

Boreuta



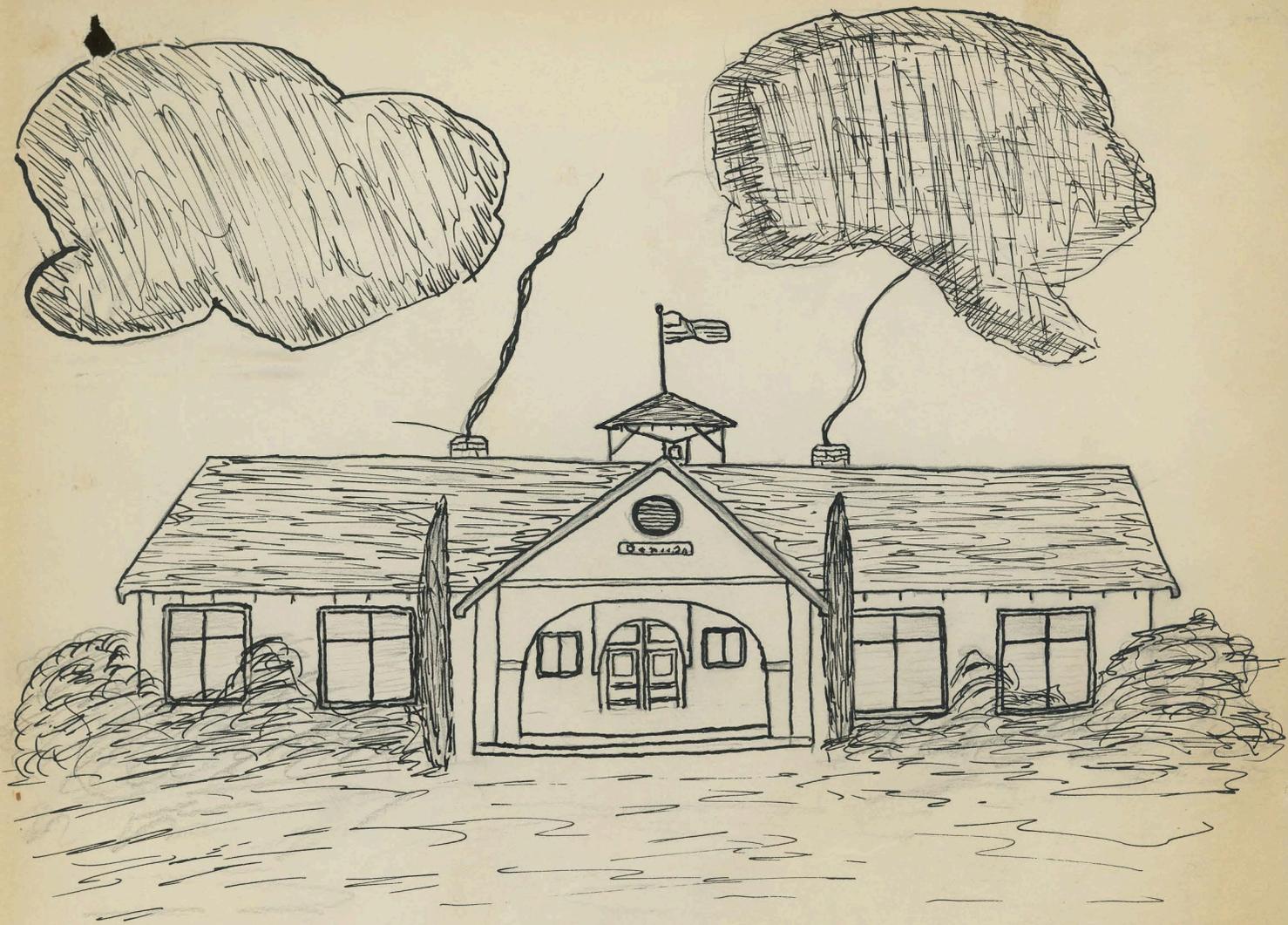
^c
979.481

Madera County

"

BERENDA HISTORY

↓ Map. 1



PREFACE

The pupils of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades of the Berenda School compiled and wrote the following article after gaining the necessary information.

Very little was to be found in the library, so that most of the material herein is that which was told to the children.

One morning the class went to call on Mrs. Woods, a resident of Berenda and perhaps the best informed person at the present time on this subject. Mr. Woods also was of much help. Not only has the Woods family lived in Berenda for over thirty years, but both Mr. and Mrs. Woods are native Californias and have lived very nearby this vicinity since childhood.

