

Eastin



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Madera County

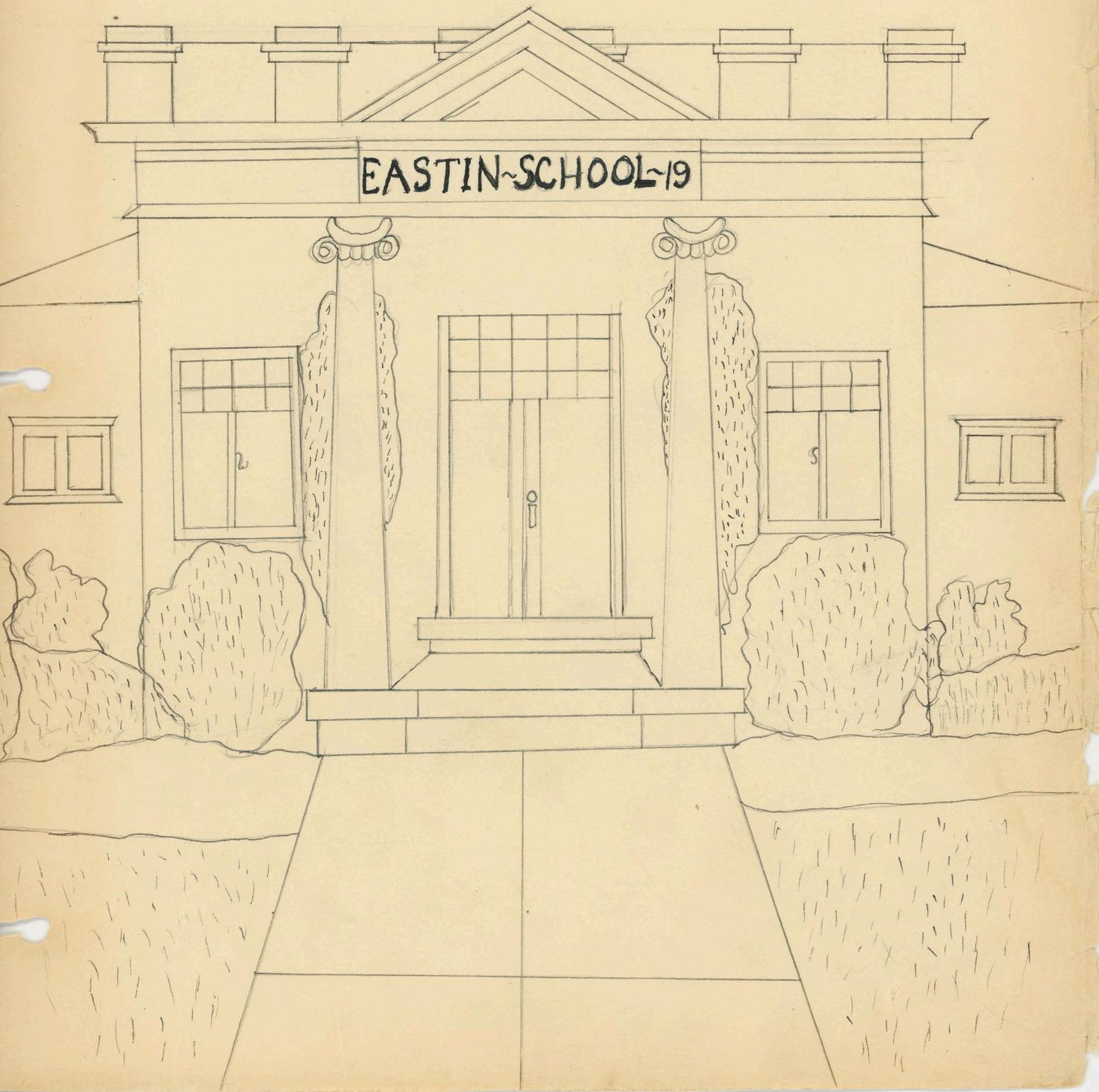
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Eastin

TO THE EARLY SETTLERS
OF THE EASTIN DISTRICT

IN ADMIRATION OF THE SPLENDID PIONEERING
SPIRIT SHOWN, IN THAT THE NOBLE WORK THUS
BEGUN HAS CONTRIBUTED MATERIALLY TO THE
WELFARE OF ALL SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS, WITH
KINDEST REGARDS, I INSCRIBE THE FOLLOWING
PAGES.

