

(575)

edition            traver

The start of the town of Traver, only "ghost town" in Tulare county dates back to 1882 when a group of land owners, at the instigation of P.Y. Baker, united in a great reclamation and irrigation project under the name of the "76" Land and Water Company. The title was taken from the name of the large acreage owned by one of the promoters, Thomas ~~xx~~ Fowler, known as the "76 ranch".

Nine years before, Fowler had used all his influence to defeat the "no fence law" but with the passage of the years and the rise of agricultural prosperity in other sections of the county, he realized the possibilities of the comparatively new ~~xxxxxx~~ enterprise and entered into the reclamation project with whole-hearted energy.

The "76" Land and Water company filed articles of incorporation on June 7, 1882, with a capital stock of \$280,000, divided into 14 shares and distributed among the following stockowners: H.P. Merritt, P.Y. Baker, Charles Traver, D.K. Zumwalt, C.F.J. Kitchener, I.H. Jacobs, Thomas Fowler and Francis ~~xxxx~~ Bullard. These men, acting as the board of directors, chose the following officers: president, C.F.J. Kitchener; secretary, D.K. Zumwalt; treasurer, H.P. Merritt, and superintendent, P.Y. Baker. Baker held office until January 1884, when was succeeded by Joseph Peacock.

The company planned to take water from Kings river at a higher elevation than other districts, with a view to irrigating 30,000 acres of land lying between the foothills and the Mussel Slough country. About 2000 acres of this tract lay ~~xxxxxxx~~ west of the Southern Pacific track. Construction of the "76 Canal" was started in August, 1882.

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ad one traver

The soil, in sections, particularly in what is now the Traver district, seemed to be of an unusual chemical formation, with the result that the moisture carried the chemicals into the ground to that certain depth ~~whazziz~~ to which it penetrated annually, causing a strata of gritty nature to form. In some places this was barely discernible but in others it developed into a condition generally known as hard pan, through which water seldom penetrates.

In the pioneer days, mere scratching of the surface was thought to be all that was necessary to produce crops, with the application of surface water.

Waste waters from the main canal were permitted to spread over the planes west of the townsite of Traver and this is believed today to have been responsible for the alkaline condition existing in that locality.

Early in the spring of 1884, the "76" Land and Water company issued 10,000 pamphlets announcing it was prepared to deliver water and sell land.

At the beginning of the reclamation and colonization project a section of land, or 640 acres, was set aside for a townsite. The property was surveyed and platted in March, 1884, and was named after Charles Traver, a member of the board of directors of the "76" Land and Water company.

The sale of lots took place on April 8, 1884. Excursion trains had been run from San Francisco, Los Angeles and intermediate points as the result of an extensive advertising campaign and lots sold on that day for a total of \$65,000. Soon afterward, the townsite was the scene of extensive building activity.

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ad two traver

The Southern ~~xxxx~~ Pacific started construction of a depot and side track and by May 1, Traver had two mercantile stores, a farm implement store, two lumber yards, three saloons, two hotels, two barber shops, two livery barns, a post office, a telegraph office, a railway station and the customary Chinatown. By the end of the first year of its existence, the population of Traver had increased to 500 and an \$8000 school and a church had been constructed.

During this early period, the growing of wheat was the chief industry of the ranchers, most of the crops being produced east of Traver ~~and~~ through the Dimuba district and north of Traver on the Clark ranches. Traver was the shipping point for all this great area.

The first warehouse in the district was not established in the town proper but south of the settlement near Cross creek at a station called Grand View. This was conducted by a warehouse company which also operated a general merchandise store. It was abandoned when Traver was started and eventually three warehouses were built having a total capacity of 30,000 tons. These were filled annually, showing a production in the "76" country of more than 1,000,000 bushels of wheat a year.

Many farm workers and residents of the surrounding country spent their money freely and for a time, the town seemed a likely competitor of Hanford and Visalia.

As the country became more thickly settled, the land grew too valuable for grain production and attention was centered on fruit growing.

