81 that number had fallen to 2,678 students, then rose slightly in 1990-91 to just a few students shy of 3,000.

The past ten years has seen a steady reduction in the size of the military force at Edwards Air Force Base, a knotty problem for the Muroc schools in that continued declining enrollment has a serious negative impact on district income and operations. The district's CBEDS report for October of 1997 indicated an enrollment of 2,579 students. Ten years later, at the end of the 2006-07 school year, enrollment had dropped to 1,989. It bears noting, too, that kindergarten enrollment, a key indicator, fell by more than 30%, from 249 students to just 169, during that same ten year period.

In 2003, following a three year period of carefully monitoring their expenditures and setting aside \$832,000 from the district's special reserve, trustees opted to use those monies to address a variety of projects that had long been deferred. Projects completed using those reserve funds included the purchase of band uniforms for Boron High School, replacement of the ovens at Desert High School, purchase of a heavy duty trailer, a forklift, and a lawn mower for the maintenance department, laptop computers for the district's special education teachers, and new playground equipment for West Boron Elementary School.

Critical needs within the district extend far beyond what can be provided by reserve funds, however, and in July of 2007, the board of trustees voted to pursue a school facilities bond for \$14.8 million. Among other things, those funds were earmarked for replacement of roofs and outdated windows, abatement of hazardous materials, upgrading of security and public announcement systems, and retrofitting to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Unfortunately, the bond election, held in November of 2007, failed.

Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, to adjust for declines in enrollment schools were consolidated on two campuses. The Bailey Elementary School was closed and students from that campus were reassigned to the Branch Elementary School. The district then eliminated the CDS code for Edwards Middle School, currently situated on the same campus as Desert High School, and the Desert campus was re-designated a junior/senior high school.

Charles Hewitt was the Muroc district's first superintendent, his tenure beginning in the mid-1940s and ending in 1951. Hewitt's successors have been: Mr. Mel Curtis (1951-1962); Mr. Richard Lynch (July, 1962-June, 1982); Dr. Bruce Farr (July, 1982-July, 1987); Dr. Robert Deckard (October, 1987-July, 1989); Mr. Gary Rice (August, 1989-October, 1993); Dr. Chet Francisco (November, 1993-May, 1997); Dr. Irene Sherman (September 1997-June, 2000); Dr. Bertha Boullion (July, 2000-June 2004); Mr. Michael Summerbell (July, 2004-August, 2006); and Mr. Rob Challinor (October, 2006 to 2010) followed by Loretta Gibson. ■

# SIERRA SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Sierra Sands Joint Unified School District** was formed in 1974 as a result of the consolidation of Rand Joint School District, Indian Wells Valley School District, China Lake Joint School District, and Burroughs High School in Ridgecrest. Burroughs had, until that time, been a part of the Kern High School District.

Sierra Sands, like the Mojave district, covers a large geographical area, some 954 square miles. The district serves just over 5,000 students and a fleet of thirty buses is required to transport students to and from school.

The desert area of northeastern Kern County has, over the years, spawned a host of small school districts beginning with the **Johannesburg School District**, formed in 1900 in the tiny mining community of Johannesburg. The Johannesburg district was small in terms of territory (a half-section of property acquired from the **Randsburg School District**) and also in terms of enrollment. In its first year, just ten students were enrolled. Johannesburg acquired an additional three and one-fourth sections from the Randsburg district in 1913 and then, in 1951, in a move designed to increase its assessed valuation, it annexed an adjacent twenty-five mile wide rectangle of uninhabited desert land. At that time, in 1951, Johannesburg had reached its peak enrollment of forty-five students.

By 1961, enrollment had dropped to just sixteen students and three years later the Johannesburg School District merged with the Randsburg School District to form the **Rand Joint School District**. Rand Joint School District then joined with **Indian Wells Valley School District** and **China Lake Joint School District** in 1974 to form the present day Sierra Sands Unified School District.

The **Indian Wells Valley Union School District** was formed in May of 1920 through the consolidation of **Brown, Inyokern, Orchard, and Las Flores** school districts. It remained small until World War II at which time the federal government began development of the China Lake Naval Ordnance Test Station. ADA rose from fifty students in 1943-44 to two hundred sixty-one in 1944-45. The establishment of the **China Lake Joint School District** in 1945 took



MT. OWEN SCHOOL





JOHANNESBURG SCHOOL

some of the Indian Wells enrollment but towns outside the station, particularly Ridgecrest, grew rapidly and, consequently, district enrollment continued to climb. ADA in 1951-52 was 630 pupils and just ten years later that figure had more than doubled, to 1,291. Unification followed in 1974.

The first classes in the **Brown School District**, established in 1910, were held in

a saloon in Leliter, a supply station just to the south of Brown. It was the first school to serve the Indian Wells Valley. At the time the school district was formed, the Los Angeles aqueduct was under construction and there was need for a school facility to serve the children of the workers on that project. Later a school house was built in Brown. In 1920 the Brown School District joined in the four district merger that resulted in the formation of the Indian Wells Valley Union School District.

The **Inyokern School District** was established in 1913 and its average daily attendance that first year was eight pupils. In 1920 Inyokern joined three other small districts - **Brown, Las Flores, and Orchard** - to form the Indian Wells Union School District.

Formed in February of 1916, the **Orchard School District** was named for the many apple orchards in the region. The Orchard School was located seven miles northeast of Inyokern. It began with nine students and was serving but ten students at the time it joined in the formation of the Indian Wells School District in 1920.

The **Las Flores School District**, located 12 miles east of Inyokern in what is now Ridgecrest, was formed in 1915 and named for Las Flores Ranch, the first large alfalfa ranch in the valley. Las Flores had an ADA of eleven pupils in 1919-1920 at which time it became a part of Indian Wells Valley Union School District.

**Mt. Owen School District** maintained a one room school until 1951 at which time it lapsed and became a part of the Indian Wells Valley Union School District. The district was formed as the **Morrison School District** in 1920 but the name was changed to Mt. Owen in December of 1924. It's interesting to note that during its thirty-one years of existence the school had but one teacher, Mrs. Ethel Standard.



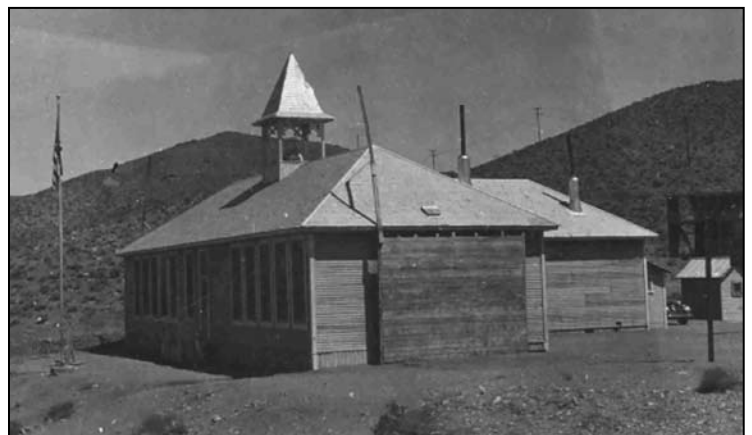
The **China Lake Joint School District** was formed in August of 1945. Its boundaries were coterminous with those of the U.S. Naval Ordnance Test Station, established there in 1943, and also included a small uninhabited portion of San Bernardino County. China Lake joined with Rand Joint School District, Indian Wells Valley School District, and Burroughs High School in 1974 to form present day Sierra Sands Unified School District. In June, 2006, voters approved Measure M, a \$50,500,000 bond proposal, the funds to be used to upgrade, expand and construct school facilities.

Some \$19 million have been sold and a number of projects have been completed or are underway. Modernization of the Faller and Pierce elementary schools has been completed and approval has been granted for the modernization of the Inyokern, Las Flores and Rand elementary schools. Plans have been approved, too, for the new Career and Technical Education building at Burroughs High School although that is not a Measure M project.

Sierra Sands currently operates six K-5 elementary schools, two middle schools, Mesquite Continuation High School and Burroughs High School. The district also has an adult school.

Enrollment in the Sierra Sands district has been on a slow decline for the past fifteen years. Average daily attendance peaked at 6,954 in 1994-95 and was as low as 5,271 in 2003-04. It rose slightly in the next four three years, to 5,450 in 2006-07. ADA for the 2008-09 school year was 5,176.

Bruce Auld served as the district superintendent from 1992-97. He was followed by Dr. April Jones (1997-2004), Dr. Charles Milligan (2004-05) and Joanna Rummer, the present superintendent. ■



RANDBURG SCHOOL



## SOUTHERN KERN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

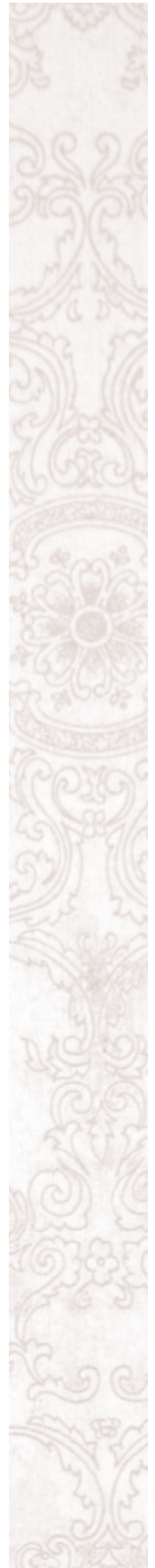
In April of 1960, following receipt of a petition requesting that such action be taken, the board of trustees of the **Southern Kern County Union School District** called an election to seek community approval for the formation of a unified school district. The measure was viewed favorably by district voters largely because it would allow them to build a high school in Rosamond and thus students in grades 9 through 12 would no longer have to be transported each day to Antelope Valley Joint Union High School in Lancaster. The new district, now called **Southern Kern Unified School District**, became an official entity on July 1, 1962.

The district from which Southern Kern Unified evolved, Southern Kern County Union School District, had been formed in 1926 through the consolidation of **Rosamond School District** and **Willow Springs School District**, both located in the Rosamond area. The town of Rosamond, and by extension the Rosamond School District, was named for the daughter of a Southern Pacific Railroad engineer. The area was first homesteaded by Charles A. Graves who, in 1909, helped to form the Rosamond School District and start the new school so that his own children might have a formal education.

In its first year of operation the Rosamond School District had an average daily attendance of ten pupils. It would remain small throughout its existence with a recorded ADA of just twenty-one pupils in 1926-27, its last year of independent operation.

The Willow Springs School District had been formed in 1904. Classes for the eleven children who were enrolled that first year were held in a building constructed by Ezra Hamilton, owner of a hotel and trading post in the little village, the town's leading citizen, and the man who would also serve as the school district's first clerk. Like the school in Rosamond, the Willow Springs School would remain quite small throughout its existence, recording an ADA of but thirteen students in 1926-27, the year prior to consolidation.