EMERSON M. BAIN

Dec. 1



EASTIN SCHOOL-19

HISTORY OF THE EASTIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Eastin School District is one of the oldest districts in Madera County and was organized from the large Arcola district while this county was still a part of Fresno County. When Madera County was organized and the two counties became separated as a result of a popular election in 1893, the district still retained its identity.

The original Eastin District had as its boundaries what is now the 99 Highway, Leigh Store Road, Madera Avenue, and the San Joaquin River. Several years ago the southwestern part of the district became a part of the Ripperdan District. Later a strip of land across the north part of the district was transferred back to Arcola. The Tharsa District was created from the southeastern part of the district in 1922 and a new building constructed there. Even though reduced in size the district has played an important part in the history of the county.

Three buildings have served the needs of Eastin in the past. The first of these buildings was erected one half mile south of the present location of the school on what is now the Ghloy Ranch. A few years later it was moved one and one half miles west on Ripperdan Avenue. In connection with the buildings several interesting features should be noted. They were of wooden structure, water was pumped by hand, and hitching posts for saddle horses were erected in front. In 1908 the present building was constructed on the new building site. Very little change has been made since that time.

The Eastin School was named after Octavius Eastin, one of the earlier settlers and a member of the first board of trustees.

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A.A. Skaggs was also a member of this board and a prominent early settler. Skaggs Bridge, a landmark in the community and a former "corner stone" of the district, was named after this man, as well as other members of his family. The third member of that early board of trustees was John Stepp. Others who should be mentioned are the J.H. Shedd, E.E. Russell, S.W. Briggs and the Bradley families.

Although these men are no longer living and all other earlier settlers have disappeared there still remains in the community several families whose names are connected with the district's early history. Isaac Ashton, who lives just north of the school, was a member of the board of trustees when the present building was erected. Mr. Ashton later served as the school's janitor for a period of ten years. Carl Overgaard has also lived in the district twenty-five years and has served as a trustee. Three of his children still attend the school.

The community was not settled to any extent until after 1869 when the plains were farmed to a limited extent by members of the Alabama Settlement who resided in and around Borden, a town of some two hundred people, and located south of the present site of Madera. From that time on the area has gradually increased in population.

In the early days of the district the land was largely grain fields. In summer and fall it gave the appearance of a desert. Land sold for approximately \$15 per acre. The history of the district differs somewhat from other parts of the state in that no gold was found on the banks of the San Joaquin and no cowboys roamed the plains. No thrilling stories of daring deeds, Indian wars or vigilantes are told in connection with this community.

Although wild horses roamed the plains the history is, instead, a story of quiet development through agricultural pursuits. The first water was supplied by means of hand pumps. These were gradually replaced by gasoline pumps and later, after 1915 when electric power was available, electric pumps played an important part in irrigation. It was not until 1912 that vineyards were set out to any great extent although there are reports of some in that section of the county as early as the 1890's. It was not until 1920 that cotton was planted extensively.

The early houses were nearly all wood. Although there were few trees in the district lumber was hauled from Borden and later from Madera where that business was carried on extensively.

Although transportation never was a serious problem in the community, the fine highways did not always exist as they do today. The road which is now the 99 Highway was once very narrow and sandy. Herndon Bridge was a narrow structure made of wood and steel and the connecting roads were entirely dirt. The most interesting factor in the early history of Eastin was the use of the San Joaquin River as a waterway until quite recent times. The last steam boat made its way as far up as Skaggs' Bridge on May 8, 1911. Since that time the community has depended entirely upon its fine network of highways.

