



A

HISTORY

of the

POLK SCHOOL DISTRICT

BRIDGE at FRESNO CROSSING

As early as 1848, this seemed to be a natural crossing in the river's course. To-day this bridge spans it, and it is connected by an oiled road.

This little volume is lovingly dedicated to the people who have lived in the vicinity of the 'Fresno Crossing' and to those who are here to-day.



A-VIEW of the FRESNO RIVER  
(facing east from bridge)

A HISTORY of the POLK DISTRICT

FRESNO CROSSING

In 1835 California was still a part of Mexico.

But before 1835 the only whites to penetrate the plains and the foothills of Madera County were a few trappers and hunters.

Gold lured the first American settlers to this vicinity, as the third gold discovery in California was made at the Coarse Gold Gulch, just five miles above our School-House in 1849.

In 1850 the area covered by Merced, Madera, Mono, Mariposa, and Fresno Counties was made a single county called Mariposa County.

Within the few years that followed all the streams of this section were thoroughly prospected, and handsome for-

tunes were taken out. All along the Fresno River, Spangle Gold Creek, and Sweet Water Creek could be seen the Miner's "diggin's".

Each prospector had his own 'outfit', a few articles of clothing, bacon, beans, flour, salt, a pick, shovel, and a pan.

They would half fill these pans with water and gravel. Then they would dip water into them and slowly shake them back and forth. Then they would gradually pour out the water and with it the loose dirt and gravel. Sometimes if they were lucky small particles of gold would be left in the pan. They would keep this until they had a small quantity and then they went to the store at Fresno Crossing, and exchanged their gold for groceries etc.

Another method used here in placer mining was called the cradle. These cradles were very crudely fashioned. On the bottom was fashioned a piece of iron with holes punched in it. Earth was dumped

into the cradle. Then with an old can fastened onto a stick, water was dipped out of the stream and poured upon it. Then they rocked the cradle rapidly back and forth. The water would carry all the gravel away, while the gold being heavier would drop through the holes, and be found in the bottom of the cradle.

Several old timers tell us it would be surprising to know the amount of gold that came from this vicinity alone.

There seems no doubt that the Fresno Crossing locality was a fairly rich placer diggings for several years, beginning in 1849 or 1850.

At this time all the foothill section was open range. A few herd of cattle and bands of wild horses that had escaped from their owners on the plains were roving at their leisure. Wild game was very plentiful.

People coming into the hills from the valley found crossing the Fresno River

oft times difficult, and so the trail made by the Indians was followed and always referred to as the 'crossing' and as early as 1851 became known as Fresno Crossing.

This crossing made a good location for a trading center and the first building to be built here was of adobe, and was a store and saloon; a lean-to furnished the living quarters.

This adobe building was built in 1852 by John Ledford and George M. Carson, but they soon sold to J. L. Hunt and J. R. Nichols, the latter sold his interest to J. R. Roan.

X This same year Mr. Hunt buried his twenty-three year old son on the hillside just above the store. The ~~tom~~ stone marking his resting place is still there.

This same year Gus Gray shot and killed Tom Overton, Gray was tried and acquitted. Overton was buried on the hill with B. J. E. Hunt and in a short space of time more than twenty-seven graves were placed there.

About this time Theodore Thure Strombeck settled in this community. He came here to mine, later supplied meat to mining camps on the upper stretches of the San Joaquin.

Strombeck was a member of the Mariposa battalion expedition which, in pursuit of the Yosemite band of marauding Indians, discovered the Yosemite Valley, suggested its name and examined many of its principal objects of interest.

Mr. Strombeck had lost a horse at the hands of the Indian marauders, horse flesh among them being a delicacy, the settlers suffered a loss frequently. Mr. Strombeck rummaging about a camp-fire discovered a foot of a horse covered with a rawhide boot. From this he recognized the horse stolen from him only a short time before.

Finally the Mariposa battalion with its historical campaign against the Indians, with several battles <sup>fought</sup> ~~fought~~. The aborigines trounced at every turn, signed a treaty in April, 1851, at Fort Barbour.

Peace BK  
S. J. ...

In August 1852, three Frenchmen went on a prospecting tour to the Yo Semite Country. They left the Hunt and Roan store at Fresno Crossing with their supplies. They were attacked by a band of Indians. Two of the Frenchmen were killed but one escaped. He made his way back to Coarse Gold Gulch the latter part of August, and having told his story, a party of thirty miners went back with him to find the remains of his unfortunate comrades. Their bodies were found near the Valley and they were decently buried.

In the late September of that same year a lion carried off a boy. With less than ten minutes notice, twenty-five men were scouting through the woods, but no trace was ever found of either the boy or the lion.

Placer Mining brought the early prosperity to the country.

Many times the miners worked days and months for these small findings.

Oft times they were robbed. Sometimes they imbibed too freely at the bar, and had to go back without either their supplies or money.

In order to buy a glass of whiskey the bar tender would ask, "How?" The patron would place the gold as high in the glass as he expected the whiskey to rise. Again in this same saloon, later owned by John Dapelo, gold was measured by the teaspoon. *and later by John Vignolo.*

X In 1855 Mr. Hutchings, Thomas Ayres, Alexander Stairs, and Walter Millard made the first tourist trip to Yo Semite ever attempted. They left San Francisco and finally arrived at Fresno Crossing. Mr. Hutchings says, "We engaged two Yo Semite Indians as guides. These guides were provided by Mr. John Hunt who was keeping a store on the Fresno River". It was a long and tedious journey, but the guides knew the trails and it was easily accomplished.

→ By 1856 Fresno County was organiz-

ed including what is now Madera County.

Madera County was then the first Supervisorial district of Fresno County, and our J.R.Roan who owns a part in this store was elected as one of the first Supervisors of Fresno County. As Roan failed to qualify, his partner J.L.Hunt was elected, at a special election, to fill the position.

Now by this time, 1856, T. J. Allen kept the restaurant and bar at the Roan store.

Allen was Justice of the Peace, too. He also kept the Post-Office.

The story of the early day experiences in this vicinity would fill a book. They were lived in strenuous, primitive times and among strenuous men in a day when law-abiding men not only were the representatives of law and order as vigilantes.

It is related that the robbing of Chinese huts and mining camps for the sluiced gold was frequent and notorious

by what was believed to have been an organized band among whom were two brothers named Al and John Dixon. All races and classes were their victims.