Another small school district had sprung up in the Willow Springs area in 1920. Originally called the **Domino School District**, it had located its school house some four miles west and one mile south of Willow Springs. In June of 1921, less than a year after its formation, the Domino district changed its name to **West Antelope School District**. West Antelope served a very sparsely populated area on the extreme



west end of Antelope Valley and enrollment in the district was always quite small, never exceeding fourteen students. On two occasions, in 1935 and again in 1944, low attendance forced the suspension of the West Antelope district but each time new enrollees appeared and the district was reestablished. Finally, in 1946, with an ADA of but eight students, the West Antelope School District lapsed. A note in the minutes of the Kern County Board of Education, dated February 2, 1946, reads as follows: *“By a five to nothing vote, approval was given to the petition of three-fourths of the electors residing in the West Antelope School District.....so that the Board might effect an agreement with the Southern Kern County Union elementary school for the education of the pupils of the West Antelope School District.”*

Southern Kern Unified inherited three schools from its antecedent elementary district: Rosamond Elementary School and Hamilton Junior High School in Rosamond, and Tropic Elementary School in Tropic. The new Rosamond High School, opened in 1966, was located on a site adjacent to what was then Hamilton Junior High School. Over the years it became apparent that this was a less than ideal arrangement and that there was a need to physically separate the two campuses so in 1992 the Hamilton campus was converted to a K-4 school and the junior high program, now designated a middle school, was moved to the Tropic campus. During its first year of operation, because there was a need to maximize the use of available classroom space, Tropic Middle School housed students in grades 5 through 8. The following year district elementary schools were reconfigured to serve students in grades K through 5 and placed on a year-round schedule. Tropic Middle School and Rosamond High School remain on traditional semester schedules.

In addition to the three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, Southern Kern Unified operates an independent study program, a continuation high school, and an adult education program.

In recent years many people who work in the Los Angeles area have moved to Rosamond because of the availability of moderately priced new housing. Since many of these new residents are young families with school aged children, the district has been faced with the need to provide additional student housing. They have helped solve their problem by enlisting the aid of one of the principal builders and developers in the area, Kauffman and Broad, who have agreed to provide financial support

for the construction of a new K-5 elementary school. The school will be located in a residential area that the company is developing and, like the other elementary schools in the district, it will be on a year-round schedule. There is no projected completion date for the new school as construction is tied to the increase in enrollment that will result from the new housing development. The district will make application to the state for matching funds to offset the cost of the project.

In November of 1999 the district held a bond election in hopes of raising \$13.3 million for new classrooms, renovation and repair of outdated facilities, and other projects. No school bond measure has ever gained the approval of local voters and this one was no exception, falling less than 4% short of the required two-thirds majority.

At the time of unification, Southern Kern County Union School District had an average daily attendance of 677 pupils. Over 3,000 students were enrolled in Southern Kern Unified for the 2004-05 school year. By 2009, the district's ADA was just over 3,300 students.

Mike Richardson served at the district superintendent from 1992-1996. He was replaced by Christine Hoffman who served from 1996-2002. The present superintendent, Rodney Van Norman has served in that capacity since 2002. ■



# TEHACHAPI UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Tehachapi Unified School District** was formed in 1957 as the result of the consolidation of the **Aqueduct School District**, **Tehachapi Union School District**, and **Tehachapi Valley Union High School District**. The new unified district operated six schools: small rural elementary schools in Monolith, Keene, and Cummings Valley, a large elementary school in Tehachapi proper, a junior high school for grades 7 and 8, and a traditional high school.

The **Aqueduct School District** was formed on February 4, 1909. It was named for the Los Angeles Aqueduct and built for the children of workers at the Monolith Portland Cement Plant who lived in the company town of Aqueduct. The cement plant was originally built by the City of Los Angeles for the construction of the huge Los Angeles Aqueduct that ran along the eastern edge of the Sierras. The village and the school were called Aqueduct until April 28, 1910, when the U.S. Government changed the name of its post office to Monolith. Aqueduct School's peak enrollment was seventy-three students in 1933-34. In the 1950s, the school was in need of repairs but not owned by the school district so in November, 1955, Aqueduct School District bought its own property a short distance from the old school and built a new one. The school has been known as the Ala Monroe Elementary School since September, 1965, in honor of a long-time district teacher.

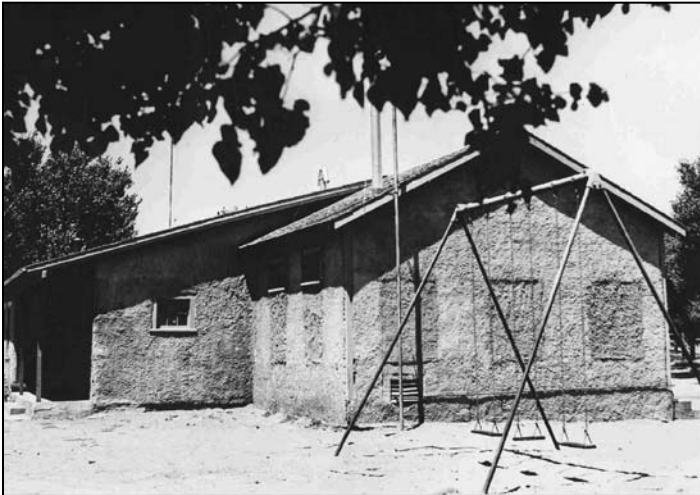
The **Cameron School District** was formed on April 5, 1893, to serve children who lived in the Cameron Canyon area. The one-room, one-teacher school was located two miles east of Willow Springs Road on the north side of Cameron Canyon Road. Peak enrollment at the Cameron School at this location was sixteen students in 1902-03. The school was moved in 1915 to a location near the bridge on Oak Creek where Willow Springs Road and Mojave Roads cross. There it was popularly known as the Oak Creek School. The Cameron School District was suspended in 1930 because of low enrollment, then declared lapsed on November 28, 1932. Cameron's territory was divided between the Aqueduct School District and the Tehachapi School District.

---

**Note:** Beginning in 1865, a stagecoach road between Los Angeles and Havilah passed through Oak Creek Pass near the site where the Cameron School would be relocated.

---





AQUEDUCT ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

The **Tehachapi Union School District** was formed on January 26, 1954, by the consolidation of the Tehachapi School District and the Keene School District. On September 4, 1956, Cummings Valley School District was also annexed to the Tehachapi district.

Shortly after the establishment of Kern County in April of 1866, the Board of Supervisors ordered the formation of school districts at Tejon, Lynn's Valley, Kelso Valley

and Havilah. The Tehachapi School District was formed at about that same time, in November of 1866. In its first year, the Tehachapi School had an average daily attendance of thirteen students. By 1880-81, the ADA had jumped to thirty-two.

On May 20, 1867, the Tehachapi School District hired the first woman teacher in Kern County, Miss Louisa Jewett, later Louisa Crites.

---

**Note:** Although details are lacking, there is some evidence that a subscription school was established in Old Town in 1868 and teacher was W.C. Higgins.

---

Trustees were elected in June of 1868, and made plans to raise public funds for a schoolhouse. A wood frame building was erected in what is now known as Old Town, and Tehachapi became the first publicly supported school district in the county.

**Brites Valley School District** was formed on May 7, 1886 and covered just nine square miles southwest of Tehachapi. Enrollment never exceeded seventeen students and Brites Valley was joined with the Tehachapi district on September 8, 1893.

By 1908-09, the enrollment of the Tehachapi School (in Old Town) had dropped to five students. Once the Southern Pacific Railroad established the town of Summit Station three miles to the east, there was a population shift



CUMMINGS VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TEHACHAPI UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



in that direction.

In 1909, the **Summit School District**, formed in 1877 with a schoolhouse on the northeast corner of I and Curry streets, changed its name to the **Tehachapi School District**. The schoolhouse had been built by the teacher, James Binnie, for \$2,100.

In 1903, concerned about young children having to cross the railroad tracks, the original Summit School was replaced by a three room brick building at E and Robinson streets and, in 1965, was renamed the Claude L. Wells Elementary School.

The **Keene School District** was established on March 6, 1883. The school was located on a flat of ground next to Tehachapi Creek, just east of the freeway overpass that crosses it today. Enrollment peaked at sixty-eight students in 1934-35, thirty-two of them from the preventorium at Stony Brook Retreat, a treatment center for tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases. The original schoolhouse was destroyed by a waterspout and school was held in several temporary facilities for a number of years. Keene was merged with Tehachapi in 1954.

Cummings Valley School was formed on July 11, 1873. The original schoolhouse was used until 1910, at which time it was replaced by a new one-room schoolhouse built at a cost of \$3,160. John Hickey, farmer, preacher, school trustee and

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN FORMATION OF TEHACHAPI SCHOOL DISTRICTS

### 1872 - Fitzgerald SD

Exact location not known but somewhere between Keene and Tehachapi. Lapsed in 1900 and annexed to Cummings Valley SD.

### 1873 - Cummings Valley SD

Served a sparsely populated area west of Tehachapi. Annexed to Tehachapi Union SD in 1956.

### 1877 - Summit SD

Located in present city of Tehachapi. The district name was changed in 1909 to Tehachapi SD when the original Tehachapi SD became Old Town SD.

### 1883 - Keene SD

Joined with Tehachapi SD in 1954 to form the Tehachapi Union SD.

### 1886 - Brites Valley SD

A small (9 square miles) district located southwest of Tehachapi. Consolidated with Tehachapi SD in 1893.

### 1888 - Bear Valley SD

Formation of this district was recorded in minutes of board of supervisors but no school ever built nor classes held.

### 1893 - Cameron SD

Located on railroad between Tehachapi and Mojave. Lapsed in 1932 and territory divided between Aqueduct and Tehachapi school districts.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN FORMATION OF  
TEHACHAPI SCHOOL DISTRICTS (CONT.)

**1909 - Old Town SD**

Originally called Tehachapi SD and, as noted above, lapsed in 1928 and territory divided between Tehachapi and Cummings Valley school districts.

**1909 - Aqueduct SD**

Located in Monolith. Joined with Tehachapi Valley Union High SD and Tehachapi Union SD in 1957 to form the Tehachapi Unified SD.

**1916 - Southern Kern High SD**

Formed in 1916 but lapsed three years later due to lack of attendance.

**1928 - Tehachapi Valley Union High SD**

Formed to serve students in the Aqueduct, Old Town, Cummings Valley, Keene, Tehachapi, and Cameron school districts. Joined with Tehachapi Union SD and Aqueduct SD in 1957 to form Tehachapi Unified SD.