During the transference from a grain to a fruit producing section, calamity began to descend, first in the form of the construction of the East Side branch of the Southern Pacific, resulting in the curtailment of the great grain shipments from the Dimuba district, which was on the line of the new road, built in 1887 and 1888.

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ad three traver

Subsequently, on three different occasions, Traver suffered from the ravages of fire, the first blaze of consequence coming on October 30, 1887, when at least one third of the business section was destroyed. ~~Amazhuz~~ On June 18, 1890, a second fire destroyed about \$36,000 worth of property and on July 29, the same year, the third fire caused an additional loss of \$51,000.

In July, 1888, the residents of the "76" country voted to form an irrigation district under the Wright act, carrying the election by a vote of 326 to 19.

Prior to the election, committees had negotiated with the "76" company for the purchase of its irrigation system to be used as a nucleus for the new project, which was proposed to provide water for a newly-surveyed area including 130,000 acres. The price agreed upon, and eventually paid, was \$410,000 in bonds. The new irrigation district became known as the Alta Irrigation District. The canal system was enlarged and now supplies one of the ~~most~~ richest districts in Tulare county, embraced in what is known as the Alta district.

Good fellowship and a hearty spirit prevailed among the early residents of Traver and annually they joined in a great celebration on April 8, commemorating the founding of the town. This custom is maintained to this day and former settlers return in large numbers for the event and to recall old times. The annual celebration in recent years has been held on the Sunday nearest to April 8 for the convenience of the visitors.

The removal of the headquarters of the Alta Irrigation District from Traver to Dinuba in 1897, voted by the directors of the district, was the final blow to the prosperity of Traver and to the continuance of the town.

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ad four traver

Most of the inhabitants of the town moved to Dinuba or Reedley and trade in the town dropped off. Grain warehouses and residences were moved to the growing centers east of Traver and the formerly thriving and prosperous community finally faded into the sleeping village of today, boasting only a few scattered buildings and houses.



edition      early population and property values

For a number of years the population of Tulare county did not increase rapidly. When the county was organized in 1852, the total white population was estimated at 100. By the census of 1860, it was given 3000; in 1870, 4553; 1880, 11281; 1890, 24,574. K

Kings county was cut off in 1893 and ~~it~~ still the ~~a~~ census for 1910 gave old Tulare 35,543. By 1912 the population of Tulare county was estimated at 45,000.

The census for 1910 gave the following populations:

Angiola, 44; Auckland, 22; Badger, 13; Dimuba, 970; Exeter, 660; Frazier, 29; Hot Springs, 22; Kaweah, 28; Lindsay, 1814; Orosi, 590; Pixley, 64; Porterville, 2696; Tulare, 2758; Visalia, 4550; White River, 94; Woodville, 76, and Farmersville, 550.

A rapid increase was noted in the population of rural centers in the census of 1910 as compared with the incorporated towns. Even then it was noted that the "back to the farm" cry was being heard.

The first assessment roll of Tulare county, in 1853, consisted of a single sheet of foolscap paper and there was not a single piece of real estate assessed. The property in the county consisted entirely of horses and cattle. That year, when the county treasurer went to Benicia to settle with the state, the state comptroller and the state treasurer had no knowledge that there was such a county as Tulare in existence. However, the state officials accepted the small sum of about \$75 that Tulare county tendered toward the support of the state government.

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The assessment roll of 1855 is an interesting document, containing 342 names, including those against whom only a poll tax was assessed. It totaled \$437,225 but only three parcels of real estate were included. These were Jones and Robedee, 320 acres, \$640; San A<sub>m</sub>elia ranch, eleven leagues, \$50,000, and Ignacio del Vallo, acreage not given, \$100,000.

S.C. Brown was assessed for \$550, John C<sup>U</sup>tlar for \$960 and Richard C<sub>n</sub>atten for \$410. In the roll of 1858, the name of Andrew J. Harrell appeared as the owner of 40 head of S<sub>p</sub>anish cattle and one horse, the total assessment being \$1040.