In 1864, a band of twelve men, Strombeck among them, organized silently one winter's night, and assembled at the rendezvous of the out-laws. For some reason not explained, only one of the robbers was caught, Al Dixon, and the next morning his body was found hanging to a tree on the road from Fresno Crossing to Coarse Gold.

Jim Rains, another out-law of the band, met with a similiar fate later, but the work of the vigilantes had its effect in dispursing the gang, and sluice-box robberies were given a check. *(stopped)*

By 1865 the leading merchants fixed a scale of prices, at which they would accept gold dust, namely:

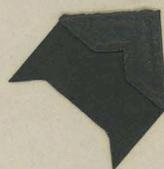
San Joaquin River-----\$15.50--per ounce *Palusky*

Fine Gold Gulch-----\$14.00--per ounce

Coarse Gold Gulch-----\$16.50--per ounce

Fresno River -----\$\$15.50--per ounce

The first quartz mill erected in the country was at Coarse Gold Gulch), only a few miles from here, and this for the most part took the place of the arrastra <sup>"raster"</sup> which had been in use throughout the country.



This is an 'arrastra' foundation in the Emerick field.

An arrastra is a rude ore crushing mill with vat and rollers worked by a long horizontal beam; used also for amalgamating.

By 1871 there were seven routes to Yo Semite Valley.

One of these routes went by way of Lathrope, to Berenda, thence to Raymond, through Coarse Gold, Fresno Flats, Fish Camp, Wawona via the Mariposa Big Trees and on into the YoSemite Valley.

In 1874 Mr. John Krohn with his family came from San Francisco in a spring wagon passing through Fresno Crossing to their homestead at Coarse Gold Gulch.

1877 was a very dry year. Sheep roamed the bald hill country and due to the lack of water and the shortage of pasture sheep sold for \$.18 a piece.

The following year, 1878, Mr. John Briggs Polk, his wife and four children came to the Crossing and took up a homestead.

At this time there were no close neighbors, and no school nearer than Buchanan. There was one house at the Knowles Quarry, a two story frame house at the Olive Orchard, one house where the

Sam Woods residence is now, and one house west of the Olive Orchard owned then by Neal Robinson.

One adobe house was built by Cap't. Mc Kune about two miles from the Crossing on the main road, and opened as a private school. This adobe was later owned by the Joe Wagner family.

About a mile north of the present bridge, and on the Spangle Gold Creek were several dwellings, a hotel, and a number of mines. X

It hardly seems possible to us to look down into this 'hollow', to-day, and realize that at one time this deserted looking creek was once a busy looking community. But the old land marks are very real and could give a far better account than we who are left to-day.



### The Flume

In 1876 a V shaped flume was built, sixty inches wide, from the Soquel Basin to the railroad at Madera.

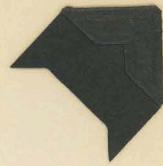
This flume was sixty-three miles in length, and wound its way along valleys, over steep mountain sides and across deep canyons.

Its construction cost about one-half million dollars and was considered one of the longest lumber flumes in the world.

It carried millions of feet of lumber from its mountain mill 'Sugar Pine' eventually crossing through the Polk District following for the most part the Fresno River.

There were a number of Section Houses in our district. So this gave employment to a great many families living in the district.

This flume transported lumber for fifty-six years and was finally abandoned in 1934.



A Choochancy Indian <sup>102</sup> 102 years old.

## INDIANS

CHOOCCHANCIES *Choochancie*

There are still a number of Indians in our community. They are descendants of the Choochancie tribe, who in the early days lived along the Fresno River.

Their height rarely exceeded five feet eight inches; and although strongly built, they are seldom symmetrically built. They have a low retreating forehead, deep set black eyes, thick bushy eye-brows, salient cheek bones, a nose spreading at the nostrils, a large mouth with thick prominent lips, teeth large and white; large ears.

Their complexion is very dark, often nearly black, so with their matted bushy hair which is frequently cut short, they present a very uncouth appearance.

Today they dress very much as we do; eat the same food; enjoy the same kind of

amusements.

There are scarcely any full blooded Indians left.

They have adopted our customs.  
The children attend our schools.

One of the many rock walls built  
in the early day by the Chinese day  
laborer.

## Chinese Emigrants

The first Chinese emigrants to come to California arrived in the brig 'Eagle' from Hong Kong in the month of Feb. 1848.

There were two men and one woman. This was before the discovery of gold was known abroad, No one knows why they came. But by 1849 there were fifty-four Chinamen and one Chinawoman in the territory.

Jan. 1, 1850 seven hundred eighty-nine men and two woman had arrived. By Jan. 1, 1851 four thousand eighteen men and seven woman were here.

The 'Alta Californian' from which these figures are taken estimated that before Jan. 1, 1853 there would be between seven and ten thousand more Chinese arrive.

There was no opposition to their coming, on the contrary they were welcomed and almost lionized.

Many of these Chinese found their way into this community. They worked for a few cents a day and did many menial tasks that no white man would do.

They built the railroad into Raymond that carried the freight for the 'Crossing', that was later transferred to teams and taken the rest of the way.

They built rock walls to fence in garden patches, corrals for cattle and horses. This also cleared the fields of rock so they could plow.

The Chinese were diligent miners. They could be seen anywhere along a stream panning for gold.

End  
→

PIONEERS  
of the  
POLK DISTRICT

## SIGNATURES

Alice Rivas

F. Jordan.

H. K. Polk

Elizabeth Seaton



Theodore Thure Strombeck



Mrs. Theodore Strombeck  
(aChoochancy)  
Indian

A PIONEER of PIONEERS  
was the late Mr.  
STROMBECK

Mr. Strombeck was born at Stockholm, Sweeden, his father being collector of the port at that place. He was only 16 years of age when the desire to go out into the broad world seized him, and he ran away from home to go to sea. A few years of the life on the billowy seas and his vessel sailed into San Francisco harbor, then knownto sea-faring men as Yerba Buena.

This was before the discovery of gold (in the fall of 1847) so that he was also one of the very earliest pioneers of Calif. as well.