**1954 - Tehachapi Union SD**

Formed through the unionization of Tehachapi SD and Keene SD. Joined with Tehachapi Valley Union High SD and Aqueduct SD in 1957 to form the Tehachapi Unified SD.

**1957 - Tehachapi Unified SD**

Formed by combining Aqueduct SD, Tehachapi Union SD, and Tehachapi Valley Union High SD.

later mayor of Tehachapi, taught at the Cummings Valley School. The Cummings Valley School was destroyed by the earthquake in 1952 and rebuilt in 1955. In the interim, class was held in the living room of Milo Sprinkle.

Records for the **Fitzgerald School District**, with territory on the southerly portion of Bear Valley, are scanty. It lapsed on October 5, 1900, and was annexed to the Cummings Valley district. Fitzgerald served the area between Keene and Tehachapi.

**The Bear Valley School District** is mentioned in the minutes of the Board of Supervisors for June 4, 1888. There are no further records and it is presumed that no district was formed nor school built.

Unification of the Tehachapi schools was the end product of a complex set of unionizations, annexations, consolidations, and lapsations that occurred over a period of some ninety years and involved two high school districts and eleven elementary districts. The chronology that follows describes the evolutionary history of each district and will perhaps make it easier for the reader to understand the sequence of events leading to the formation of the district as it is presently configured. (*See chart beginning on page 233*)

The Tehachapi community has experienced considerable population growth in recent years and the magnitude of that growth is reflected in the school district's enrollment figures. The average daily attendance for the district in 1961-62

was recorded at 1,287 pupils, 981 in grades K-8 and 306 in grades 9-12. At the close of the 1997-98 school year total enrollment stood at 4,707 students, with 2,756 students enrolled in grades K-6, 761 students in the junior high school, and 1,190 students in Tehachapi High School. Current enrollment (2010) stands at 4,589 students.

In August of 2001, the Tehachapi district opened the Cummings Valley Elementary School to serve some 600 students from Bear Valley Springs, Stallion Springs, Alpine Forrest, and Cummings Valley.

The present Tehachapi High School campus, designed for 500 students, was opened in 1965. When enrollment reached more than double that figure in 1998, the district sought to raise \$24 million through a bond issue, a portion of the funds, along with matching funds from the state, to be used for the construction of an elementary school in Cummings Valley and a new high school. The bond issue was approved by the voters and the district began preliminary planning and site preparation for the new high school, assuming that the State Allocation Board would approve the \$19.4 million in matching funds necessary to complete the project. Due to a change in the manner in which priorities for school construction funds are determined, however, final approval was not forthcoming until January of 2001. The new high school, opened in 2003, replaced the old high school which was converted to a junior high school.

In addition to the traditional programs, Tehachapi Unified School District also operates a continuation high school, an independent study program, and an adult school. They also provide materials and support for parents involved in home schooling through a program called "*Home Base*".

George Wolters served as the district superintendent from 1984-1990. He was followed by Kent Ashworth (1990-2003), Marian Stephens (2003-2006) and Dr. Richard Swanson (2006 to the present). ■



## DELANO JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

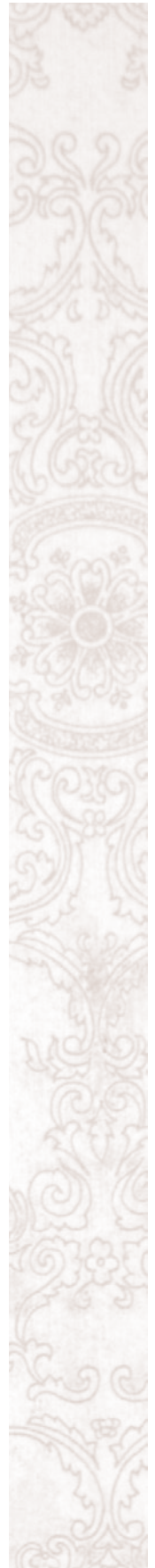
Long before permanent settlements were established in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley, the area was home to about 30,000 Yokuts Indians, separated into four distinct tribes. For some 7,000 years, the Yokuts had made their home near Tulare Lake, a huge expanse of water that, at the time, covered 800 square miles of the valley floor and teemed with fish and waterfowl. North to south, Tulare Lake ran for about fifty miles, its northern extreme almost due west of Visalia and its southern tip due west of McFarland.

The first non-Indians to arrive in this part of the valley were Spanish missionaries who came here in the early 1800s. Accompanied by Spanish soldiers, the missionaries, whose party included Father Francisco Garces, had plans to build a string of missions in the San Joaquin Valley much as they had along the California coast. But the Spanish governor of California, Joaquin Arrillaga, could not decide on the best way to subdue the Indians: by military might or missionary zeal and so, in the end, the missionaries left without having built a single mission.

Prospectors, too, were among the early settlers in this region, thousands having come here to seek their fortunes when gold was discovered in 1853 in the Kernville/Greenhorn area.

But Delano's first settlers of consequence were men, along with their families, who came to help lay the tracks for the Southern Pacific Railroad as it wound its way down the valley from San Francisco. Having reached the Delano area, construction of the railroad had to be halted for a year as an economic downturn required Southern Pacific to seek additional funding. As a result of the delay, Delano became a railhead of some consequence with goods being freighted from here to points south and east. Although many workers moved on when construction resumed, a significant number found reason to stay and, in 1873, the city of Delano was founded. Columbus Delano was Secretary of the Interior at that time and the railroad company named the town in his honor. Delano was incorporated in 1915.

**Delano Joint Union High School District**, Kern County's second largest high school district, was formed in 1911 to serve the elementary school districts in the Delano area. It is a "*joint*" school district because it serves not only elementary school students from **Delano Union School District** and the **Pond School District** in Kern County but also several



elementary school districts in southern Tulare County, notably **Earlimart, Columbine, Alpaugh, and Richgrove.**

In its first year of operation, 1911-12, the district's twelve students attended classes in a Delano church building. A bond election had been held in 1912 to raise \$50,000 to build a new school and students were in temporary quarters until the new facility could be completed. The first seniors graduated from Delano High School in 1914. By 1915 the school had an enrollment of twenty-four students and a staff of 5 teachers. By 1923, enrollment had grown to 154 students; by 1937, to 475 students; by 1948, to 859 students; by 1959, to 1,377 students; and by 1969, to 1,943 students. Steady growth followed and by 1998 the district was serving better than 2,700 students on a campus designed in the 1960s to house approximately 1,600. An additional classroom building was added in 1980 and, over the years, the district also added 32 portables to the campus but with an enrollment increase of 7-8% each year, as one board member put it, *"The school has just outgrown itself"*.

Obviously in desperate need of a second high school, in November of 1998 Delano voters were asked to approve a \$27 million bond measure. It passed easily, having received favorable votes in excess of 80%.

Construction of Delano's second high school, on a 55 acre parcel at the corner of Ninth Street and Browning Road, got underway in January, 2002, and opened in the fall of 2003. It is designed to accommodate about 2,100 students. Total cost of construction was about \$46 million, including \$21 million from the state.

The location selected for the new school was in dispute from the beginning of the project and naming the school was controversial as well. Some residents wanted it on the west side of freeway but the site available on west side did not meet state standards. After considerable debate, the school was named in honor of Cesar Chavez.

The district's third high school, located on the west side of the freeway and named in honor of Robert F. Kennedy, opened in 2008.

Current district enrollment is approximately 4,000 students making the Delano district the second largest high school district in the county.

Delano Joint Union High School District also operates an adult school, a continuation high school, an independent student program, and a program for pregnant minors and young mothers with preschool aged children.

Dr. Frank Dyer was the Delano High School District superintendent from 1962-1980. He was followed by Dr. Robert Flores (1980-1985), Dr. Curt Kennedy (interim from July to December of 1985), Dr. Leonard Dalton (November, 1985-December, 1988), Tom Henry (interim for one week in July, 1988), Mr. Robert Selent (interim July, 1988 to January, 1989), Dr. Mike Ramos (interim January, 1989 to June, 1989), Dr. Rueben Trinidad (interim, July 1989-August, 1989), Mr. Fred Mendoza (interim August 1990 to June, 1991), Mrs. Sherrill Hufnagel (interim March, 1991-June, 1991), Dr. Art Murray (July, 1991, one month), Mrs. Sherrill Hufnagel, August, 1991 - July 2007). The current superintendent is Rosalina Rivera. ■





# KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

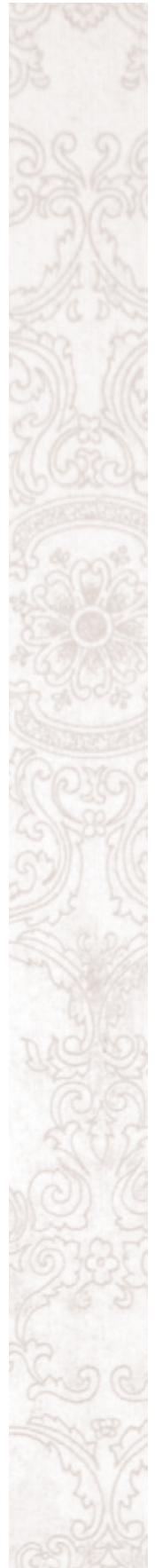
In November of 1892 voters were asked to determine whether or not Kern County should have its own high school. The election was called by the Board of Supervisors in response to a supporting petition which had been circulated by county superintendent of schools, Alfred Harrell. Apparently Mr. Harrell's petition fairly represented the wishes of the public at large as citizens voted 1,274 to 286 in favor of the proposal with but a two-thirds majority being required for approval.

It was agreed that the new high school would be located in Bakersfield but would serve the entire county which, at that time, had a population of fewer than 10,000 people. Once voters gave their approval, little time was wasted and Kern County's first high school began operations on January 12, 1893.

An agreement with the Bakersfield School District allowed the first classes to be held in two upstairs rooms of the old Railroad Avenue School at Truxtun and L streets, a temporary arrangement until a separate high school facility could be built. Kern County High School had an enrollment that first year of thirty-two students and the staff included a principal, Professor Phillip Eden, one teacher, and a custodian. Students were offered a three year course of study that focused principally on literature and science.

The cornerstone for a permanent high school facility at 14th and G Streets was laid on July 3, 1895. The building was situated on a site now called Elm Grove and, once completed, included four classrooms and an assembly hall, all built at a cost of \$14,000. The old county hospital had once stood on this same site and it was reported that during excavation for the foundation several arm and leg bones were uncovered, apparently buried there following amputations at the hospital.