We are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Woods for giving to us so generously of their time and knowledge, and wish to acknowledge our sincere thanks to them.

Berenda School Pupils

June 1938

~~Following are the signatures of Mr. and Mrs. Woods.~~

BERENDA HISTORY

We will begin our story with the time when most of the white settlers lived on the edge of the foothills; some Indians still lived along the streams, and herds of wild antelope inhabited the valley.

The valley was like a desert in the dry season and people did not see any way of growing things in it, so did not settle there.

As in the case of most California localities, the thing that brought the first settlers was their search for gold. In some instances when they found no gold they were rewarded by finding rich deposits of other ores. Such was the case in the nearby mountain region where a large copper mine was developed at Buchanan which produced for a good many years.

Work in the copper mines was very hard, for the people got up very early in the morning and worked until late in the evening. The mines were very dusty and dirty.

To run the mines the men had to make their own coal. To do this they made a big pile of pine logs and covered them with dirt. They made a hole about two feet around on the top of the pile, and put ventilators around the bottom. Then they would set fire to the logs and keep them burning for two weeks. What was left was used as regular coal is used. It was not very good but they had to use it because there was no natural coal here. Mr. Woods father used to work there making coal. He helped make over 3000 ton of coal in this way.

They hauled the ore by wagon all the way from Buchanan to Stockton and then put it on a river boat which took it on to San Francisco. Some times they hauled it to Firebaugh on the San Joaquin River, where boats used to come.

The community which grew up at Buchanan was quite a busy place with its many miners, and their families. At one time it had a school and a Post Office. This was the second oldest Post Office, Mariposa having the first.

Gradually people began settling in the valley to raise cattle. They bought the land from the government for \$1.25 an acre as homesteads. If they did not live on it 6 months of a year they had to give it up. The biggest of these land owners was Henry Miller. He was a native of Germany who came to San Francisco where he peddled beef to make a living. In 1865 he went to Germany to borrow some money which he used upon his return for getting his start in buying cattle and lands. He formed a partnership with Mr. Lux and together they obtained all the land they could.

It was a general practice for homesteaders to swap less desirable lands for better lands after they had seen what they had. Here was Henry Miller's opportunity. He bought up many thousands of these acres for less than 25¢ an acre. He got land from the government in a more or less comical way. He put a boat on his buckboard, started the horses, let them go where they would, while he pretended he was rowing this boat. Then he went to Fresno and swore that he had gone over this land in a boat and that it was swamp land. His word was not questioned, so he got the land. Although this was a dishonest thing to do, he might almost be forgiven, for he was a very good landlord and treated all who worked for him fairly. He was also very generous. He let it be known that he did not mind having people kill his beef if they were hungry just so long as they did not waste it. He boasted of having enough land to start his cattle from below San Francisco and run them way up into Oregon and be able to stop on his own land every night.

Mr. Miller laid out the town site of Berenda

on some of his property. He probably named it. Shortly after this a German miner named John Brown, who had worked at Buchanan, bought some of this property and built the first general merchandise store in Berenda. He also had a blacksmith shop and a two story hotel. There is still a small piece of chimney ; the cellar hole; and the fig trees, which he planted, where his store was. -Many people He was thought to have buried some money on his property, so many people have dug in hopes of finding it, but no one has ever succeeded. Mr. Brown continued in this business for many years. He died in 1890.

As we mentioned before many antelope used to roam through this valley. We were interested in finding out that the name of Berenda means antelope, although the spelling has become somewhat distorted. The Spanish word for male antelope is "verrendo".

In 1872 the Southern Pacific built a railroad through the San Joaquin Valley. The Railroad company induced the government to give them every other section of land along the tracks which they laid. This land they offered to settlers free of charge , if they would develop it and make their permanent homes on it.

With the coming of the Railroad, Berenda grew. The miners from Buchanan now brought their ore to Berenda to ship it, instead of having to take it to the rivers at Stockton or Firebaugh. A few of the old settlers of today lived or worked at Buchanan or Berenda then. Mr. Woods, who helped us with this story, is one of these. He drove eight horse teams carrying copper ore from Buchanan to Berenda when he was sixteen years old. In those days many boys as young as this did such hard work. They were needed to help with the work, so even though it was hard, they had to do it. Sometimes they got to go to school, but were lucky if they went so long as 2 or 3 months a year.