With the excitment of the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill about January 30, 1848, Strombeck followed the general tide and the rush to the mines. He rigged up a launch to convey provisions and miner's

supplies to Stockton, then the head of navigation and the distributing point to the interior. Strombeck acted as navigator of the launch and was one of the first to pilot a sailing craft up the river to Stockton. Some of the accounts have it that he was probably the first.

Two years were spent in this occupation and he came to the Southern Mines, then in Mariposa county, afterwards Fresno county, and now Madera county.

There he became identified with mining operations at Coarse Gold Gulch, and along the Fresno River, which in the summer of 1851 was already a prominent mining camp. He also supplied the nearby mining camps with meat, using pack horses as a means of transportation over traveled trails because there were no roads save those followed by the Indians, the miner with pack trains and the sages.

Stirring events came to pass and tragedies to be enacted, some of which history has recorded, but many more are recalled

only in story or legend with few of the participants left to tell of them.

Strombeck was one of the few left of the almost thinned out band that helped to make so much of Fresno county history that is not recorded.

The Mono tribe of Indians, living on the Sierra range, looked with jealousy at the encroachment of the white man represented in the rough miners and the not less rough settlers.

History records several small massacres at Savage's trading post in 1850, at Cassidy & Lane's trading post in January, 1857, below Millerton, near what is now Pollasky, and a murder of two men at Fine Gold Gulch. This was the climax.

### IN MARIPOSA BATTALION

Strombeck was a member of the Mariposa battalion expedition which, in pursuit of the Yosemite band of marauding Indians, discovered the Yosemite Valley, suggested its name,

and examined many of the principal objects of interest.

In the Indian War of 1851, Strombeck was a member of Company B, commanded by Captain John Boling, the battalion nominally under command of Major James D. Savage.

He married a pretty Choocchancy Indian girl, Mēmerit, and they raised a large family.

The old family home is now in the Polkk District. The daughters are: Mrs. J.H. Elam, Mrs. Fred O. Ninnis, Mrs. Mary Jones, and Kathryn Strombeck. There were five sons: Fred, William, Leonard, Charles, and John.

Mr. Strombeck died at the home of his daughter Mrs. Fred Ninnis in Fresno at the age of 82.



Mr. and Mrs. Tom Sivils

## The Sivils Family

Mr. Tom Sivils crossed the plains with his grandfather from Missouri. They located in Merced for a short while, coming to Madera County in '76.

They homesteaded at Soquel, planting a large apple orchard. They spent their summers there, but came to this community during the school months. They used their squatter's rights on the place now owned by Press Emerick. From here the children, riding three on a horse, attended the Coarse Gold School.

There were nine children in the family: Rose and Tom who are both dead, Sam and Nell living in Modesta, Rose and Edd in Friant. George in the Polk District, Matey and Magie

Mr. Sivils was buried at Oakhurst. His wife then moved to Richmond, but was not satisfied there so they brought her to Friant. She lived there until she passed away at the age of 84 years. She was buried in Fresno, 8 years ago.



Mrs. Alice Rivas, who came here  
as a bride in 1877.

## RIVAS

Among the earliest settlers to come into this community were Mr. and Mrs. Rivas.

They came here in 1877 as a bride and groom. Their home was in Fresno but as there was no fence law at that time, and the cattle kept straying into the foothill hills they became interested in this land.

Mrs. Rivas tells us she was a bride, twenty-one years of age, when she and her husband decided to go into the hills and home-stead.

Their first trip was on horse back. The trail carried them out of Fresno, into the foot-hills. There was no bridge across the San Joaquin River, so they crossed by ferry. They came through Fine Gold, down the trail that leads passed the Polk School, and up the hill over the almost identical road that leads to their present home.

They stayed there a few days, finally decided this was a very desirable location and so went back to Fresno on horse-back,

Not long afterwards they started on this same trail, but with a four wagon, carrying their bed, stove, table, chairs, and food-supplies for a year at least.

The luggage in that wagon covered over with canvas was very useful and most necessary.

Mrs. Rivas, now a small, sweet faced, gray haired little old lady smiles as she recalls her high seat up on the wagon with her canary birds in a cage on her lap.

While she was recalling these memories, several canaries in their cages were warbling in the room beside her.

This room has a large old fire-place in it. It stands since the early days when her husband built this same home on this same spot.

At that time they had to go to North Fork for lumber. This being a long hard trip, they started with one room. As the family increased they added more rooms, and now have a large old fashioned house.

They have had ten children. Their first homestead consisted of 160 acres,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile square. Eight of the children

homesteaded the near by land and all the  
nine homesteads join each other.



Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Polk  
to the left their cousin

## The Polk Family

Mr. John Briggs Polk and family came here from Calaveras County in '78. They had four children; George, William, Henry, and one daughter.

At that time the bald-hill country was over-run with sheep, and the foothill section here about was the best feed country to be found.

So here the Polk family established their home.

In a corral adjoining the Polk Ranch Mr. Will Polk tells us, it was no unusual sight to see as many as seventy-five or more head of stolen horses brought here at intervals of once a month. These horses were brought from Nevada - kept there for several days - and then finally disappear into the San Joaquin Valley, where they would be sold. Then these rustlers would gather horses on their drive back from the valley, stop here over night; then

some dark evening start for Nevada to sell these native horses.

The leader, Louie Trubucci, was double-crossed by his partner, a Frenchman and shot at his home one evening in Feb. 1883. He was still a young man, about thirty-three years of age.

Trabucci always kept a horse saddled day and night in order to make a quick get away. The partner knew this and made his escape on the waiting horse. He was later caught, but only slight proof could be gathered so his sentence was very light.

After Mr. Polk died Mrs. Polk took up a home-stead adjoining the original home. The sons, Henry and George lived on the ranch. Henry raised cattle, while George farmed and raised hogs. They hauled freight out of Raymond.

Sometime later a stage-line ran from Berenda to Fresno Flats. Pat Grace had the first contract to operate this line and he established a stopping place to

change horses at this ranch.

In 1913 George was bringing a four-horse load of freight out of Raymond and was found dead beside his team.

After Henry's first wife died he later married Mrs. Abbie Polk.

Henry died January 7, 1930, and was buried in Merced.

Mrs. Polk now lives on the ranch with her son Joe Pierce. Mr. Will Polk spends most of time here, too.

The class of 1938 exploring the cave which the bold Joaquin Murietta was supposed to have used for a hide-out.