In its formative years the day-to-day operation of Kern County High School was administered by the Kern County Board of Education with the county superintendent of schools serving as chief administrator. Control of all business and fiscal aspects of the operation, however, resided with the Board of Supervisors. The Kern County Board of Education served as the governing board of Kern County High School until 1916 when changes in the state law required a separation of the two entities. That forced separation led to the formation of Kern County Union High School District. A board of trustees was appointed to govern



the operations of the new district and Leo G. Pauly, formerly a member of the county board of education, was chosen to serve as the first board president. The district had no superintendent at that time, the chief administrator being the principal of the high school.

The number of students enrolled in the high school grew at a steady pace and the new board soon found that there was a pressing need for additional classroom space. In response to that need, a second building, located across the street west of Elm Grove and facing F Street, was completed in 1908. Following completion of this second building, D.W. Nelson, superintendent of Bakersfield School District and a member of the county board of education, gave this description of Kern County High School:

Kern County has but one high school, consisting of two modern buildings and their equipment, valued at \$100,000. It has grown rapidly since its establishment in 1893 and now has an enrollment of more than two hundred students. The school has two departments, the academic and the commercial. The academic department offers three courses of study of four years each, the literary, the scientific, and the engineering, any of which leads to a course in the University of California. Thorough instruction is given in English, mathematics, Latin, science, French and drawing.

The school is well equipped with a fine library, laboratories and scientific apparatus. Pupils from the best high schools in the country are able to enter our high school without loss of time or other inconveniences.

The department of manual training has just been added to the high school, consisting of wood and iron work for the boys and sewing and cookery for the girls.

The annual cost of maintaining the high school is about \$20,000. The average salary paid to the teachers is \$1,250.

In consequence of the rapid increase in the attendance of the high school, the board of supervisors has just erected a new building at a cost of \$50,000. The building is of white sandstone brick and is 65 x 100 feet. It is three stories in height and contains an assembly hall with a seating capacity of three hundred, ten recitation rooms, four

laboratories, one lecture room, a large gymnasium with baths, a library room adjacent to the assembly hall, a drawing room and offices and private rooms for teachers.

The rooms are lighted from one side, the library and drawing room having skylights. There are two hundred steel lockers for the accommodation of the pupils. The building is heated by the Morgan gravity system and is supplied with plenum blowers and thermostats. By means of this apparatus, the rooms are automatically furnished with air at seventy degrees Fahrenheit, which is changed every twenty minutes, making the heating and ventilation absolutely perfect.

The new structure on F Street, initially referred to as the academic building and later on as the administration building, would be in continuous service for the next forty plus years. Its service would end only after sustaining severe damage in the 1952 earthquake and, like a number of other buildings on the Bakersfield High campus, it was abandoned and razed.

By 1912 enrollment in the high school had reached 392 students and the curriculum had been expanded to include a manual arts program. Classrooms to accommodate that program were built just north of Elm Grove. Three years later, in 1915, facilities and services were expanded again: an auditorium was added to the campus and the district began providing bus transportation services. Initially, bus service was limited to the transportation of students to and from the school farm but before long buses began transporting students who lived outside the Bakersfield area to and from school. By 1917 students were being transported from as far away as Rosedale, Shafter, Edison, and Arvin.

Junior college classes, considered high school post graduate work at the time, were first offered in 1913 and within three years there were 27 students enrolled in the program. The twenty courses offered by the junior college were designed to fulfill the requirements for the first two years at the University of California.

---

**Note:** The development of Bakersfield College and the Kern Community College District is reviewed in a separate section of this document.

---

Athletics has always played an important role in Kern County's high school programs and this rich tradition of team sport competition can be traced back to the beginning of the century. The man most responsible for the high school's early successes in athletics was Dwight "Goldie" Griffith, who began his coaching career in 1908 and continued as an active member of the coaching staff for most of the next forty years. Coach Griffith's teams, especially in the areas of football and track and field, were often among the best in the state and, in fact, his football team of 1916 won the state championship, the first of seven under his tutelage. The football stadium at Bakersfield High School is named in honor of Coach Griffith.

The 1920's saw enrollment in the high school top 1,000 students and classroom space once again became a pressing need. Successful bond elections, each for \$200,000, were held in 1919 and 1920. A portion of the revenue from the sale of these bonds was used to increase the size of the campus by purchasing adjacent properties, the remainder going toward construction of classroom buildings for the domestic science and agriculture programs.

The population of the Bakersfield area continued to grow in the 20's and so, too, did the population of the county's outlying communities. In the mid-1920's, both McFarland and Shafter expressed a desire to begin local high school programs. Permission was granted and in 1926 McFarland began offering high school classes in the basement of a local church. The following year Shafter began holding high school classes in the Union Congregational Church, the Shafter Women's Club, and the American Legion. Permanent structures for both programs were completed in 1928.

The influx of migrant farm worker families during the Depression years had a tremendous impact on almost every school district in Kern County and the high school district was no exception. Enrollment in Kern County Union High School, just 1,328 in 1922-23, had climbed to 2,250 by 1929-30 and, once again, the need for additional student housing became a critical concern.

Two bond elections, each for \$300,000, were held in 1934 as the district sought to raise funds for construction of a new auditorium. Both failed. The following year the district received a \$100,000 Public

Works Administration grant for the auditorium project but problems in obtaining permits forced the delay of actual construction until 1941, only to have work on the project suspended in 1943 because of the war.

A \$200,000 bond issue gained voter approval in 1936. Funds generated by the sale of these bonds went toward construction of East Bakersfield High School, opened in 1938, Kernville High School, opened in 1941, and purchase of a site for a high school in Oildale. Although the Oildale site was acquired in 1939, construction was postponed due to the war and the north-of-the-river campus, which would be called North High School, did not open its doors to students until 1953.

The U.S. entered World War II in December of 1941 and the nation's wholesale concern with "*the war effort*" required major adjustments in the high school's programs. The availability of teachers became a problem almost immediately as a large segment of the district's teaching staff entered military service. By October of 1942 fully one-third of the certificated staff members employed in Kern County Union High School District were in uniform. Some programs were added to the curriculum as a direct result of the war, a good example being a cadet program for young men not yet eligible for military service. By the same token, some other programs, athletic competition between schools for example, were suspended for "*the duration*". In lieu of competition between schools, which would not resume until the war ended in 1945, intramural sports programs were organized on all campuses so that students were still afforded the opportunity to participate in athletics but at a much less formal level.

The manpower shortage created by the war also presented local farmers with serious problems, especially at harvest time, and they appealed to the high school district to allow students time away from school to help with the crops. The district, not wishing to dilute their academic program, resisted somewhat in terms of allowing wholesale release days but they did cooperate with the agricultural interests by issuing work permits and scheduling Harvest Holidays, days that students worked in the fields in lieu of attending classes. At one point the district agreed to close schools in November for an extended period so as to allow students to help with the completion of the cotton harvest.

SCHOOL SITE CHRONOLOGY  
KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

DATE	FACILITY OPENED/CLOSED/DROPPED
1893	Kern County High School established
1928-29	McFarland High School opens
1928-29	Shafter High School opens
1938-39	East Bakersfield High School opens
1941-42	Kern Valley High School opens
1945-46	Burroughs High School opens
1949-50	Arvin High School opens
1953-54	North High School opens
1957-58	South High School opens
1961-62	Foothill High School opens
1965-66	West High School opens
1967-68	Vista Continuation High School opens
1970-71	Highland High School opens Mesquite Continuation High School opens Nueva Continuation High School opens
1971-72	Central Valley Continuation High School opens
1972-73	Ruggenberg Career Center opens
1974-75	Burroughs High School & Mesquite Continuation High School become part of Sierra Sands Unified School District

The end of the war signaled the beginning of a period of tremendous change and growth in the Kern Union High School District but a new superintendent, Theron McCuen, had been appointed in 1945 and, from all accounts, he was more than equal to the challenge. McCuen's tenure with the district, which spanned almost forty years, began in 1929 when he was hired to teach mechanical drawing. In 1936 he was selected to be the district's first business manager and he would serve in that capacity until his appointment as superintendent. McCuen proved to be a skillful manager and deftly guided district activities during a twenty-three year period that was witness to an explosive growth in enrollment. In his first year as superintendent, 1945-46, the average daily attendance in the Kern Union High School District was 5,907 students. By the time of his retirement in 1968, not only had enrollment tripled, to 18,962, but the district had built and opened six new comprehensive high schools and its first

continuation high school.

In 1947 district voters approved a \$6 million bond issue. A portion of these funds was used to improve and augment existing sites but the bulk of the money went towards the planning and development of new schools and a new district office complex.

Another bond issue, this one for \$17 million, was approved by the voters in 1953. The opening of a new district office complex two years later signaled the beginning of a major expansion program with the district completing South High in 1957, Foothill in 1961, and West High School in 1965.

In an election held in November of 1960, voters approved the

establishment of a separate junior college district and the **Kern Joint Junior College District** was formed shortly thereafter. While the new junior college district was governed by a separate board of trustees, Theron McCuen remained superintendent of both districts until his retirement in 1968. Dr. Edward Simonson was president of the college when McCuen retired and his appointment as superintendent of the junior college district severed the last link between the two districts.

Within the past twenty-five years, three Kern County communities with high schools in the Kern High School District have opted for local control of their high school programs by forming unified school districts. In 1974 Sierra Sands formed a unified school district that included Burroughs High School, up until that time a part of the Kern High School District. Similarly, McFarland

Union School District opted to form a unified school district in 1980 and McFarland High School, like Burroughs, withdrew from the Kern High School District to become a part of that unification. In 1988 voters in the El Tejon Union School District approved a measure that lead to the construction of a new high school and the formation of a unified school district in their community. High school students in the El Tejon/Frazier Park area who, for many years had been transported to Bakersfield or Maricopa for high school classes, now attend Frazier Mountain High School, completed in 1995 and opened as part of the **El Tejon Unified School District**.

As the high school district moved into the 1970s and 1980s, administrators grappled with issues that ranged from student unrest and student rights to collective bargaining for teachers and the demand by

SCHOOL SITE CHRONOLOGY KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT	
DATE	FACILITY OPENED/CLOSED/DROPPED
1975-76	Horizon Continuation High School opens
1976-77	Phoenix Learning Center opens
1978-79	Vista East Continuation High School opens
1979-80	Constellation opens
1980-81	McFarland High School becomes part of McFarland Unified School District
1982-83	Horizon High School dropped from district
1985-86	Regional Occupational Program & Center opens Summit Continuation High School opens
1986-87	Vista West Continuation High School opens
1991-92	Stockdale High School opens
1993-94	Centennial High School opens Discovery Campus opens
1994-95	Ridgeview High School opens
1999-2000	Liberty High School opens
2003-04	Golden Valley High School opens
August, 2008	Independence High School opens Mira Monte High School opens

minority groups for a greater voice in their children's education. There were also problems associated with burgeoning growth. In the first half century of its existence the number of students enrolled in the Kern County Union High School grew at a slow to moderate pace. Following World War II, however, the rate of growth increased markedly and the district has experienced significant increases in student population from that time to the present. The chart on the following page, showing the district's average daily attendance taken at ten year intervals beginning with the 1902-03 school year, clearly illustrates that growth pattern.

