

1 ead story section 2

Two early white arrivals in Tulare county were persons of peculiar character and background. They were Jedebiah S. Smith, a preacher of sorts, and Thomas L. (Peg Leg) Smith, a teacher of sorts.

Jedebiah S. Smith, a preacher of sorts, and Thomas L. (Peg Leg) Smith, a teacher of sorts, were the first two white leaders to enter what is now Tulare county.

Jed, the preacher arrived in 1826 ~~or 1828~~, accompanied by about 15 trappers and was said to have been the first white man to cross the Sierra Nevada mountains. ~~Entry~~ Jed and his party entered the valley by way of the Tejon pass. Tulare lake was observed and hunting for beaver along the upper reaches of the Kings, San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers was successful.

Jed, while not a regularly ordained minister, was a strong and aggressive Christian and endeavored to convert to that faith the reckless and lawless men who joined his band. His efforts at reform, however, are said not ~~to~~ to have been too successful.

"Peg Leg" arrived in this section some time ~~was~~ between 1827 and 1830, ~~the~~ authorities differing as to the exact date. ~~was~~ "Peg Leg," the teacher had no teacher's certificate but was a horse thief by profession and confined his "teaching" to instructing the Indians with whom he made friends in the art of stealing cattle and horses. It is said that "Peg Leg's" leg was shattered in a fight with Indians and that he coolly amputated the limb at the knee, with his own hunting knife.

"Peg Leg" and his party, including some Tulare Indians, after being ~~was~~ ordered from the country, departed, taking with them several hundred California horses, for which they found a ready market in the New Mexico country. He died in San Francisco in 1866.

Closely following Jedebiah Smith came Ewing Young and party, who started trapping in the San Joaquin valley in 1831, finding beaver plentiful. Young hunted in the Tulare lake area for a period and then traveled northward.

ad one early county

During the next decade, several other groups of trappers passed through the San Joaquin valley. Between the San Joaquin valley and the Calaveras river there was at that time an estimated Indian population of 20,000.

The coming, in ~~1824~~ the 1840's of John Fremont and his party is dealt with elsewhere in the Anniversaries Edition. Also dealt with, in the sketch of Visalia history, is the arrival of Woods and his party who were massacred by the Indians.

Gilbert M.L. Dean, who arrived in the Four Creeks country when a boy of about 12 years, states that his father's family came from Texas in a party conducted by Nathaniel Vise. Both the Vise and Dean families remained for awhile at Los Angeles, and Vise, taking young Dean with him, left for the northern country, traveling on horseback, and with a pack outfit.

They remained for a few days near the Kaweah. Vise decided to push on to the mines and left the boy with Loomis St. John (for whom the St. John's river later was named), ~~and~~ who then had a cabin near the river, about a half mile from that afterwards constructed by the Woods party. Thus the generally belief that the latter structure was the first permanent habitation erected by white men within the present limits of Tulare county is disputed by Dean, who was living in St. John's cabin when the Woods party arrived to establish their settlement.

Settlers and traders continued to straggle in. In the ~~18~~ fall of 1851, C.R. Wingfield and A.A. Wingfield arrived from Mariposa. On the way they met two men named McKenzie and Ridley, who had been trading with the Indians for several years and who were somewhere in the neighborhood when the Woods party was slain.

more

ad two early county

A bridge had been built across the Kaweah near the Woods cabin, but there was no settlement. The Wingfields settled near the cabin, laying claim to the land from the river southward. They found the Indians friendly and sociable and although their outfit was within reach of hundreds of these people, never so much as a needle was missed.

In December, 1851, Nathaniel and A_ner Vise came to what is now Visalia and built a log cabin on the north bank of Mill creek.

The state legislature was in session and, at the behest of a hungry horde of office-seekers centered mainly at Mariposa, the legislature passed an act which was approved on April 20, 1852, as follows:

"The county of Mariposa is hereby subdivided as follows: Beginning at the summit of the coast range, at the corner of Monterey and S_an Luis Obispo counties; thence running in a northeasterly direction to the ridge dividing the waters of the San Joaquin and Kings rivers; thence along the ridge to the summit of the Sierra; thence in the same direction to the state line; thence southeasterly along said line to the county of Los A_ngeles; thence southwesterly along the line of Los A_ngeles to Santa Barbara; thence along the summit of the coast range to the point of beginning.