## Joaquin Murrieta

Joaquin Murrieta was born in the Republic of the U.S. of Mexico. His family, highly respectable people of Sonora, Mex. brought him up in his native town where he received a finished education. During his childhood he was remarkable for his sweet and gentle disposition.

In 1845 Joaquin Murrieta left his native town in Sonora to seek his fortune in the San Joaquin Valley.

His old blind mother and a brother Jesus, had come here a few years earlier.

Marvelous tales were told of the lucky ones who had struck it rich.

The lawlessness which always accompanies a gold rush predominated.

Joaquin always managed to take care of himself in those reckless early days; but not so the hapless brother. Jesus, the brother, was hung for horse-stealing. He was innocent

but at that time the feeling was so strong against the 'Peon', or half-breed that even a drunken man's word was taken against the half-caste.

Joaquin arrived a little too late to save his brother.

His pretty little wife was shamefully murdered one dark night.

These terrible deeds caused him to become revengeful, and later an outlaw and renowned bandit, with a large reward for him dead or alive.

There are people still living who can point out places where the terrible Joaquin Murrieta was accustomed to stop.

Mr. Henry A. Polk spoke Spanish fluently and I have been told by several patrons that Mr. Polk has conversed with Joaquin while he was in this vicinity.

He would remain for several days; or until it was safe to be on his way again.

*Paper*



P. E. Anderson

## P.E. Anderson

A very interesting little old man, Mr. P.E. Anderson, but better known as 'shoemaker Anderson', tells us that when he came here in '91, he bought a ranch from some French people. He recollects a French Colony all along the River from his house to the Bridge. These people were homesteaders, they built crude habitations, they terraced the river banks and planted grapevines everywhere. Besides these French people there were a great many settlers here who had come to this country and taken up homesteads. They had no money, were unable to make a living, and were starving to death.

Colonel Cox and his army came to investigate, and arranged to aid these people to return to their home states.

There was no road through this section of the country and Mr. Anderson

circulated a petition to have one built. He easily obtained some sixty signers. It took six years to get the road through. It is now known as the Madera River Route.

His father and mother joined him and they built a two room cabin with a fireplace. They set out many fig trees. These beautiful old trees are still on the place and are now showing their age.

Three granite quarries were working at that time; the McClennin, Day, and Knowles.

Skirting over the mountain he was able to walk to these quarries and in this way follow his shoemaker's trade.

Mr. Anderson also prospected along the Fresno River. The largest nugget he ever found brought him \$5.00 in trade at the Shaw Brother's store.

He and his father, Anders Anderson helped fight many large forest fires. In 1912 a large fire raged over Potter Ridge and the elder Mr. Anderson became over-

heated and contracted pneunomiaa and  
died. He was buried on the home place.  
The wife and mother, Christine Anderson,  
is now buried beside him.



Mrs. Elizabeth Seaton

Mr. and Mrs. U.G. Seaton

In 1886 the Seatons with two children, came to the crossing. They built a dwelling house 14' by 18' and people came here to dance. Adjoining this was the saloon. The lumber for these buildings came from Soquel, down the flume, and unloaded there.

They lived here until 1888, when they were burned out.

The father Elija Seaton, had taken up a homestead a few miles above there, so after the fire, they moved to the father's place, and finally proved up on the father's place. The father having moved to Fresno prior to this, due to illness.

There were four Seaton girls: Eliza, Nellie, Annie, and Rela. Mrs. Seaton had one son by a former marriage, Sam Hern.

Mr. Seaton has been dead for some years. Mrs. Seaton was 72 her last birthday - Feb. 5, 1938.

## Axel Olander

Mr. Axel Olander was born in Calmer, Sweden, March 26, 1887. He came to America in 1903. He came to Fresno County and worked for the Sanger Lumber Company until 1910, when he came to Madera County to enter the employ of the Madera Sugar Pine Lumber Co., as flume tender at Elderbrock Station.

He married Miss Winifred Emerick. They live in the Polk District. Their children attend the Polk School.

Mr. Olander remained in the employ of Madera Sugar Pine Co. until they closed down in 1932.

## LAWLER

Mr. Lawler came here in 1903. He and Rose Jordan were married in 1909. They had four sons: Leon, Woodrow, Lonnie, and Jennings.

They bought the old Frickstad home of one-hundred sixty acres along the flume on the Fresno River.

Mr. Lawler worked on the flume, steadily, for twenty-eight years.



Rose & Sanford Lawler

Woodrow, Jennings, Lex,  
Lennie



Mr. and Mrs. F. O. Jondan

Fred & Sarah Jane Jordan

Grandparents of Jim Jordan

## Fred O. Jordan

Fred O. Jordan was born December 8, 1854, in Monterey County.

He and his wife came here in Dec. 1905 in a wagon. This was an unusually wet year and it was impossible to cross the Sweet-Water Creek.

Mr. Jordan took up a homestead on the Madera River Road. He spent some time in mining the various streams, but later took up farming.

In Jan. 1906 he was joined by his son James F. and his family. In April of the same year another son Charles joined them. He also was joined by his two daughters, Mrs. Rose Lawler and Mrs. Edith Foster.

His wife died a number of years ago, and his daughter, Mrs. Lawler in the summer of 1936.



Mr. and Mrs. James Jordan  
and family

James + Addie Jordan + Jim (oldest)

Bob, Ralph, Fred, ~~Charles~~ Eleanor, Bessie,

Ray

Some of the people living in this locality, mostly on Government land, but who took an active part in building up the community. It is impossible to get in touch with all who may have lived here, but their names are so often mentioned in connection with this or that event.

Mr. and Mrs. Frickstad

John Elderbrock

John Slouthour

Mr. and Mrs. Grunagle

Mr. Gustaverson

John Carter

Oscar Jones, father and mother

Antone Lenardo

James Langdon and family

George E. Millard and family

Jake Gaymon

Mr. Van Bibber \*-Rube Branson

Mr. Logan

Dan Mc Iver

John Jones

John Mc Cardy



The Aldax Home in winter.



The Jake Gaymon Home

The mountain directly back of it is the famous 'Trabucci Mountain', where wild horses ran for many years.

POLK SCHOOL DISTRICT

1912



HENRY A. POLK  
for whom this school was named.