The wealthiest property holders of 1855 with the exception of the del Vallo and San San Amelia ranch owners were: Elisha Packwood, \$23,735; Pemberton Brothers, \$14,075; S.A. Bishop, \$21,875; Reuben Matthews and Company, \$10,070, and Patterson and Hazelton, \$1210.

The assessment roll of 1860 includes the following information:

A<sub>c</sub>res of improved land, 20,313; ~~number~~ number of horses and mules, 4245; number of cattle, 42,375; number of sheep, 16,521; number of swine, 32,546; bushels of wheat, 40,268; bushels of corn, 6355; bushels of Irish potatoes, , 4067; bushels of sweet potatoes, 1656; pounds of wool, 16,900; pounds of butter, 30,380; pounds of cheese, 14,970; gallons of wine, 1000, and tons of hay, 980. Real estate was valued at \$372, 835; machinery at \$32,763 and live stock at \$1,212,381. The total debt of the county at that time was \$33, 262.46.

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ad two early population and property values

By 1880, values had increased considerably, the total assessment roll showing property values assessed at \$6,411,378. During the next decade there were further increases, the assessment roll for 1890 totaling \$21,740,817. In 1893, Kings county with the rich towns of Hanford and Lemoore was lopped from Tulare yet the assessment roll for 1910 showed Tulare still possessed property ~~valued at~~ assessed at \$37,475,140.

An article elsewhere in the Anniversaries Edition gives statistics on the present wealth of the county.

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edition

early day bad boys

Tulare county history is not without its record of "bad boys" as would be expected in a frontier section. Crimes of violence were not uncommon and, judging from the amount of space given them in the newspapers of the period, they were not taken too seriously. Often there is a record<sup>indicate</sup> of a homicide but no "follow-up" story to ~~indicate~~ what, if anything, was done to the killer. It may be assumed in such cases that he went unpunished.

On July 4, 1860, J.B. Brown shot and killed William A. Borland in the streets of Visalia. Both men were intoxicated and there is no record of punishment for the slayer.

At about the same time at Keyesville, then a part of Tulare county, <sup>James Matthews</sup> asked a Mexican to dismount and loan him his horse. The Mexican refused and rode away, followed by Matthews who shot the Mexican fatally. Matthews escaped.

On November 29, 1862, Eugene Vogle, a soldier, entered O'Neal's saloon in Visalia and asked for cigars. Frank Slawick, a sympathizer with the Confederacy, said, "I have no cigars for your kind." Vogle, with other soldiers in the saloon, started to leave and was shot to death by Slawick. A general riot followed in the establishment, Slawick, O'Neal and two soldiers suffering injuries.

A meeting of citizens and officials was called to devise methods of keeping the peace. Colonel George S. Evans, in command of Camp Babbitt, said if the soldiers were the aggressors, he would bring about their punishment or hand them over to the civil authorities but how could punish none for resenting insults to the American flag.



ad one early day bad boys

"Cease your outrages and peace will prevail," declared Evans. Outrages did not cease, however, and peace did not prevail!

In April, 1863, Indian Jim, a warlike chief of the Owen River Indian tribe, came to the Tule river reservation to be treated for a number of wounds received in a battle with the soldiers. A squad of soldiers, sent from Camp Babbitt to arrest the chief, shot the Indian when he attempted to flee. Joaquin Jim was known to have slain two white men.

Differences of opinion on the Civil War often were the causes of homicides. One August 6, 1863, Charles Stroble, sergeant of Company I, Second Cavalry, California Volunteers, standing in a saloon in Visalia, was shot to death by James L. Wells, a secessionist. Wells escaped to Mexico and later was reported killed at Mazatlan.