"The southern portion of Mariposa county so cut off shall be called Tulare county. The seat of justice shall be at the ~~log~~ log cabin on the south side of Kaweah creek, near the bridge built by Dr. Thomas Payne and shall be called Woodsville, until changed by the people as provided by law.

more

ad three early county

"During the second week of July next, there shall be chosen for Tulare county on county judge, one county attorney, one county clerk, one recorder, one sheriff, one county surveyor, one assessor, one coroner and one treasurer.

"The county judge chosen under this act shall hold his office for two years from next October, and until his successor is elected and qualified. The other officers elected shall hold their respective offices for one year, and until their successors are elected and qualified. The successors of the officers elected under this act shall be chosen at the general elections established by law, which take place next preceding the expiration of their respective terms."

James D. Savage, M.B. Lewis, John Boling and W.H. McMillen were appointed commissioners to carry out the law and conduct the election.

The principal mover in this plan to form a new county was William H. Harvey. He and his associates knew of the massacre of the Woods party and, fully expecting to have to fight their way to the Four creeks, placed the expedition under the command of Major James D. Savagen.

On the morning of July 8, 1852, about 300 Indians took the Wingfield brothers captive but they were released with the arrival of the Savage party.

The commissioners, upon their arrival, started with their preparations for their election. It is said, ~~that~~ by most authorities, that the selected as the site of the election, a large ~~big~~ oak tree near Venice hill, having in mind the desirability of obtaining the benefit of any breeze that might be blowing. Other authorities assert the election was held several miles ~~to~~ from this point but the tree, which still stands, is accepted generally as the site of the election.

more

ad four early county

The tree today is in excellent condition, the only one of the hundreds that used to line the north bank of the Kaweah river. The election was held July 10, 1852.

An old volume entitled "Organization of the Tulare county," in the ~~offices~~ chambers of the board of supervisors lists the following successful candidates; the first officers of Tulare county:

County judge, Walter H. Harvey; county attorney, F.H. Sanford; county clerk, E.D.F. Edwards; county recorder, A.B. Gordon; sheriff, William Dill; surveyor, Joseph A. Tivy; assessor, James B. Davis; coroner, W.W. McMillen, and treasurer, L.C. Frankenberger.

Edwards, the county clerk, was killed shortly after ~~he~~ by Bob Collins in a quarrel. Treasurer Frankenberger is said to have wandered off into the swamps, in a fit of delirium tremens, and died.

Dr. ~~EE~~ C.E. Everett, one of those prominent in the election, engaged in a dispute with a named named Ball over a gambling debt of \$5 after a game in Woodsville and was shot down, Ball later being examined before a justice of the peace when the charge was dismissed.

Major Savage later was killed by Judge Harvey who was jealous of Savage's success with the Indians and miners of the Kings river district, and was accused by Savage of leading a band of unprincipled and designing politicians, who made claims upon the ~~the~~ Kings River Indian reservation and fired upon a number of Indians who came to warn them off, killing several.

L.H. Bunnell, author of "Discovery of the ~~Kaxantia~~ Yosemite," describes events leading to the fatal quarrel as follows:

"Self-interest as well as public good prompted Savage to use every means at his disposal to keep these people quiet, and he denounced Harvey and his associates as entitled to punishment under the laws of the government.

ad five early county

"These denunciations, of course, reached Harvey and his friends. Harvey and a sub-agent by the name of ~~Sam~~ Campbell seemed most aggrieved at what Savage had said of the affray, and both appeared to have common cause in denouncing the major in return. Harvey made accusations against the integrity of Savage, and boasted that Savage would not dare visit Kings river while he, Harvey was there. As soon as this reached the major's ears, he mounted his horse and at once started for the Kings river agency.

"Here, as expected, Harvey was found, in good fellowship with Marvin, the quartermaster, and others connected with the agency. Walking up to Harvey, Major Savage demanded of him a retraction of his offensive remarks concerning himself.

"This Harvey refused to do, and said something to the effect that Savage had talked about Harvey. 'Yes,' replied Major Savage, 'I have said that you are a murderer and a coward.'

"Harvey retreated a pace or two and muttered that it was a lie. As quick as the word was uttered, Savage knocked Harvey down. Harvey appeared to play 'possum and made no resistance. As Savage stooped over the prostrate Harvey, a pistol fell from Savage's waist, seeing which, Marvin picked it up and held it in his hand as the major walked off.