The first class to attend the opening  
of the Polk School in 1912.

back <sup>row</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> from ~~right~~ left - Jim Jordan

front row - #1 Fred Jordan

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First school was Langdon's barn where children studied on boards + boxes for desk. Then the school was built. Boys carried water from Langdon home. Horses were in the barn on one side & students on the other.

Info from Jim Jordan

## POLK SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pupils living in this vicinity were attending Willow Creek and Coarse Gold Schools, and either way meant five or six miles. So the people in the community decided to organize a district and build their own school-house.

Mr. Henry A. Polk owned the land immediately at the forks of the road and volunteered to donate the land as long as there was need for a school.

The first trustees were Henry A. Polk, Fred O. Jordan, and James H. Landon.

Pursuant to a request for a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Polk District a meeting was called to order on the 12th day of June 1912.

The purpose of this meeting, according to request, was to submit to the electors of the district, the matter of voting bonds, to raise money for the building, erecting, and constructing of a school-house, and buying the necessary furniture.

On the 6th day of July 1912, at the residence of Mr. James H. Landon poles were opened at one o'clock.

This poll was opened for the purpose

of issuing and selling of bonds to the amount of \$ 1,000, for the purpose of erecting a school-building and constructing such school building with necessary furniture and supplies.

Jacob S. Grunnagle was the inspector, James F. Jordan and Charles Reed served as judges..

Before the school-house was finished, the school term was here and rather than be so late in closing, it was decided to establish a temporary school, and by the time the cold weather set in, the new building would be ready for use.

On the ninth day of September 1912, Miss Minnie Middleton began her duties in a portion of the old Langdon barn, set aside for this purpose.. There were no desks available and so they used discarded dry goods boxes, Rough boards and smaller boxes served for seats..

Horses were often tied in the stalls on the other side of the partition.. The large inside section of the barn was full of hay..

Twenty-three pupils were enrolled that first day.

The water was carried by the janitor and stood in a large earthen jar in

## PUPILS

This is a list of the pupils who attended the Polk School from its establishment Sept. 9, 1912 until the present day May 20, 1938..

James Jordan  
 Fred Jordan  
 Clyde M<sup>c</sup> Cormick  
 Marie M<sup>c</sup> Cormick  
 Victor Bartlett  
 Fred Baetlett  
 Roy Landon  
 Roy Anderson  
 Maggie Lenardo  
 Charles M<sup>c</sup> Cormick  
 Ellen Bartlett  
 Mary Lenardo  
 Donald Walker  
 Lila Smith  
 Webb Walker  
 Clyde Stuthor  
 Ida Craford  
 Edgar L Langdon

Artie Smith  
Geneive Gokey  
Blanch Gokey  
Lola Gokey  
John Gokey  
Ellen Anderson  
Nellie Gault  
Ruth Tripp  
Chauncy Reis  
Kenneth Mc Intire  
Beth Mc Intire  
Audley Galbraith  
Ethel Reis  
Gladys Galbraith  
Naomi Reis  
Gordon Tripp  
Howard Tripp  
Merrill Tripp  
Edith Mc Intire  
Felton Millard  
Agnes Wood  
Manual Nordgreen  
Edward Nordgreen  
Ada Tripp  
Christina Nordgreen  
Elmer Tripp  
Sarah Tripp  
Helen Austin  
Lewis LeGrand  
Mary Reed

Ernest Sluthor  
Virginia Hunt  
Letty Rivas  
Polly George  
Stella Hamond  
Ralph Galbraith  
Robert Jordan  
Bernice Shermantine  
George Keith  
Leon Lawler  
Roy Jordan  
Jessie Hunt  
Sallie Pumpkin  
Julia Pumpkin  
Oliver Sharp  
Flora Sharp  
Florance Sharp  
Woodrow Lawler  
Jack Lee Gras  
Fred Davis  
Edna Haymaker  
Alis Davis  
Gladys Haymaker  
Myrtle Davis  
Louise Haymaker  
Eleanor Jordan  
Winnie Pierce  
Joe Pierce  
Max Bowling

Hubert Bowling  
Floyd Duncan  
George Pierce  
Ruth Pierce  
Harry Gokey  
Mable Gokey  
Golda Pierce  
Grace Langdom  
Verna Shannom  
Lonnie Lawler  
Marie Stewart  
Edna Sphar  
Bernice Hudson  
Pauline Hudson  
Clifford Hudson  
John Hansen  
Margaret Jones  
Alice Wilson  
Alice Dodge  
Bessie Jordan  
Alice Galbraith  
Lucille Maynard  
Cathrine Northcliff  
Elizabeth Northcliff  
Carl Hansen  
Mary LeGrass  
Raymond Linxwiller  
Millie Cook

Melba Cook  
Tina Campbell  
Edley Campbell  
Evelyn Campbell  
Melvin Gokey  
Lena Jones  
Virgil Gokey  
Elmer Jordon  
Edmere Cook  
Florance Strickler  
Frank Spinelli  
Natal Spinelli  
Quinton Spinelli  
Edgar Noble  
Marjorie Gokey  
Mable Hansen  
Marie Hansen  
Glenn Linxwiler  
Marion Wilson  
Edith Jordan  
Eldon Wright  
Claudie Wright  
Zeffie Wright  
Lorin Wood  
Vivian Maynard  
Roy Wright  
Edith Hansen  
Mary Hansen

Helen Jordan  
 Fred Johnson  
 Frances Jones  
 James Cummings  
 Emma Tommans  
 Dick Arnold  
 Clara Jones  
 Glen Millard  
 Harris Millard  
 Clifford Johnson  
 Rico Spielli  
 Denny Shannon  
 Lewis Shannon  
 Hugh Graves  
 Jennings Lawler  
 Coleman Mealey  
 Anna Aldax  
 John Aldax  
 Louise Aldax  
 Catherine Aldax  
 Virginia Millard  
 Margaret Coats  
 Marie Aldax  
 Betty Bunbery  
 Delta Mae Tanasse  
 Mildred Wilson  
 Henry Clay Jones  
 Richard Olander  
 Hazel Foster

Gordan Foster  
Stanley Foster  
Leslie Olander  
James Aldax  
Glenn Foster  
Alice Jordan  
Ruby Jordan  
John Gains  
Dorothy Gains  
Leland Denny  
Dick Robarts  
Jane Coats  
Edd Holiday  
Margaret Holiday  
Betty Jean Holiday  
Ray Miller  
Dana Mae Miller  
Willard Savage  
Francis Savage  
Harold Savage  
Bruce Knoch  
Clifford Moore  
Alvin Goodwin  
Aurelia Goodwin  
Dickie Emerick  
Myla Lemm  
Grant A. Engstrom  
Iola Savage  
Kathryn Mitchell  
Marilyn Mitchell

Mildred Olander  
Kenneth Emerick  
Pete Aldax  
Armenta Lou Funston  
Betty Whipple  
Bobby Cross



The class of 1937 & 1938.