Map. 1

As time went on Henry Miller saw the need for a school in Berenda. So he Built a school house and gave it, with five acres of land to ~~Feh~~ the Berenda district. The present school house is on the same site. At that time, the Berenda district was about ~~the~~ only district north of Madera, and therefore was very expansive. It covered many miles of territory. The first teacher of the Berenda School was a Mr. Hawkins. This was just at the time of the separation of Madera and Fresno counties. Mr. Hawkins enjoyed the distiction of being the first Superintendent of Schools of Madera County. He held this office at the same time he taught the Berenda School of 60 pupils. He sometimes found it necessary to leave his school in~~g~~ charge of older pupils while he made his visitations in the few other schools of the county them.

According to Mrs. Woods' memory, Berenda lacked only two votes of becoming the county seat of Madera County. Madera was a smaller place than Berenda, but the Sugar Pine Lumber Company's Flume soon made Madera boom. Berenda was the larger because in 1884, the railroad built a branch line to Raymond. 9 From then on, all the Yosemite bound tourists went came to Berenda, changed trains to go to Raymond, and continued by stage from there. Before this all tourists had gone from Madera all the way by stage coach. The tourists used to stop at Mr. Woods' mother's home at Raymond. The next day they went as far as ^hAwahnee, the next to Wawonah, then the last day they went on it to Yosemite. The stage line was called the Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company. There were no paved roads then. Teams went through dust up to the hubs. Sometimes ladies and children had to get out and walk. They had no~~x~~ idea of the hardships they would have on this supposedly pleasure trip. Mrs. Woods said, " Neither did the piomeers. But

when the hardships confronted them they had to face the music and carry on . So did the ~~thes~~ tourists. The same is true today. We must have the same spirit in attacking our problems."

The train to Raymond carried most of the supplies that went in to Yosemite. There were two trains a day. The early morning train took passengers then returned to Berenda with freight. About five o'clock it returned to Raymond again with freight. Then it was ready to bring back a load of passengers who had returned from Yosemite in the mean time. Many noted people went to Yosemite through Berenda. Among them were President Grant. ^{and} President Ree Theodore Roosevelt ~~visited Yosemite, but went via~~ ^{then} ~~Madera.~~

Going back to Raymond a bit, we wish to say that at the peak of the tourist trade it was a very busy place. Many times there were ~~as-many~~ between three and four hundred horses put up for the night at Raymond. Nearly every grain farmer for miles around was able to dispose of his entire crop of grain by hauling it to Raymond and Yosemite for these horses. Irene Kinney 's grandfather was one of the men who used to haul grain into Yosemite.

For twenty years people went through Berenda to Yosemite. In 1907 or thereabouts the railroad built a spur into Yosemite via Mefced. This killed Berenda, as the tourists no longer needed to go through it, as now they could go by rail all ~~the~~ way. Shortly after the building of this railroad, two hotels, one at Berenda and the other at Raymond were "conveniently" burned.

Mrs and Mrs. Woods came to Berenda in 1907, with a wagon load of children, as she describes it. They ran a hotel and had the postoffice in their family for many years. She educated all of her children in the Berenda school. In the next statement she believes she holds a record, for-"for twenty-seven years she

without a break, she had children in high school in Madera.

At that time Berenda had three saloons. They, and the stores were on one side of the street; the houses were on the other. One of the stores was owned by Guy Crow's grandfather.

The people used to have great baseball ~~haves-~~ games, sometimes having as many as one hundred people at the games. One of the fans of these baseball games was the Dr. Ransom, who worked at Berenda loading grain so that he might earn money to go to college.

Mr. Haskell's father planted the first grain at Talbot. It grew successfully, so this was the beginning of the huge grain industry we now have.

As we have stated before, Mr. Henry Miller owned most of the land. He had filed riparian rights on all ^{his} the lands. This was unfortunate for the people who came later and took up lands in the valley. Because of the uncertainty of their getting any water, they were forced to dig wells. The first well was dug on the place where the Buckley's used to live, which is now owned by Mrs. Wood's son. After wells were dug, vineyards were planted.

-Ber Quoting Mrs. Woods-"Berenda isn't much any more. Posterity has not carried on like the pioneers. It would almost seem that the pioneers threw their work away. However, many people have at some time lived here, and many have gone to far countries and made good."

In concluding her story to us, Mrs. Woods suggested that we always live the kind of lives that will not disgrace the grand flag of the United States of America, and to carry on in the spirit of the pioneers.