In 1864 is recorded what probably was the first legal execution in the county. In May of that year, Jose Jesus Stenner, the son of an English father and Spanish mother of San Luis Obispo, robbed and killed two men named Williams who were herding sheep on the west side of Tulare lake. He fled to San Luis Obispo with his trifling loot, was returned to Visalia, tried, convicted and sentenced to hang on December 2. The youth, 18 years old, confessed his crime and acknowledged the justice of his punishment before his execution.

On October 25, 1864, Benjamin Bronson was shot to death in Visalia by Frank Wallace, a soldier of the Volunteers, "for an insult." No further explanation of this homicide is recorded.

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ad two early bad boys

In June, 1865, E.M. King, who kept a wayside station near Owens river killed J.N. Rogers, was later arrested, brought to Visalia, tried and convicted and, on December 7, 1865, was hanged by the sheriff.

Thomas Hawkins, on November 7, 1866, was sentenced by Judge Alexander Deering to be hanged for the murder of John Johnson at Kern river, now a part of Kern county. Hawkins was hanged in Visalia on December 14, 1866. The Delta remarked ~~that~~ at that time that, although there had been 20 slayings in the county, only two of the killers had been executed.

On August 28, 1868, W.D. Cresswell shot and killed W.O. Cummings in a Visalia street duel. The two had had a dispute over a game of cards. The Delta, describing the duel, says the ball from Cummings' pistol grazed the ear of T.J. Shackelford. Another shot made a flesh wound in the thigh of "Babe" Williams two blocks away. Cummings then started to cross the street when Cresswell fired his shot gun, killing Cummings. Although county and town officers witnessed the affray, no attempt was made to halt it.

James G. McCrory, on October 21, 1870, shot and killed Manuel Barcla, a Mexican bartender in the Fashion saloon in Visalia. The slaying appeared to have been unprovoked and McCrory was placed on trial but by some strange proceeding before the court, District Judge A.C. Bradford permitted ~~him~~ McCrory's attorney to enter a plea of guilty of murder in the second degree.

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ad three early day bad boys

Judge Bradford then sentenced the prisoner to 15 years in prison. McCrory subsequently denied he had given authority for the plea entered and at a second trial was acquitted. For a later murder, McCrory was lynched, an account of this incident appearing elsewhere in the Anniversaries Edition.

On December 5, 1870, the wife of Jesse Bohsall and two small children residing on Tule river near the foothills were slain by three drunken Indians from the reservation. The Indians were arrested and indignant citizens promptly hanged two of them to a tree and the bereaved Bonsall later shot the third to death. His act was deemed justifiable.

On February 13, 1871, Jacob Nash was hacked to death by a Yoko Indian. The Yokos promised they would put their tribesmen to death for his deed but the white men believed the duty was theirs and promptly hanged the slayer.

On April 1, 1871, William F. Buttermurth and Lemuel Perkins, while digging a ditch near Tule river, ~~xanagam~~ engaged in a dispute over a trivial matter, Perkins called ~~xanagam~~ Buttermurth a liar and Buttermurth killed Perkins with a shovel. Buttermurth was tried and acquitted.

John Findley, on August 7, 1871, was slain after he had heard cries of men for help at midnight and started to go to their assistance. The slaying of Findley was linked to a will he had made disposing of an estate valued at from \$50,000 to \$60,000. Thomas Woody, a youth, was tried, sentenced to hang, granted a new trial, convicted of second degree murder and served a few years in prison but was released because it was believed he had been a tool in the hands of others.

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ad four early day bad boys

On December 28, 1872 Erastus Weisner,, while in a saloon in Visalia, charged G.F. Rice, an old and highly respected citizen with having accused Weisner of having branded calves that did not belong to him. Weisner shot Rice and, believing the wound would prove fatal, a meeting of citizens was held and the lynching of Weisner was considered. The newly-elected district attorney, however, cited recent convictions for murder and pleaded that the law be allowed to take its course. A vigilance committee was organized and Rice recovered.

On February 13, 1873, George Hodges fatally shot ~~W~~ Walter T. Gladdis in a dance hall in Visalia. Hodges was tried and acquitted on a self defense plea.