They are left to right ,rear:

Richard Olander, Willard Savage, Ray Miller,  
 Francis Savage, Alice Jordan, Catherine Aldax  
 Ruby Jordan, Kathryn Mitchell, James Aldax,  
 Marilyn Mitchell;

Left: Leslie Olander, Kenneth Emerick,  
 Dickie Emerick, Edd Holliday, Louise Aldax,  
 Myla Lemm, Dona Mae Miller, Armenta Lou  
 Funston, Mildred Olander, Peter Aldax, and  
 Betty Whipple.

TEACHERS  
of the  
POLK DISTRICT

I  
1912----- -1938

1912----- Miss Minnie Middleton  
 1913----- Miss Evelyn Curran  
 1914----- Miss Agnes Lernhart  
               Miss Helen Wilkinsom  
 1915--1916--- Miss Alice Ebi  
 1917--1919--- Mr. L. M. Hollingsworth  
 1920----- Mrs. Shirley Duncam  
 1921----- Miss Clara Nysander  
               Miss Flora Rodriques  
 1922----- Miss Margaret Carney  
 1923--1925--- Miss Mary Redden  
 1926----- Miss Frances Seeburt  
 1927----- Miss Marian E. Davis  
 1928----- Mrs. Mildred Gaster  
               Mrs. Celia Whitfield  
 1929----- Miss I. G. Ebbet  
               Miss Laura Spruil  
 1930--1934--- Mrs. Laura Coats  
 1935--1938--- Mrs. Emma Footman



Craig Cunningham  
Sup't of Schools when Polk  
was organized.  
1912.

## Craig Cunningham

Mr. Cunningham was the Superintendent of Schools at the time the Polk District was organized from portions of Willow Creek, Goarse Gold, and Green. He drew the plans for the Polk building.

Mr. Cunningham is a native of Madera County, born in 1881, in Madera. Soon after his family moved to Arcola, near Borden, which at that time was known as the Alabama Settlements. He attended the Arcola School, graduating in 1896, attended High School in Madera, graduating there in 1899.

Being interested in school work, he took the examination from the County Board, passed the county examination; but due to the fact that he was not yet eighteen years of age, the board could not issue a certificate, so he took the examination again the following Christmas, and received a grade-school certificate.

At that time it was very discourag<sup>n</sup>

ing to secure a position as teacher. So he applied for Marysdale, Hanover, and Iron Mt., and was elected to all three positions.

He accepted Iron Mountain. He taught at Granite two years, and later taught three years at Gambetta, the old Grub-Gulgh School.

From here he was elected to the Superintendency for twelve years, 1911 to 1923.

During that period marked the development of the greatest number of districts the County has ever known; Alamo, Bethel, Polk, Dixieland, Dairyland, Manzanita, Ashview, Castle Peak, Chowchilla, Resideal, Tharsa, Cunningham, Ripperdan, Baily Flats, Trigo, Sharon, and Picayune.

Two high schools, Chowchilla and the Raymond Granite Union, were organized during this time, too.

During 1915, all the San Joaquin Valley Counties joined in holding Institute in San Francisco, during the World's Fair.

In 1923, Mr. Cunningham decided that twelve years was sufficient time to serve

the public and he relinquished the office to his deputy, Mrs. Meta Footman, who was elected his successor without opposition.

He then engaged in the furniture business for ten years.

Now he is Secretary and Manager of the Madera Business Men's Association.



This was the first bus used to transport pupils from the Polk District to the High School at Raymond. James Jordan Jr. (driver)

Jim - driver - was going to  
Higo when he drove the bus

1st ——— Roy Anderson  
2nd from left - Fred Jordan  
3rd ——— Ellen Anderson  
4th ———— Leonardo  
5th ————  
6th ——— Golda Pearce

## Birds

We have a variety of birds.

Some of the most common around our school yard are:

Quail	Wild Canary
Doves	Black Birds
Orioles	Blue Birds
Blue Jays	Road Runner
Meadow Lark	Swallow
Linnets	Humming-Bird
Robin	Sparrow
Mocking Bird	Snow Bird
Thrush	Hawk
Wren	Buzzard
Wood-pecker	Owl
Killdeer	Eagle

Occasionally a Sand-hill Crane will stray up the Fresno River. Their stay is very short-lived for the most part.

## Flowers

Among the flowers to be seen in our foot-hill district in the Spring are:

Shooting Star (Johny-Jump-Up)

Eor-Get-Me-Nots (Snow-drops)