"Harvey rose to his feet at this moment, and seeing Marvin with the pistol in his hand, exclaimed, 'Judge, you have got my pistol.' Marvin replied, 'No, I have ~~not~~ not. This belongs to Major Savage.' When, instantly, Harvey commenced firing at Major Savage, who, though mortally wounded by the first shot and finding his pistol gone, strove hard to once more reach Harvey, whom he had scorned to further punish when prostrate before him.

more

ad six early county

"This was in August, 1852. Harvey was arrested, or gave himself up, and after the farce of an examination, was discharged....Harvey, having killed his man, was now well calculated for a successful California politician of that period ~~and was triumphantly elected to office~~..... but the ghost of Major Savage seemed to have haunted him, for ever afterward, he was nervous and irritable, and finally died of paralysis. The body of Major Savage was afterward removed to Fresno near his old trading post. A monument was there erected to his memory by Dr. Leach, his successor in business."

It is uncertain just how long the seat of government remained in Woodsville but the first minutes of the county court are dated Woodsville, July 5, 1853; the next session on September 5, is the same, and on November 7, 1853, the name of Visalia appears for the first time. The next date, February 7, 1854, notes the county seat as Buena Vista, but by the following meeting, on September 4, 1854, the name Visalia was restored and has been used since.

County affairs during the year following the formation of the county were under the control of the body known as the Court of Sessions, consisting of the county judge and two associate justices, the latter elected in a convention of justices of the peace of the county. The first convention for choosing the necessary associate justices was called in Woodsville on October 4, 1852, by Judge Walter H. Harvey. W.J. Campbell was the only justice to answer the roll call and as there was no quorum and adjournment was taken until the next day. ^{John} Leons St. ~~John~~ then appeared and the court was organized with the election of both.

The first formal business of the court of sessions was conducted next day when Assessor James B. Davis, having failed to perform his duties, according to the minutes of the session, Thomas McCormic was appointed to the office. P.A. Rainholt was named treasurer to succeed Frankenberger.

more

ad seven early county

On October 14, 1852, Judge Harvey issued an order calling for a general election to be held on the first Tuesday in November for the election of president, vice-president, four presidential ~~re~~ electors, two congressmen, two judges of the supreme court, one clerk of the supreme court, one senator, two assemblymen and one district judge but there is no record of the outcome of the elections.

The next session of the court of sessions took place on June 6, 1853, Thomas Baker having succeeded to the office of county judge after the departure of Judge Harvey for Mariposa.

A.B. Gordon and Charles R. Wingfield, respectively, were appointed to fill fill vacancies in the offices of clerk and treasurer. Also, at this time, the first grand jury in the county was called.

The grand jury reported for duty on August 1, 1853 and S.C. Brown was appointed by the court to act as county or district attorney, Brown having been formally admitted to practice law in Tulare county at a meeting of the county court on July 5.

The court meanwhile divided Tulare county into three townships; Woodsville Township No. 1; Kings River Township, No. 2, and Visalia Township, No. 3.

During a special session of the court on August 20, 1853, O.K. Smith was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Campbell as associate justice who had resigned, the grand jury returned an indictment against Samuel Logo (the first prisoner sent from Tulare county to the state prison) on a charge of assault with intent to murder two Indians.

The county court served mainly was a court of appeal from the justice court. In the minutes of September 5, 1853, the second sitting recorded, Garrett Streef, a native of The Netherlands, who had taken out his first papers in the district court in Marion county, Ia., ~~was~~ on March 31, 1849, was the first man admitted to citizenship in Tulare county. In the following year, on September 4, Peter and Freidolin

ad eight early county

A second set of county officers was selected in an election held September 7, 1853, votes being cast at Precinct No. 1 in Woodsville, Precinct No. 2, at Campbell's ferry on Kings river and Precinct No. 3 in Visalia and at this time Visalia definitely was named as the county seat.