On May 29, 1873, Pablo Martinez and Jose Demetrio engaged in an altercation on a Visalia street and Charles White interfered to keep the peace with the result that he was stabbed to death by Martinez. The two were arrested and Martinez subsequently was sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was commuted and Martinez eventually was pardoned.

The above homicides are but a few recorded in the early days of Visalia and Tulare county. The wheels of justice ground less accurately in those days, perhaps, but the record in this ~~raz~~ area is no worse than that in others and much better than that in some sections.

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early trails and roads

The first trail across the Sierra Nevada mountains within the limits of what now constitutes Tulare county was constructed partially in 1861, by John ~~Haze~~ Jordan, according to a "History of Tulare and Kings C<sup>o</sup>unties," by Eugene L. Menefee and Fred A. D<sup>o</sup>dge.

The article continues:

"It took its origin in the Yokohl valley, crossed the Blue ridge, wound around by Peck's canyon through Quinn's horse camp and followed down Little Kern to Trout meadows, thence up Big Kern to a point below where Kern lakes now are, crossed the river and, proceeding eastward via Monache meadows, was to strike Owens river below the lake.

"The pressing need of a shorter and quicker route for the host pf prospectors eager to reach the new mines warranted the project. Jordan secured a charter to maintain it as a toll road and completed nearly all the work on this side of Kern river in 1861. In 1862, while attempting the passage of ~~the~~ Kern river on a raft, he was drowned. There were four in the party, the others being his two sons, Allen and Tolbert, and a man named Gashweiler.

"A<sub>1</sub>len remained on shore; Gashweiler, as the raft became unmanageable in the swift current, jumped onto a rock. Tolbert grabbed a limb of a tree which lay on the water and swung himself to safety on ~~the trunk~~ its trunk. Jordan was tipped off and, although a powerful swimmer, was sucked under by the strong current and drowned, the body never being recovered.

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ad one early trails and roads.

~~There is~~ "In the following year the sum of \$1600 was raised by subscription in Visalia to complete the trail. G.W. Warner undertook the work and finished it, completing a bridge across Kern river. The magnitude of this latter undertaking will be better realized wh n it is understood that all chains, harness, stretchers and implements had to be packed from Visalia.

"In 1863, J.B. Hockett built the trail which, commencing at Three Rivers, proceeded up the south fork of the Kaweah, passing Hockett lakes and Hockett meadows and joined the Jordan trail, continuing on its route to Big Kern. I<sub>n</sub>stead of crossing the river at the same point, however, it continued up the stream to a point near the lower Funston meadows, whence crossing and ascending the wall of Kern canyon, it made its way via the Whitney meadows to the crossing of Cottonwood creek, near the lakes, and thence down to I<sup>n</sup>dependence. ~~This trail, although altered to a great extent~~

"The trail from Eshom valley through to Owens river by way of Kings River canyon was an old Indian trail, as in part the others were.

"At this period, roads were few in number, the principal being these: The stage road to Stockton, which proceeded westerly as far as the G<sup>o</sup>shen area and then turned in a northwesterly direction to Cross creek; the two immigrant roads to Los Angeles; the road to ~~E~~ Woodville which passed what later became the Mineral King orchard, crossed the Ship bridge and continued on to the Thomas mill in the mountains; a road through the Packwood district which proceeded in a westerly direction from near the south city limits of Visalia; a road proceeding west from the Ship, or Cutler bridge to the old Warren Matthews



ad two early trails and roads

place on Elbow creek, and thence by the Bass Parker place to Smith's on Kings river and known as the upper Stockton road.

"Due north of town lay a swamp, ~~the St. John's river was~~  
~~the Kings river was~~. The first road to cross this  
proceeded by the ~~the~~ Pratt place and connected with the  
Stockton road. The Pacheco ~~the~~ pass or Gilroy road proceeded  
west through 'tin can alley,' now West Oak street, crossed Kings  
river at Mat Isely's ~~place~~ point, then turned west four miles to  
Kingston, thence in a northwesterly direction by the head of  
F<sup>n</sup>esno slough, passing Firebaugh, where the ferry was located and on  
to the St. Louis ranch, at the mouth of Pacheco pass.