In 1990 voters in the high school district approved a \$97.5 million bond issue, the proceeds to be used primarily for the construction of additional new high schools. The revenue from the sale of those bonds was put to work immediately. Stockdale High School was completed and opened in 1991, followed by Centennial High School in 1993, Ridgeview High School in 1994, Liberty High School in 1999, and Golden Valley High School in 2003.

The district voters approved a \$219 million bond issue in 2004 and a portion of those funds were used for the construction of two more schools, both of which opened in August of 2008. The Mira Monte High School is located at Redbank and Fairfax Roads, and Independence High School at Old River and McCutcheon Roads.

District enrollment topped 28,000 students for the first time in the fall of 1999.

Kern High School District currently operates 26 sites, including eighteen comprehensive high schools. The chronology below illustrates the manner in which district school sites have evolved from 1893 to the present.

The primary goal of the schools in Kern High School District is to improve academic performance on a broad scale and that is clearly demonstrated by the fact that eight district schools have earned the designation "*California Distinguished High School*" and one, Highland High School, has been named a "*National Distinguished School*". Additionally, the district was named "*School District of the Year*" in 1992 by the California Department of Education in recognition of district efforts to reduce dropout rates, improve educational opportunities for "*at-risk*" students, and increase the likelihood of school success for the average student



through the implementation of "Project 2000". "Project 2000", a joint project of businessman Jim Burke and then superintendent Don Murfin, has received national recognition as a model for the improvement of public education through a public-private partnership.

Six superintendents have directed operations in the Kern High School District since the retirement of Theron McCuen in 1968: John Eckhardt, from 1968 to 1977, Gerald DeGrow from 1977 to 1981, Don Murfin from 1981 to 1989, Dr. Tom Jones from 1989 to 1999, and Bill Hatcher from 1999 to 2004. Don Carter was named to succeed Hatcher in 2004.

A footnote to the past: Acquisition of the site that would become Bakersfield High School.

In December of 1905, the Board of Supervisors placed an ad in *The Bakersfield Californian* seeking parties who owned, and wished to offer for sale, property that would be appropriate as a site for a new high school. Several offers were received.

One, from R. McDonald, owner and proprietor of Bakersfield News Company, stated that he would offer for sale "one block of land, 264 feet square on the southwest corner of F and 14th streets, just across the street from the present High School for \$4000."

A second offer came from F.M. Noriega. Mr. Noriega wished to sell a 2-1/2 acre plot on the northeast corner of H and Forrest streets. His asking price was \$3,000. The Board of Trustees of the Municipality of Kern also submitted an offer - "a block of land in the Bernard Addition" - but were non-specific as to the exact location and did not include an asking price. They did go on to state that the "land offered for a school site is centrally located near Baker Street and of suitable elevation." The offer was signed by the president of the board, James Curran.

The Board of Supervisors obviously accepted the offer of Mr. McDonald. The first building on that site, initially called the Academic Building and, later, the Administration Building, was

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE IN KHSD  
1902 TO PRESENT

YEAR	ADA	YEAR	ADA
1902-03	148	1995-96	27,611
1912-13	320	1997-98	25,277
1922-23	1,328	1998-99	29,694
1932-33	2,354	1999-2000	29,577
1942-43	2,463	2000-01	25,111
1952-53	8,327	2001-02	25,709
1962-63	15,335	2002-03	26,741
1972-73	19,619	2003-04	27,654
1982-83	15,653	2004-05	28,842
1992-93	22,084	2005-06	30,237
1993-94	26,072	2006-07	31,995

completed in 1908. It faced F Street and was situated just south of 14th Street. It served the district well until 1952 when it was destroyed by the severe earthquake of that year. ■

# TAFT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

In May 1908, prompted by a booming oil business, the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads began construction of the Sunset Western Railroad, a line that originated at Pentland Junction, 4.3 miles east of Maricopa, and made its way northwest for seventeen miles through the middle of the Midway oilfield. Its terminus was at Shale, just north of the siding that would later become the town of Fellows.

It was not practical to live in Maricopa or McKittrick and work in the Midway field so a few dwellings and businesses began to appear along the railroad in what would one day be the city of Taft. In 1904, a settlement developed on part of E.J. Boust's property in the vicinity of Tenth and B streets in what is now Taft Heights. It consisted mostly of saloons, hotels, and brothels and was called Boust City.

---

**Note:** By 1908, the following businesses had opened their doors in Boust City: Al Thackery Saloon, Eating, and Rooming House; Bert Tibbett Rooming House and Restaurant; Sampson and Jones Saloon; Milton and Martin 35-room, 2 story hotel and bar; Mosier and Johnson saloon; and the H.F. Dover and George Wilson Saloon. The population at the time was 100 to 150 people.

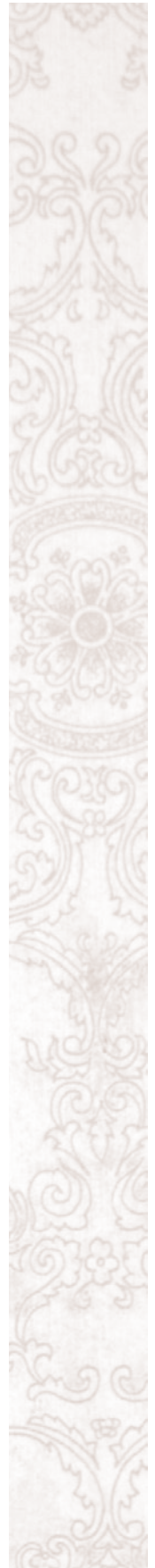
---

In 1909, the railroad won the approval of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to establish a townsite north of the railroad tracks and began by laying out Main, Center, and North streets between Second and Sixth streets. The area covered seven square blocks and was called Moron by the railroad. That proved to be a less than popular name for obvious reasons and when the post office opened in April of that year, the name of the town was officially changed to Taft, in honor of President William H. Taft.

By 1910, Taft had two newspapers - The Midway Driller and The Midway Courier, a sure indicator of just how fast the town was growing. It nonetheless was not growing fast enough to sustain both newspapers and within a year the two had consolidated their operations and kept the Midway Driller name.

On November 7, 1910, an election was held to determine whether or not Taft should be incorporated.

(Oddly enough, the area to be incorporated included only section 13



with its 800 residents and excluded the other 800 residents who lived south of the railroad tracks and in Boust City). There was little opposition to the measure and it passed by a vote of 212 to 18; what just two years earlier had been little more than a railroad siding was now the city of Taft,

Initially, Taft had an inadequate supply of domestic water and water had to be hauled in from Bakersfield in railroad tank cars. By 1911, however, that problem was solved when the Western Water Works began delivering water to Taft via pipeline from wells near the Kern River, some 14 miles to the east.

Taft was a boom town in every sense of the word. Within two years of its founding, a host of businesses had opened their doors to serve a growing population and it was not unusual to see a few automobiles making their way up the dirt roads.

---

**Note:** Automobile road races had become a popular diversion at this time. One account describes a competition held on Washington's Birthday in 1912 that began in Bakersfield, went from there to Maricopa, then to Taft, McKittrick, Buttonwillow, and then back to Bakersfield. Thousands of spectators lined the roadways. Drivers and their mechanics were required to go twice around the circuit, most of it on dirt roads, and described by one driver as a "*two hundred and twelve mile grind.*" A Ford and a Buick were among the competitors but the other cars bore names less familiar to us today, names such as Nyberg, Mitchell, Pope-Hartford, Flanders, Stutz, National, Reo, Kline Kar, and Knox.

---

Taft's first formal high school program began in 1911 when Conley High School was established as a branch of the Kern County High School. Classes were held at Conley Elementary School in South Taft and enrollment that first year was ten students.

In 1915, Conley was accredited by the University of California, an act which allowed them to separate themselves from Kern County High School and form the Conley High School District.

---

**Note:** Kern County High School's role as a governing body was altered 1916 when a change in the state law led to the formation of Kern County Union High School District.

---

Enrollment in the now independent district grew rapidly and crowded conditions prompted the opening of a new \$60,000 high school plant in "North Taft" in 1917; formal dedication of the school did not take place until February 22, 1918, however. The new school, which included a main building, auditorium, domestic science building, and a manual arts building, was located on San Emidio Street between Seventh and Eighth streets, the site of the present Taft Union High School.

---

**Note:** Taft's high school district takes great pride in the maintenance of their facilities as demonstrated by the fact that those original buildings, now some ninety years old, appear to have aged but little.

---

In June of 1918, eleven of the 162 students enrolled in the new Conley High School received their diplomas as the first graduating class.

The **Conley Union High School District** was formed in 1920 when the **Conley High School District** was joined with the **Bear Creek Union High School District**. During its first three months of existence, the newly formed district retained the Conley name but in July of 1920, the name was changed to **Taft Union High School District**.

The **Bear Creek Union High School District** had been formed in November of 1919 from territory formerly in the **Kern County Union High School District**. Its boundaries included the elementary school districts of **Browngold, McKittrick, Midway** (in Fellows), and **Olig** (in Reward). No high school was ever built, however, since just six months later the residents of the Bear Creek district voted to join the Conley district.

In its first year, 1920-21, the Taft Union High School District had an average daily attendance of 265 students. The city itself was also experiencing rapid growth - from 6,000 people in 1920 to 10,000 in 1929 - so it's not surprising that by 1925 the district was serving 610 students. The recorded ADA for 1930-31 was 780 students.

---

**Note:** The *Kern County Public Schools Directory* for 1930-31 lists C.L. Tomerlin as a member of the Taft High School teaching staff, teaching history, civics, and law. Tomerlin would later gain prominence as the owner of the Bakersfield Inn.

---



TAFT UNION HIGH SCHOOL &  
JUNIOR COLLEGE

Another note of interest ten years hence: The *Kern County Public Schools Directory* for the 1941-42 school year shows a combined “*Taft Union High School and Junior College District*” with an enrollment of 1,450 students. The superintendent at that time was Stanford Hannah.

Taft High School fielded its first football team in 1921 under the guidance of Coach Andrew Hardin. They were

known as the Gaugers until 1928 when the team mascot became the Wildcats.

In 1922 the high school district established Taft Junior College under the provisions of an act passed the previous year by the California legislature. This act provided that high school districts with adequate financial resources and sufficient population to draw from might establish junior colleges, subject to the approval of, and under the general control of, the California State Board of Education. In its first year of operation the Taft Junior College had an average daily attendance of 20 students and by 1935 that number had grown to 39. The junior college program proved to be quite popular and by 1961-62 there were 535 students enrolled.