Red Bud

Lupin

Poppies

Butter Cups

Cream Cups

Dasies

Bird-eyes

Baby Blue Eyes

Lark-spurs

Hyacinth

Mariposa Lillies

Primrose

Harvest Brodea

Fiddle Neck

Four O'Clocks

Monkey Faces

Ethereal Spheres

HONORARY MENTION

of the

SUPERINTENDENT'S

OFFICE - STAFF



Howard L. Rowe  
Superintendent of Schools



Florance P. Koontz  
General Supervisor



Gertrude Allison  
Primary Supervisor

Vivian Kennedy  
Music Supervisor

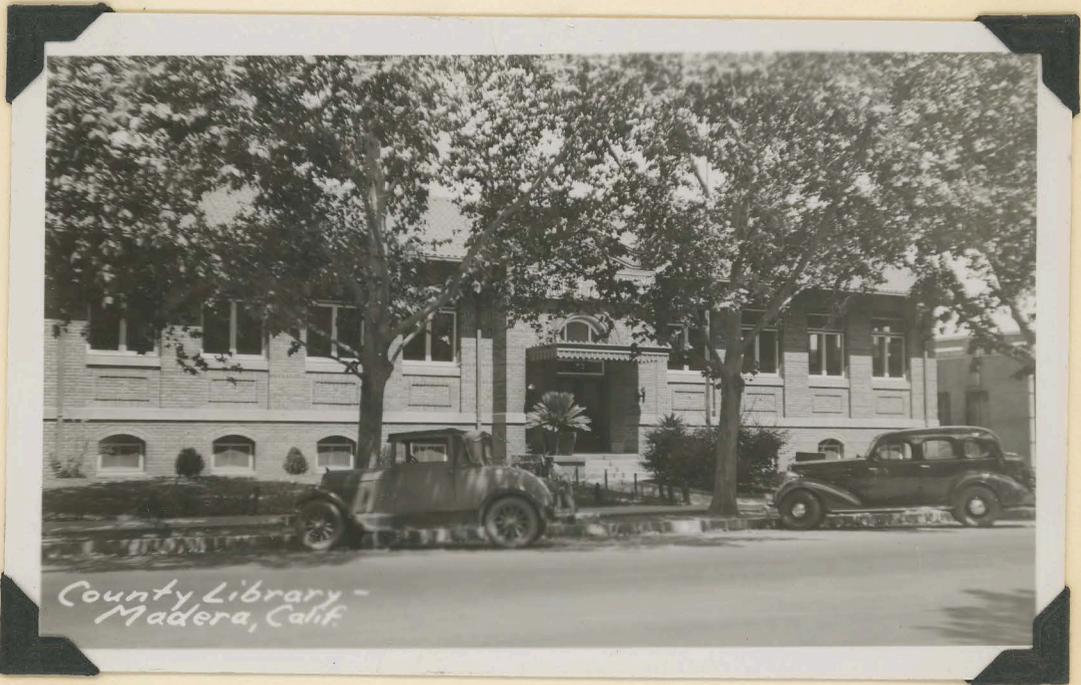
Health Supervisor

J.E.Rea-Attendance

Our Library System



Miss Mary Glock  
Librarian when Polk joined the present  
library system.  
1915



*County Library -  
Madera, Calif.*

Miss Galoway  
(librarian)

Mrs. Bennet  
has charge of our  
home-reading

Miss Thompson  
school-department

## MADERA COUNTY LIBRARY HISTORY

Madera County was first served by traveling libraries sent out to communities asking for them from the State Library. A box of books was made up in Sacramento and sent to a responsible person in the community who was public minded enough to see that they were circulated while there, and sent on to another station at a designated time.

On May 3, 1910 the County Board of Supervisors entered in a contract with newly appointed Trustees of the city of Madera whereby the County agreed to appropriate \$4500 for library service throughout the county beginning July 1, 1910.

The first branch library was established at Raymond, November 26, 1910, the second branch established at Coarse Gold November 28, 1910.

Miss Estelle Bagnelli, Superintendent of Schools took a very active part and

interest in the promotion of library interests.

On July 5, 1911, the contract with the City of Madera was revoked and the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution establishing a County Library under the new laws, which made this possible. Madera County Free Library was the first library in the state to be established under the new laws.

Miss Ida Regan was appointed County Librarian July 11, 1911, she did the pioneer work in organizing the County Library service, traveling by horse and buggy, spending a week on a trip to the mountain section, which we now do in a day.

In the Spring of 1912 circular letters were sent to schools explaining the library service offered them through contract system. Three districts joined by July 10, 1912.

Polk School joined October 11, 1915.  
The library now owns 114,403 books

which are circulating from headquarters through 69 branches and schools. All of the elementary schools in the county and one high school belong to the county Library system. During the year ending June 30, 1937 186,381 books and periodicals were lent for home use.

one corner of the room.

In the early part of October the new building was completed and the old barn was abandoned.

WILLOW CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT

ORGANIZED MAY 1883

LAPSED AUGUST 2, 1938



WILLOW CREEK SCHOOL  
built in 1883

## WILLOW CREEK SCHOOL

1883--1935 *52 years*

In the matter of the petition of George W. Bond et al for a school district May 8, 1883.

This was found recorded in the  
Supervisor's Office  
Fresno County Court House.

This little school-house was built in the fall of 1883.

Eldridge Koontz, a former pupil, tells us there were thirty-five pupils attending there at one time.

This building was in constant use until it was sold for the sum of \$17 in May 1917.

A new school-house was erected during the summer and was ready for occupancy in September.

The trustees at this time were Samuel M. Dyer, Mrs. S. J. Mc Reynolds, and E. L. Farley.



The new Willow Creek School-House  
erected in 1917.

Willow Creek School was about  
half way between Palk school &  
Raymond

This school was suspended in June of 1935.