"One of the roads to Los A<sup>n</sup>geles left town at the old  
Wiley Watson ~~place~~ place, ran due south to Dry creek, thence  
east about what is now Tulare avenue to the Evans place  
(later Evansdale orchard). After passing here, it ran due east  
to the Pike Lawless place on Packwood creek, thence easterly  
to near the site of the former Deep Creek schoolhouse, thence  
southeasterly to O<sup>u</sup>tside creek and on in the same direction to  
P<sup>o</sup>rterville.

"The other road to Los A<sup>n</sup>geles crossed the old Kelly  
place just south of town, followed in a general way the route  
of the T<sup>u</sup>lare road and passed through the Buzzard's roost.

"The road from the western portion of Tulare county to the  
coast, crossing the coast range through the Lawless Gap followed  
essentially the route taken by John Hawpe, Bert Lawless and  
W.H. Mills who in 1856 traveled to the coast and thence to  
Los A<sup>n</sup>geles with many yoke of oxen which they there exchanged  
for stock cattle, obtaining eight head for each yoke.

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ad three early trails and roads

"A road from Warren Matthews' place on Elbow creek, through V<sup>+</sup>salia to Kern river was surveyed and ordered built in 1857. Five district overseers were appointed by the supervisors in charge of the sections as follows: first district--north of Kaweah and Mill creek, W. Matthews; second district--Kaweah river to Elk bayou, Wiley Watson; third district--Elk bayou to White river, I.S. Clapp; fourth district--White river to North Fork of P<sub>o</sub>sey creek; fifth district--P<sub>o</sub>sey creek to Calwell's ferry.

"In 1863, a franchise was granted by the legislature to John McCarlane, Peter Goodhue, William P. Poer, H.A. Bostwick, E.E. Calhoun and others, under the name of McFarlane and Company, to build a toll road to O<sup>n</sup>ens valley. This road, via Keyesville and Walker's pass, was completed in 1864 and proved of great benefit to the public. About 1,000,000 pounds of freight passed over it the first year and it carried a heavy traffic for some time but financially the venture was a failure."

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edition short

Visalia, in the early days even as ~~now~~ it would now, resented overplayed news stories in metropolitan areas injurious to the community. The following article, printed in the Visalia Delta of February 6, 1862, is self-explanatory:

"For the satisfaction of our up-country contemporaries who are run ning over with sympathy for the "destruction of the ~~city~~ town of Visalia," we will state that Visalia is not injured at all, compara tively speaking. The water rose to a height of 24 inches in our streets, and no more. There is not a single brick or wooden building down in the town. And in the "Four Creek" country, generally, all our inquiries have failed to discover the fact of one single animal of the horse or cattle type, or even a full grown hog being drowned, and but few, very few, bogging down.

"Tulare gets off cheaper than any county in the state, so far as the farming portion of it is concerned and even the mining portaiion has lost nothing which the indomitable energy of those miners will not replace this summer."

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edition short

The jailer wasn't blamed for the escape from jail here in 1862 although it isn't made fully clear how a spade, with which he made his get-away, was smuggled to a forgery suspect.

The following report appeared in the Visalia Delta of March 6, 1862:

"A man named J.F. Woolfe, who had been committed to jail to await his trial for forgery, made his escape on Saturday evening last about 6 o'clock, by digging through the wall of the court-house connecting with the jail with a spade which seems to have been furnished him by someone outside.

"The wall in question was much cracked and it did not take probably 15 minutes to make the hole. We do not hear that ~~anyone~~ any blame is attached to the jailer, except in failing to pursue the fugitive but this escape shows the impossibility of confining men in the old rattle-trap of a jail if they wish to get away."

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