The new list of officers, as certified by County Clerk A.B. Gordon, on September 15, 1853, follows:

John A. Tivy, assemblyman; John C^Utler, judge; A.B. Gordon clerk; O.K. Smith, sheriff; D.W.C. French, district attorney; Charles R. Wingfield, treasurer; J.B. Hatch, assessor; ~~and~~ Early Lyons, surveyor; A.J. Lawrence, A.H. Fraser, John Pool, Henry Burrough and Warren Matthews, supervisors; Woodsville Precinct No. 1, A. Peterson and James H. Chamberlin, justices of the peace; A.A. Wingfield, constable; Kings River, No. 2., William Packard and Thomas Johnson, justices of the peace, and Visalia Precinct No. 3, Reuben Matthews and G. Douglas, justices of the peace, and Louis Van Tassel, constable.

As a result of the election on September 7, 1853, when the board of supervisors was created in conformity with an act of the legislature, to discharge the civil duties previously carried on by the court of sessions, the first meeting of the supervisors was conducted. Henry Burrough was named chairman and various fees for county officers were fixed.

During 1853, a Commodore, a son, was born to Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Murray, the first white child to be born in the new settlement. The second white child to arrive was Sebert Stevenson, born in 1854, to Mr. and M^rs. Robert Stevenson.

An entry on the minute books of the board of supervisors of March 8, 1854, reads as follows: "The whole of this day, O.K. Smith and the board were engaged in selling ~~the~~ town lots." Prices ranged from \$13 to \$92. The next day the tax rate for 1854 was fixed at 35 cents on each \$100 of taxable property.

ad nine early county

Bids for the building of ~~the~~ a county jail were called for the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June. ~~By~~ Just when the contract was awarded, however, is not a matter of record but the combined jail and court house was erected later in the same year on the northeast corner of the public square and remained as the seat of government until better quarters were established in 1858. Funds for construction were obtained largely from the sale of town lots.

C^Onstruction of other court houses and the period when the government was carried on from rented quarters is related in another article in the Aⁿniversaries Edition.

The first real stimulus to population in the F^ur Creeks country occurred during the years 1854 and 1855 as the result of the discovery on Kern river, then a part of T^ulare county, but T^ulare county never developed into a great mining center.

There were various clashes with the Indians in the early days, ~~which~~ chiefly the Indian War of 1856 and the later trouble in the Owens river area, both of which are described elsewhere in the Anniversaries Edition.

In the early days if the county government the court house and ~~the~~ jail were ~~combined~~ combined in the court house. ~~By~~ the latter part of 1888, however, it became apparent that the jail in the court house was inadequate and that larger quarters also were required for several of the county offices. With this in mind, the supervisors in 1889, gave notice of intention to purchase lots five and six in block 14 from W.F. Thomas for \$3000. The jail, built at a cost of \$27,000, was accepted by the supervisors on February 10, 1891.

more

ad ten early county

There was no regular county hospital for a long period after the organization of Tulare county, the citizens ~~x~~ coming to the aid of one another in times of need. Later the supervisors let contracts to individuals to care for the indigent, the contracts generally covering a year.

This plan proved unsatisfactory as the population of the area grew so n on ~~x~~ February 12, 1873, the board of supervisors authorized the purchase of block one in Visalia from S.C. Brown for \$300 as the site for a county hospital. The contract was awarded to A. Beyer for \$3682, the building to be of fram construction and two stories high. Mrs. C. S^ueelela was awarded the contract on A^ugust 5, 1873 for keeping the hospital for one year and placed a bond of \$1200 to fulfill her contract.

The institution was enlarged in 1878 when a dead house and pest house were added. In 1889, the building was destroyed by fire and a combined hospital and poor farm was established between Visalia ~~in~~ location and Tulare. The ~~six~~ proved unsatisfactory, however, and the project long was viewed as a failure before it was destroyed by fire in 1894.

Plans and specifications were drawn for a brick building in Visalia, the contract price being \$5575. It was completed in 1895 and is used today, after having been improved, as an Old People's Home.

The original Tulare county as created by the state legislature was a vast area as may well be pictured from the original boundaries given in the forepart of this article but the true size is better reflected when it is recalled by the following slices that have been taken from ~~the~~ its territory:

more

ad eleven early county

In 1856, Fresno county, with 6035 ~~xx~~ square miles; in 1866, Inyo county, with 10,224 square miles; in 1866, Kern county, with 1852 square miles, and, in 1893, Kings county, with 1375 square miles.

The present area of Tulare county is 4863 square miles.

Other stores dealing with various interesting phases and incidents in Tulare county, the county's resources, past and present, and days of early Spanish influence are ~~given~~ published elsewhere in the Anniversaries Edition.