Taft’s high school and junior college programs began operating as separate entities with the establishment of the West Kern Community College District in 1963.

---

**Note:** Information relevant to West Kern Community College District is covered in a separate section of this history.

---

Average daily attendance in 1962-63 was 1,108 students, rising to 1,350 in 1966, the district’s peak enrollment year. By 1970, enrollment was down to 1,200 students and a slow but steady decrease followed. In the past thirty years, however, district enrollment has remained remarkably steady. Since 1975, enrollment has fluctuated between a low of 846 in

1983 and a high of 1,037 in 2004. Average enrollment from 1990 to the present has been 978 students. Current enrollment, including students enrolled in regular education, special education, continuation high school, and independent study programs, stands at just under 1,000 students. Additional programs include adult education, GED equivalency preparation, adult independent study, and the regional occupational program operated through a JPA with Maricopa Unified School District.

Like most Kern County school districts, Taft has experienced a significant increase in the number of Hispanic students now enrolled in the district. In 1990, the district's 99 Hispanic students represented just over 10% of the total student population. The CBEDS survey for 2006 reveals a Hispanic population of 320 students, 31% of the total school population of 1029 students.

Through the years the Taft Union High School District has razed, remodeled, and moved old facilities, adding new facilities as needed. In January, 1998, the district completed construction of the Buena Vista Continuation School, the first phase of which was completed in November of 1984. No bond elections have been required to accomplish the district's ongoing modernization efforts.

Technology is considered a very important component of district curriculum and Taft was recently awarded a \$285,000 Digital High School Grant. There is an attempt to integrate technology into all areas of the curriculum and since the early 1980's students have been required to demonstrate some measure of computer literacy as a condition for graduation.

The Taft high school district's first principal/superintendent was Robert Gray who served until 1924. He was followed by: J.T. McRuer (1924-1930), W.T. Watson (1930-33), Frank Bauman (1933-1936), Stanford Hannah (1936-1944), Eugene Johnston (1944 to 1966), Dr. C.E. Wallace (1966-1971), William W. Kelley (1971-1974), Quentin Watts (1974-1984), Dr. Lynn L. Davies (1984-1994), D. Patrick Mills (1994-95), Gerald P. Dragoo (1995-2003), Dr. Curt Dubost (2003-2008). The current superintendent is Dr. Mark Richardson. ■





# WASCO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

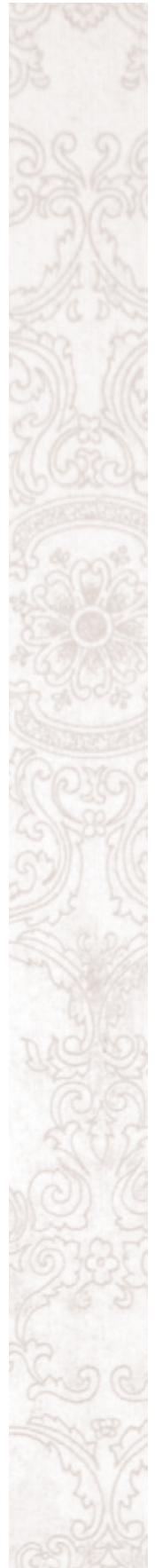
In 1898, the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railroad established a depot some 25 miles northwest of Bakersfield and named it Dewey, then later Deweyville, in honor of Admiral George Dewey, a hero in the Spanish American War. Soon a small trading center that included a grocery store, a blacksmith shop, and two saloons grew up around the depot. A post office was established in October of 1899 with the rail agent, Arthur Weaber, serving as postmaster. The opening of the post office led to the discovery that another town called Dewey already existed and a year later the name of the little village was changed to Wasco.

It is generally agreed that the town's new name was suggested by Jimmy Bonham, the foster child of a local family and, by birth, a member of the Wasco Indian tribe of Oregon. There is scant agreement, however, among those who offer opinions as to the English translation of "*wasco*." Some say it means "*hot*" which would be appropriate given the climate of the region, but it may also mean "*a large body of water*" or even "*a cup or small bowl made of bone*."

The Wasco Colony was founded in 1907 through the efforts of the Kern County Board of Trade. The Board of Trade persuaded M.U. Hartcraft, head of a Los Angeles based land agency called the California Home Extension Association, to purchase nine sections of land from the Kern County Land Company for development.

After acquiring title to the three square miles of mostly raw land, the developers began a nationwide advertising campaign promoting the sale of both village lots and farm lots in what they called the Wasco Colony. The lots were sold at auction in the association's Los Angeles offices on February 6, 1907. Raw land sold for \$50 to \$100 per acre and "*improved*" property for as much as \$200 per acre. During the summer of that year more than two hundred families arrived at the colony to settle on their newly acquired parcels of land, in most instances without ever having seen the property beforehand. Almost immediately the availability of water became a major concern since the purchase price did not include water rights. Many settlers ended up leaving and those who opted to stay found life very difficult for the next several years.

In spite of the hardships, however, Wasco soon became a thriving community and there was even talk of incorporating. The matter was put before the voters in 1922 but many residents were concerned about the



effect incorporation would have on their property taxes and the measure was overwhelmingly defeated. Subsequent incorporation elections were held in 1923 and 1924 but they, too, were defeated. The matter lay dormant for the next twenty years and it would be December of 1945 before Wasco voters consented to incorporation and the formation of a municipal government.

Two elementary school districts had been established in the area some years before the depot and the little village of Wasco even existed. The **Shamrock School District**, formed in 1880, was huge, at least in terms of territory. Its boundaries extended from the Kern County line on the west to a point 18 miles beyond Wasco to the east, and from the Kern County line to the north to Lerdo Highway on the south, an area of more than 1,300 square miles. The Shamrock schoolhouse was located on the south bank of Poso Creek at the junction with Whistler Road.

---

**Note:** Alfred Harrell, who would later serve as the county superintendent of schools and also as publisher of *The Bakersfield Californian*, taught at the Shamrock School from 1883-1885.

---

The **Delta School District**, with territory wholly within the boundaries of the Shamrock district, had been formed on May 2, 1892. Following a successful \$4,000 bond election in October of that year, the Delta district built a schoolhouse at the corner of Kimberlina Road and Central Valley Highway, now the site of the offices for the Wasco-Shafter Irrigation District.

Neither of these districts ever served more than a handful of students. Faced with closure because of low and declining enrollment, the two districts joined together in 1906 to form the **Delta-Shamrock School District**. A few years later the Delta-Shamrock schoolhouse was moved to the Wasco townsite and the district was renamed the **Wasco School District**. In 1918, as a result of having absorbed the tiny **Elmo School District**, it was designated a “*union*” district, and was thus renamed **Wasco Union School District**.

---

**Note:** Wasco had another school, the Colony School, about which little is known or can be discovered. It was located south of the townsite but details as to its exact location, when it was built, and how long it was

in existence are murky. A photograph of the schoolhouse, found in the district archives, suggests that it was a one-room frame structure, small in size and of coarse construction. History records that Karl Clemens was hired to teach at the Colony School in 1914 but was there for just a brief time before being named principal of the elementary school in Wasco. He would go on to have a long and distinguished career as the district's superintendent, retiring in 1952. In 1962, the Wasco Union Grammar School was renamed Karl F. Clemens School in his honor.

---

In 1915, the voters of the **Cleveland, Maple, Poplar, Wildwood, Semitropic, and Wasco** elementary school districts approved the formation of a high school district for the community. Twenty-eight students were enrolled in Wasco High School that first year and classes were held in a rented auditorium-like building called Wasco Hall.

A successful \$45,000 bond election was held in December of 1915 and a portion of the funds thus generated were used to purchase a fifteen acre school site at Trogdon's Corner. An adjacent three acre parcel, labeled Lot 48 of the Fourth Home Extension Colony, was also purchased.

In August of 1916 the board accepted a bid of \$44,552 for construction of the new high school building. It was completed in six months and the cost at completion was about \$50,000. Sixty-one students were enrolled at the time of the dedication on March 3, 1917. The new high school building included both classrooms and the school offices and was in regular service until shortly before being razed in 1957. After 1917, as new structures were added to the campus, this original building was referred to simply as the Main Building.

Wasco High School's first principal was John Corcoran but his tenure was quite brief. Apparently his performance did not pass muster with the board of trustees and, in April of that first year, he was given ten days notice and dismissed. Corcoran was replaced by a member of the board of trustees, Charles Hill, who withdrew from his seat on the board to take over as principal/superintendent. He would serve the district in that capacity until 1933.

In the years following the opening of the Main Building, a host of new buildings were added to the campus: an industrial arts building in 1925, an auditorium in 1929, a gymnasium in 1931, an agricultural addition to

the industrial arts building in 1934, the first phase of the science building in 1935, then the second phase in 1939. The cafeteria and a language arts building were added in 1949, a library and a music building in 1953, a new classroom building and a bus garage in 1957, and a new administration building in 1959.

---

**Note:** The PTA operated a cafeteria program from sometime in the 1920s until 1931 at which time the district assumed responsibility for food services.

---

The Great Depression presented difficult challenges for virtually all segments of American society and school districts were not exempt from its devastating effects. Revenue was suddenly in short supply and belt tightening became the order of the day. This was clearly the case in Wasco in 1932 when the high school district's revenues fell far short of what had been anticipated and the operating budget had to be reduced by almost a third, from \$124,000 to \$78,000. In 1936, with the community struggling because of widespread unemployment, the high school board of trustees, in a effort to provide some small measure of relief, adopted a policy of non-employment of married females so as to offer employment opportunities for men with families. In 1938, in a move that could be counted on the plus side of the Depression ledger, the Works Progress Administration approved a federal grant that allowed the district to complete construction of the second phase of the science building.

---

**Note:** Generally referred to simply as the WPA, the Works Progress Administration was a make-work project of the Roosevelt administration that created jobs by providing federal funding for the construction and improvement of highways and bridges, schools, libraries and other public entities.

---

In terms of territory, Wasco is one of the larger high school districts in Kern County. Its attendance area, the western boundary being the San Luis Obispo County line, covers an area of approximately 750 square miles. Entering freshman come from four feeder elementary school districts: Wasco Union, Maple, Lost Hills Union, and Semitropic. Some

students from Wasco's two private schools, St. John's and North Kern Christian School, also attend Wasco High School.

Being situated in a largely rural community, Wasco High School has for many years offered a program that places heavy emphasis on the development of both vocational and agricultural skills. Agriculture remains a major element of the school's curriculum as evidenced by the fact that some five hundred Wasco High students take agriculture related course work. Ag students have an opportunity to learn the practical aspects of agriculture on the district's 110 acre school farm which operates in conjunction with a 10 acre farm lab where instruction is provided in welding, ag mechanics, plant science, and animal care.