In recent years the rapid development has been stimulated by several organizations. The old Eastin Church (Presbyterian), still dear to the hearts of many, played an important part in the spiritual life of the community. This church is no longer in existence except in memory. More recently the Farm Bureau has been important. Along with that organization the Eastin Welfare Club, later changed to Eastin Home Department, has had its place in the

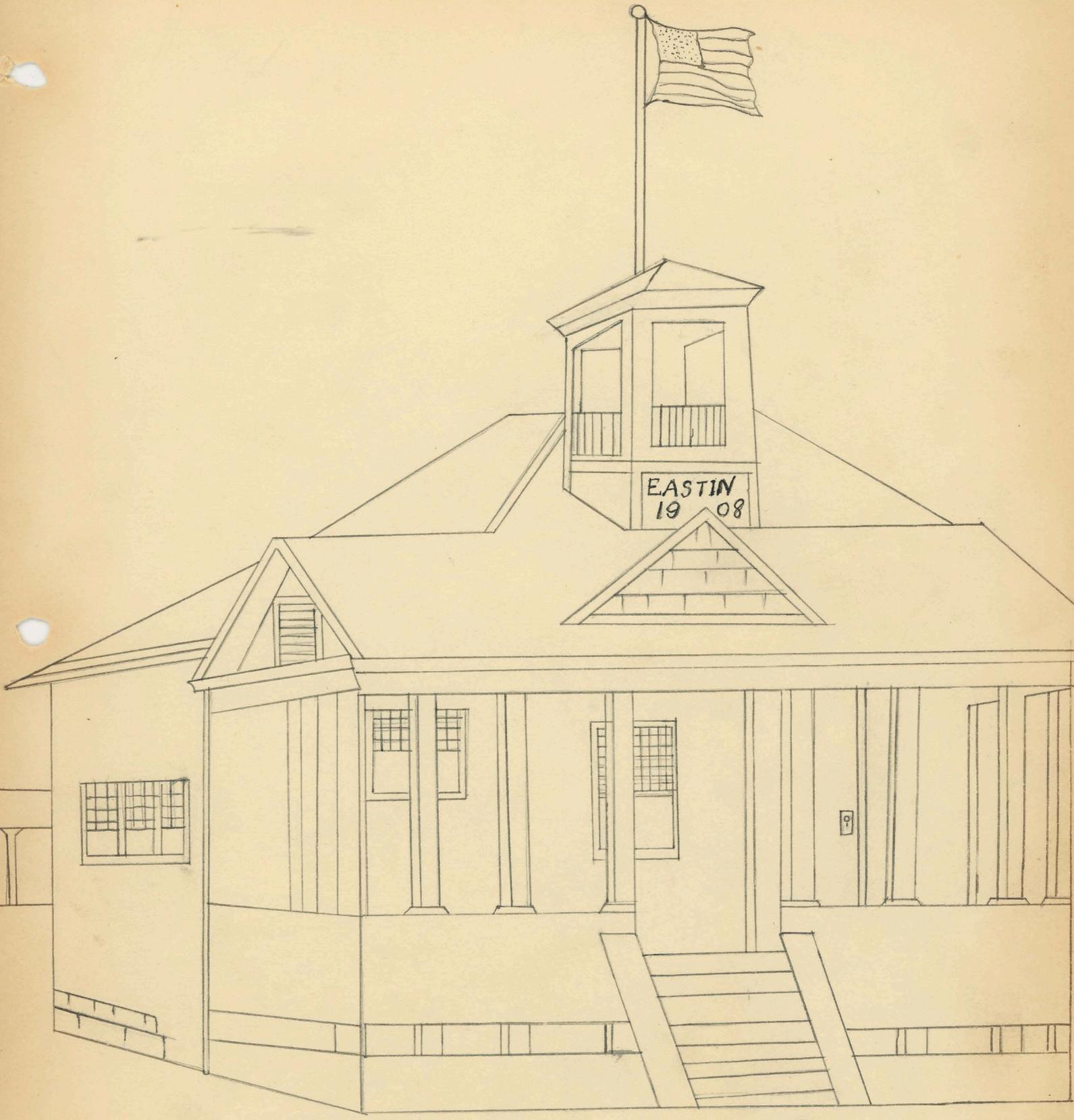
life of the district.

The Eastin District is, as a whole, a fine agriculture community. Cotton, grapes, and alfalfa are the most important crops today. With the construction of Friant Dam under way, the district's main handicap will soon be overcome and with plenty of water available, the rich land should prove to be one of the garden spots of the nation.

With the community supporting, the school should continue its rapid strides forward and maintain its just place as the center of the educational and social life. The attendance is already increasing, rooms are being added, lawn is being grown, a new pressure system has been installed and the people are entering into the spirit of advancement.

Surely great things are in store for Eastin.

Emerson M. Bain
June 14, 1938



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