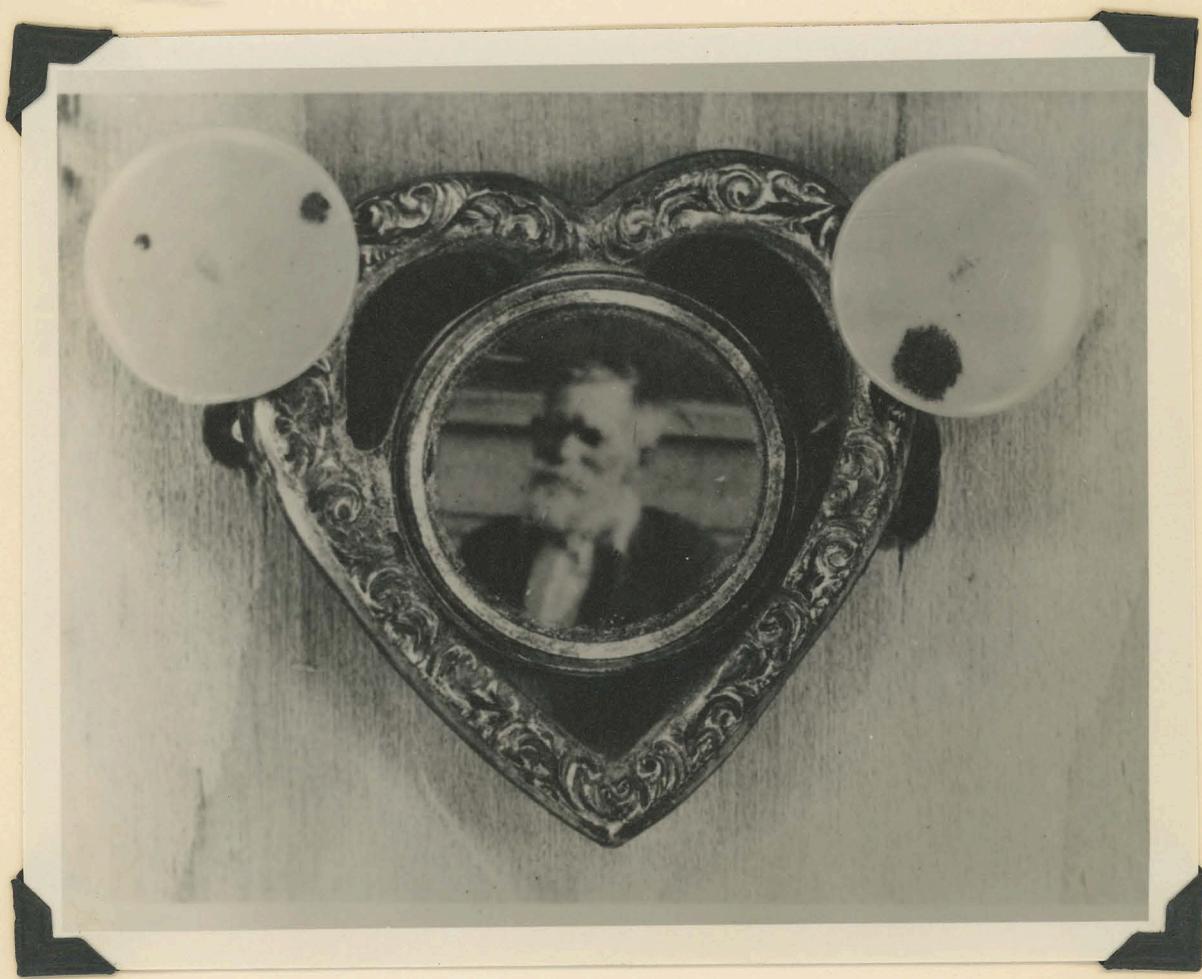
On July 11, 1938 the trustees of the Polk district met with the trustees of the Willow Creek district and finally agreed to consolidate.

Mr. H. L. Rowe, Supervisor of Schools, was present.

Then on August 2, 1938 a feature of the meeting of the Board of Supervisors was the annexation of the Willow Creek school district by the Polk school dis't.



Mrs. Louise Wagner



## The Virgil Koontz Family

One of the old time families to live in the Willow Creek District, is the Koontz family.

Mr. Virgil Koontz came here from West Virginia, while his wife, Miss V. Turner came from Missouri in '74.

After they were married they located in Plainsburg, later coming to this district in 1884, to the Goat Ranch, now known as the old Aiken Place.

From here they moved to the bridge on Willow Creek, where it now crosses under the Ahwahnee Road. Here they lived for a number of years, and kept a Post Office. before

They built their present home in 1891. From this union were three sons: Singleton, Alius, and Eldridge, Jean Latouche made her home with Mrs. Koontz from infancy, until her marriage,

Mr. Koontz passed away a number of years ago. Mrs Koontz is now living with

the son Alius and his family, in Oakland.

\*\*\*\*\*

Some of the neighbors in this locality in the early days as recalled by several of the 'old-timers' living here to-day :

Jim Mc Claren, his wife and three children, Edd, Billy and Charles.

Edd Piot; a Cap't Townsend; Mr. Calhoun his wife and two babies; Taylor; George Bond and family; Cass Rodgers; John Hansen; Edd, George, Albert and Jimmie Stevens.

\*\*\*\*\*

Charlie Walters came here thirty years ago, 1885, and still lives in an old cabin, on the side of a hill just above the Koontz Ranch. He has an orchard and garden.

Still others mentioned are Joe Philipo; Jerome Martin; Ben Turner.--



x  
The W.B. Aiken Home

## W. B. Aiken

Forty-five years ago, Madera County split from Fresno County and the first Supervisor of the fourth district was W. B. Aiken.

Mr. Aiken was a native of Mississippi and was born December 15, 1830. He came to California in a covered wagon in 1849, with his brother-in-law, S. R. Givens, at one time a very wealthy cattle-man.

They made their home in Merced for some time. While he was there he was the County Assessor for a number of years.

His wife was born in Springfield, Mo. May 20, 1849, and crossed the plains in a covered wagon with her parents in 1852. They settled near Hornitos, but later went to Merced where she was married to Mr. Aiken.

Mr. Aiken came to his ranch near Raymond, in the Willow Creek district, in 1891, and it was while he was Supervisor that Madera County was formed of a part

of Fresno County.

Some of the younger children attended the Willow Creek School.

Their home was known as the 'Old Goat Ranch'.

The names of the Aiken Family are: Stella Price, Mary, and Henry L. who passed away a number of years ago; Will F. who lives in Madera; Jessie E. in San Jose; John S. somewhere in Texas; Rosella Mc Mann, Nettie Carlson, and Elva Aiken who reside in Fresno.

Mr. Aiken passed away March 12, 1904, and was buried in Merced.

Mrs. Aiken lived on until November 10, 1931.



THE LOUISE MINE

## The Louise Mine

Madera miners were excited over a rich strike made in the Wagner's mine, situated about eight miles above Raymond, in the Willow Creek District, and the same distance from the old mining camp known as Coarse Gold. Reports reaching this city indicated a wonderful deposit of the yellow metal had been found.

Wagner first began striking gold in his crude shaft about March 1, and in one month he had extracted \$25,000 worth of highly productive ore.

On April 1, he sold the mines for \$11,000 to the Shaw Brothers of Raymond, one of whom, A.C. Shaw, was the Republican candidate for assembly in the sixty-third district.

From:

Fresno's Yesterdays

The Bee

FOUR SOLDIER BOYS  
from the  
WILLOW CREEK DISTRICT



James Alvin Beach  
Co. C-4th Battalion-U.S. Guards  
Presidio, California.



William B. Bossert  
25th Co., 7th Battalion,  
166th Depot Brigade,  
Camp Lewis, Washington.



Corperal Neal D. Dyer  
35th Service Co. S.C.  
Paris, France.  
American Expeditionary Forces



Emil J. Knak  
Troop D\* 4th U.S. Cavalry  
Camp Henry J. Jones,  
Douglas, Arizona.