Recent remodeling and updating projects are indicative of changes that have taken place in the district's curricular focus. The auto shop has been converted into two classrooms, as has the sewing room, since both of these programs have been dropped from the curriculum; the metal shop has been converted into a weight room for athletes; a rehearsal room in the auditorium now houses the computer lab; and the career and student centers have both been greatly expanded.

The district received a tech grant in 1998 that provided funding for the installation of computers in classrooms. Systems have been configured according to the state technology model and all stations have access to the internet. Assignments in the core areas of the curriculum require students to glean information from the internet and, consequently, a great deal of staff development time has been devoted to familiarizing teachers with techniques for using the computer as a teaching tool.

Most Kern County schools and school districts have experienced a dramatic change in demographics in recent years and Wasco High School is no exception. Hispanic students represented just over 71% of the total school population in 1991, compared to almost 85% by 2006. A majority of these youngsters are identified as migrants and so are able to benefit from the school's Migrant Education Program, funded by the federal government and administered by the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. The Migrant Education Program provides supplementary support designed to help these students progress and succeed in school. Sessions are held after the regular school day ends and some 65% of the Wasco High School students participate.

In 1996 the district opened Independence High School to accommodate those students who fail to thrive in a traditional classroom setting. This facility, on a separate campus, serves as a continuation school, a center for those students on independent study, and also houses the district's adult education program.

In 2004, the district completed a needs assessment and demographic study that resulted in the development of a very ambitious Facilities Master Plan. Elements of the plan will be completed in three phases and will require extensive expansion and modification of existing facilities.

Phase I was completed by the winter of 2007 at an estimated cost of \$5.6 million. Among other things, this phase included the addition of one wing of nine modular classrooms with restrooms and technology access, the construction of asphalt basketball courts, and demolition of the existing maintenance building.

Phase II of the plan calls for the addition of a second wing of nine modular classrooms and the construction of a sports complex on district property west of Palm Avenue.

Phase III includes a third wing of nine modular classrooms and possibly a new cafeteria, gymnasium, and a multipurpose room.

No projected completion dates have been established for Phases II and III.

---

**Note:** Although the renovation projects will greatly alter the school's appearance, the old auditorium will remain the centerpiece of the Wasco High School campus. Its unique architectural splendor has been beautifully preserved and, in 1998, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

---

The district's average daily attendance for the 1925-26 school year, ten years after first opening its doors, was 143 students. The enrollment pattern from 1925 to the present is revealed in the following figures, given in ten year increments: 1935-36 (299 students); 1945-46 (385 students); 1955-56 (546 students); 1965-66 (879 students); 1975-76 (869 students); 1985-86 (854 students) and 1995-96 (960 students). Enrollment dipped to around 650 students in the early 1980's but has grown steadily since.

Growth has been more dramatic in recent years. The CBEDS information sheet for 2000-01 recorded an enrollment of 1,126 students,

for 2002-03, 1,244 students, and for 2003-04, 1348 students. Closing enrollment for the 2005-06 school year was 1,551 students and the average daily attendance for 2008-09 was 1,626 students.

To help offset the burgeoning effect of the city's rapidly growing student population, developer fees of \$2.63 per square foot are assessed on all new residential construction and \$.42 per square foot on all new commercial construction. Revenue is divided between the elementary district, which receives a 65% share, and the high school district which receives the remaining 35%.

Should the district sustain its present rate of growth, projections indicate that Wasco High School's enrollment will soon reach 2,200 students. To prepare for that eventuality, the district has begun preliminary planning for a second comprehensive high school. No projected date for construction has been established but the district has purchased an 80 acre school site at Griffith and Prospect Streets.

Jack Cutner served as superintendent/principal from 1961-1980. His successors have been: Kenneth Proctor, 1980-1983; Douglas Fletcher, 1983-1987; and Thomas Blum, 1987-1990. The principal/superintendent designation was then dropped by the district and Blum served exclusively as superintendent from 1990-1997. He was replaced in 1997 by Dr. Roberta Mayor. Mayor headed up the district until June 30, 1999, at which time she was replaced by an interim superintendent, Mike Butcher, who held that position until November 30. On December 1, 1999, Anthony Monreal was appointed superintendent and he served in that position until June 30, 2003. Butcher again served a brief stint as the interim superintendent being relieved of those duties on September 1, 2003, by the present superintendent, Elizabeth McCray. ■





# COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS

The development of junior colleges in California began early in the 20th century when it became apparent that there was a need to expand educational opportunities in those areas of the state that did not have easy access to the universities in the bay area or in Los Angeles. In 1907 Senator Anthony Caminetti of Amador County, who had earlier sponsored legislation which authorized the establishment of high schools in the state, was instrumental in the passage of a law permitting junior college work in the high schools. The law was written in simple terms and briefly stated:

The board of trustees of any city, district, union, joint union or county high school may prescribe post graduate courses of study for the graduates of such high schools, or other high schools, which courses of study shall approximate the studies prescribed in the first two years of university courses. The board of trustees of any city, district, union, joint union or county high school wherein the post-graduate courses of study are taught may charge tuition for pupils living without the boundaries of the district wherein such courses are taught.

It was three years later, in 1910, that Fresno established the first junior college in California. ■

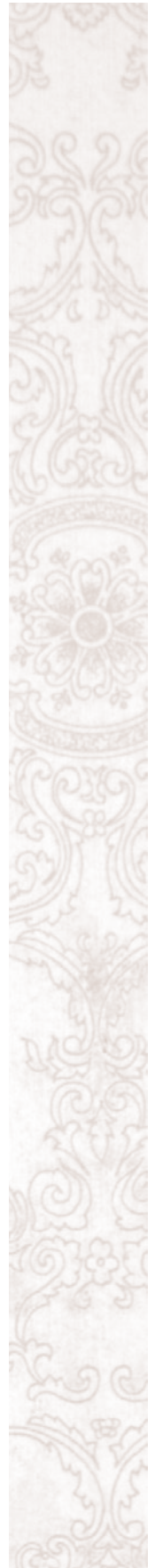


# KERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

It is believed that the board of trustees of Kern County High School gave their approval for junior college courses in the high school in 1910, the same year that the junior college in Fresno was established, but apparently there was no formal agreement at that time, or so it would appear since no such action is recorded in the board minutes. Paul VanderEike, who would be named the first dean of the junior college, came to Bakersfield in 1911 as head of the high school science department. He recalled that the establishment of a junior college had been approved by the board of trustees that same year but that no effort was made at that time to organize college classes and none would be until two years later.

On July 25, 1913, the Kern County Board of Education, somewhat skeptical as to the likelihood of the program's success, approved a proposal that would include a two-year junior college and normal course in the curriculum of Kern County High School. The task of convincing the board that they had made the right decision would fall on Dr. B.S. Gowan, principal of the high school, and Paul VanderEike. Gowan had a doctorate from Yale University and had been the president of a normal school. VanderEike had served as the superintendent of the night school at Minnesota State Penitentiary. So the "*man from Yale and the one from jail*" as Gowan and VanderEike were called, became the real founders of Bakersfield's junior college.

The junior college in Bakersfield began without ceremony on Monday, September 8, 1913, with approximately fifteen students in attendance. The stated purpose of the junior college, as outlined in a circular published in the July 26, 1913 edition of *The Morning Echo*, was to provide the first two years of a regular four year college course and also to enable students who were not planning on going away to college to get two extra years of schooling at home. As a consequence, the course work was organized in such a way that students in the junior college program were given full credit for all work transferred to the University of California. Courses were not exclusively academic in nature, however, and the same amount of instruction was available in the agriculture, manual arts, and other industrial departments. Another important feature of this departure from the traditional county high school program was what was then termed the "*normal*" course. This course of study accommodated those students who wished to prepare for careers in teaching.



A listing of the junior college course offerings was published in the August 10, 1913, edition of The Morning Echo. Two separate regimens were available for those wishing to prepare for teaching careers; one was decidedly academic in nature, the other largely a review of public school subjects. Course A, the more academic of the two, required work in the following areas: English, a foreign language, history, mathematics, geology, pedagogy, psychology, history of education, juvenile literature, agriculture, shop work, and drawing. Course B, which appeared to focus more on practical application, required completion of classes in the following subjects: review of arithmetic, review of grammar, review of geography, geography methods, reading methods, psychology, pedagogy, history of education, shop work, and drawing.

The two-year program for students wishing to transfer to the University of California or Stanford was also listed in that issue of The Morning Echo and it required completion of the following academic courses: Two years of advanced English, two years of advanced Latin, two years of advanced French, a year of European history, a year of industrial and institutional history, a half year of solid geometry, a half year of trigonometry, a half year of analytical geometry, a half year of calculus, a year of surveying, a year of organic chemistry, a year of advanced physics, a year of sociology, a year of economics, two years of advanced agriculture, two years of advanced shop work, and two years of drawing.

Paul VanderEike was named dean of the junior college in 1914 and served in that capacity for three years. He was succeeded by Miss Grace Bird, who was given the title of dean in 1920 and then was named director in 1941. Miss Bird would serve in that capacity until 1950, at which time she took a position with the University of California.

In 1918, what was referred to as the Kern County Union Junior College, a department of the Kern County High School, became a part of the University of California by affiliation. That same year, in an apparent attempt to attract more women to the junior college, several new domestic courses were added to the curriculum. They included millinery, food and nutrition, sewing, and aesthetics. The class in aesthetics, taught by Grace Bird, offered students help with planning for *"beautifying the home and its surroundings in an artistic and appropriate way."*

The junior college quickly grew in popularity and by 1915-16 had an

enrollment of twenty-seven students. While the records are incomplete and contradictory, enrollment seems to have declined during the years that America was involved in World War I. By 1920, however, students began returning to the junior college and an enrollment of fifty students was recorded for the 1920-21 fall semester. That same year, in a move indicative of their growing spirit and independence, the junior college students published their first separate newspaper, "*The Scrutinizer Raspberry*."

As the number of students at the junior college increased, so too did the interest in fielding a football team. In 1922 the first "*Renegade*" eleven took the field with just sixteen players on the roster. This was at a time, of course, when Dwight "*Goldie*" Griffith's great Driller teams were dominating high school football throughout the state so the potential existed for enticing players from those squads to play for the junior college once their high school playing days were over. The 1922 junior college team won five straight games including victories against Taft, Modesto, and Santa Barbara before being defeated by Fresno in their season finale.

Oddly enough, there appears to have been some disagreement as to who coached the team. *The Bakersfield Californian* of September 12, 1922, lists the coach as one "*Doc*" Seawright. Other sources, including an article by Morris Chain that appeared in a 1972 *Renegade* football program, indicate that the first coach was F.L. Ryan, a professor of economics at the junior college. Chain, who claimed to have been a member of the 1922, 1923, and 1924 teams, also claimed to have named the team the "*Renegades*" but that, too, is a matter of some dispute. Chain would go on to become one of Bakersfield's most prominent attorneys.

In 1916, Dr. Gowan resigned as principal of the high school and was replaced by A.J. Ludden, who had been an instructor in history and mathematics. Ludden, who served as principal from 1916 to 1922, was an enthusiastic supporter of the junior college program as was his successor, H.A. Spindt. Records indicate that Spindt was designated both principal and superintendent for the district, his tenure ending in 1938. T.L. Nelson was district superintendent from 1939 to 1945 and his successor was Theron McCuen. McCuen served as the district's chief administrator for the next 23 years before retiring in 1968.

That same year the junior college formally separated itself from the high school district by electing its own board of trustees, charged with the responsibility of governing what was then called the Kern Junior College District. Dr. Edward Simonsen was named superintendent and later, chancellor, of the new district, a position he held for the next ten years.

In the years immediately following its formation, operations in the junior college district were directed by the board of trustees and administration of the Kern County Joint High School District. Theron McCuen served as superintendent of both districts until his retirement.

What we now know as the Kern Community College District was formed in November of 1960 as Kern Joint Junior College District. District boundaries at the time were coterminous with those of the Kern County Joint Union High School District and included not only vast areas of Kern County but small and largely uninhabited portions of Inyo and San Bernardino counties as well.

The Junior College building, on the campus of Kern County Union High School, was completed in 1931.

Earthquake of 1952 resulted in the condemnation and demolition of the high school administration building and temporary loss of classrooms in the junior college building. To make maximum use of the available space, large classrooms were partitioned and classes held on either side of the partitions. Tents and portable buildings were also brought on campus and used for classroom.

Jack Frost resigned as Renegade football coach in 1953 and Homer Beatty was named to that position.

In 1967, Porterville College became a part of the Kern Junior College District which four years later, in 1971, would change its name to Kern Community College District. The next year a third college, Cerro Coso in Ridgecrest, joined the district.

As the district began to expand, there was an obvious need to separate the responsibilities of the college presidents and the chancellor. Dr. Simonsen was the last administrator to hold both positions. The chancellors who followed him were: James Young (1978-1999), Joe Conte (February, 1999-November, 1999), and Walter Packard (1999-2003). Jerry Young was the interim chancellor for the 2003-04 school year. The current

chancellor is Sandra Serrano.

Titular heads of Bakersfield College from its inception have been: Grace V. Bird, Vice Principal and Dean of the College (1913-1950), Ralph Prator, Vice Principal and Dean of the College (1950-1958), Edward Simonsen, president (1958-1968), Burns Finlinson, president (1968-1972), John Collins, president (1972-1983), Richard Wright, president (1983-1997), Robert Allison, interim president (1997-1998), Sandra Serrano (1998-2004), Lincoln Hall, interim president (2004-05), Dr. William Andrews (2005-2008). The current president is Dr. Greg Chamberlain.

The chief administrators of Porterville College since it opened in 1927 have been: Benjamin Grisemer, Vice principal and Dean of the College (1927-1928), Francis Gault, Vice Principal and Dean of the College (1928-1930), B.E. Jamison, Dean of the College (1930-1955), Orlin Shires, president (1955-1978), Paul Alcantra, president (1978-1993), John McCuen, interim president (1993-1994), Bonnie Rogers, president (1994-2000), Lincoln Hall, interim president (July-October, 2000), and Dr. William Andrews, president (2001-2005). The current president is Dr. Rosa Carlson.

The presidents of Cerro Coso Community College have been: Richard Jones (1972-1975), Richard Meyers (1975-1978), Raymond McCue (1979-1995), Darnell Roe (1995-2003), Sharon Dyer (2003-06), and Dr. Mary Retterer (2006-2010). The current president is Jill Board. ■





## WEST KERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

In 1922 the trustees of the Taft Union High School District, following the provisions of an act passed by the California legislature in 1907, approved a proposal allowing the high school to offer junior college classes. The college began holding classes the following year, 1922-23, serving, at that time, just a handful of students and using classrooms on the high school campus. The superintendent of the high school district, Robert F. Gray, also served as chief administrator of the junior college as did his successor, J.T. McRuer, superintendent from 1923 to 1925.

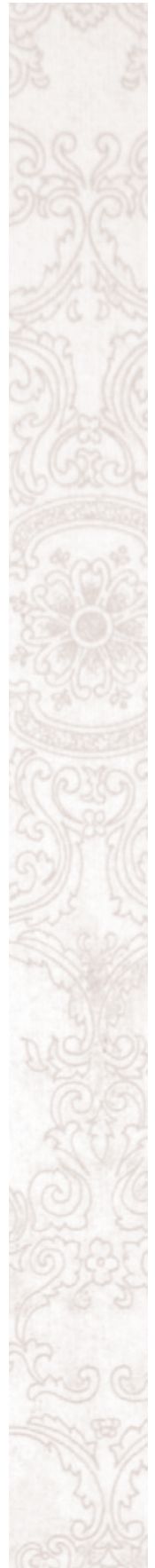
By 1925 enrollment had risen to thirty students and the college appointed its first dean, John Howes. That same year a classroom on the high school campus was set aside to be used exclusively by the college, a tiny step that would ultimately lead to the establishment of the junior college as a separate educational enterprise.

The years between 1925 and 1935 saw a tenfold increase in junior college enrollment, to 300 students, and that pattern of steady growth continued until 1941 and the coming of World War II. In the early months of 1942 most of the men on campus left school for military service and only about 30 students, mostly women, were enrolled for the 1943-44 term. Enrollment remained near that level for the duration of the war.

The end of hostilities in 1945 saw Congress adopt the G.I. Bill, one section of which provided benefits in the form of educational supplements for veterans who wished to return to college. There was a dramatic increase in enrollment at colleges and universities all across the U.S. and Taft was no exception. When the doors of the junior college opened for the 1946-47 school year, 220 students were enrolled in college courses.

In 1948, the district acquired a surplus headquarters building from nearby Gardner Field and moved it onto campus for exclusive use by the junior college. It was necessary, of course, to continue holding some classes on the high school campus but the college found room in their new acquisition to house a library, a student lounge, several classrooms, and administrative offices. A second surplus building was acquired at about this same time and was situated off campus for use as a student dorm.

Although the high school and junior college would be jointly administered as the Taft Union High School and Junior College District



for the next eighteen years, it was evident as early as 1954 that the board of trustees was leaning toward the establishment of the junior college as a separate entity. After having opted to shorten the name of the institution to simply Taft College, the board then approved plans for the construction of a new college campus, to be situated immediately north of the high school. Construction began in May of 1955 and the new facility, which included an administration and classroom building, a library, and a student center, was ready for use in September of 1956. The growing number of enrollees, 425 at this point, made it necessary for the college to continue holding some classes on the high school campus and to use the high school gymnasium and stadium for physical education and athletic events.

In 1962 the Kern County Committee for Organization of Schools approved a petition for the establishment of a separate college district in Taft, opening the door that would lead to the formation of the West Kern Junior College District.

On July 1, 1963, the college, now with its own board of trustees, was officially separated from the high school district and an ambitious building program was launched almost immediately. Residence halls and a physical education building were completed in 1964-65, a new science building in 1966, a technical arts building in 1967, and a vocational arts building in 1968. 1971 saw another name change and West Kern Junior College District became West Kern Community College District, the name that it bears today.

The district encompasses 735 square miles and is made up of the Taft City, Maricopa Unified, Midway, McKittrick and Elk Hills school districts.

Taft College has been characterized by mild but steady growth since the end of World War II, that pattern being strongly influenced by a number of factors. In 1965, Maricopa Unified School District was added to the territory served by Taft College and, as a consequence, many high school graduates from the Maricopa area now begin their college careers in Taft. On-campus housing first became available in 1964, a move which has attracted out-of-area students by making the environment of the college more appealing.

Many students, too, are drawn to Taft College because of special program offerings such as those included in the highly developed vocational and technical curriculum or the training available in the fields of corrections and safety.

While these special program offerings represent an important part of the curriculum, the primary focus of Taft College remains on academic as well as vocational education at the lower division level. Courses are available for students who wish to work in certificated programs as well as for those wishing to work toward an associate of arts degree. A solid general education program provides the necessary transition link for those high school students who wish to continue on with upper division work at colleges and universities.

The college has continued to expand classroom and administrative facilities in an effort to serve their growing student population and to accommodate new programs. 1981 saw installation of a new computer system and construction of the Cougar Sports Center. In 1983 the college added more residence halls and the school's first campus television station became operational. In 1990, in a move that typifies the changing face of college campuses everywhere, a child care center was added to the campus. It is now one of the largest such facilities in the state.

Started in 1994 and truly unique to Taft College is a program called Transition to Independent Living. The TIL curriculum is designed to serve the needs of young adults who function at a low developmental level that precludes them from living on their own. It is perhaps the only such program in the nation. Enrollment in TIL is limited to just twenty-six students and all are housed in the residence halls for the two years required to complete the course.

TIL students are guided toward independence through participation in activities designed to aid them in the development of daily living skills, e.g. cooking, banking, and shopping, those skills then being augmented and supported by remedial level classes in reading and arithmetic. The program places strong emphasis on the development of social skills and each TIL student is assigned a "buddy" to provide support as he or she progresses through the program. Many TIL students work at on-campus jobs and all are involved in some kind of program related activity each day. Upon completion of the prescribed curriculum, students graduate and receive a certificate of completion at the regular commencement ceremony.

In recent years Taft College has realigned programs and shifted emphases to meet the needs of their school community. A comparison

of attendance figures clearly demonstrates the impact of that transformation. In 1982-83 enrollment in the college, measured in terms of average daily attendance, was 674 students. Current enrollment, when considered in terms of the number of unduplicated individuals attending classes of any kind, is in excess of 5,600 students. While that obviously represents a considerable increase in the total number of students, both full-time and part-time, being served by the college, it should be noted that a direct comparison of enrollment figures is not easily accomplished since current attendance accounting procedures measure enrollment in terms of Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES) rather than Average Daily Attendance.

The West Kern Community College District has had just five chief administrators since its formation in 1963. Garlyn Basham was superintendent/president from 1963 to 1975, at which time he was succeeded by Wendell L. Reeder. Reeder served in that capacity from 1975 to 1980. In 1980 Dr. David Cauthron was appointed superintendent/president and Dr. Cauthron directed district operations until his retirement in June, 2001, Roe Darnell succeeded Cauthron and served until June, 1997. His successor and the district's current chief administrator is William H. Duncan. ■