

Dixieland



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*Madera County Schools*

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A HISTORY of the  
DIXIELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Compiled by the Faculty  
of the Dixieland School.

October 1938

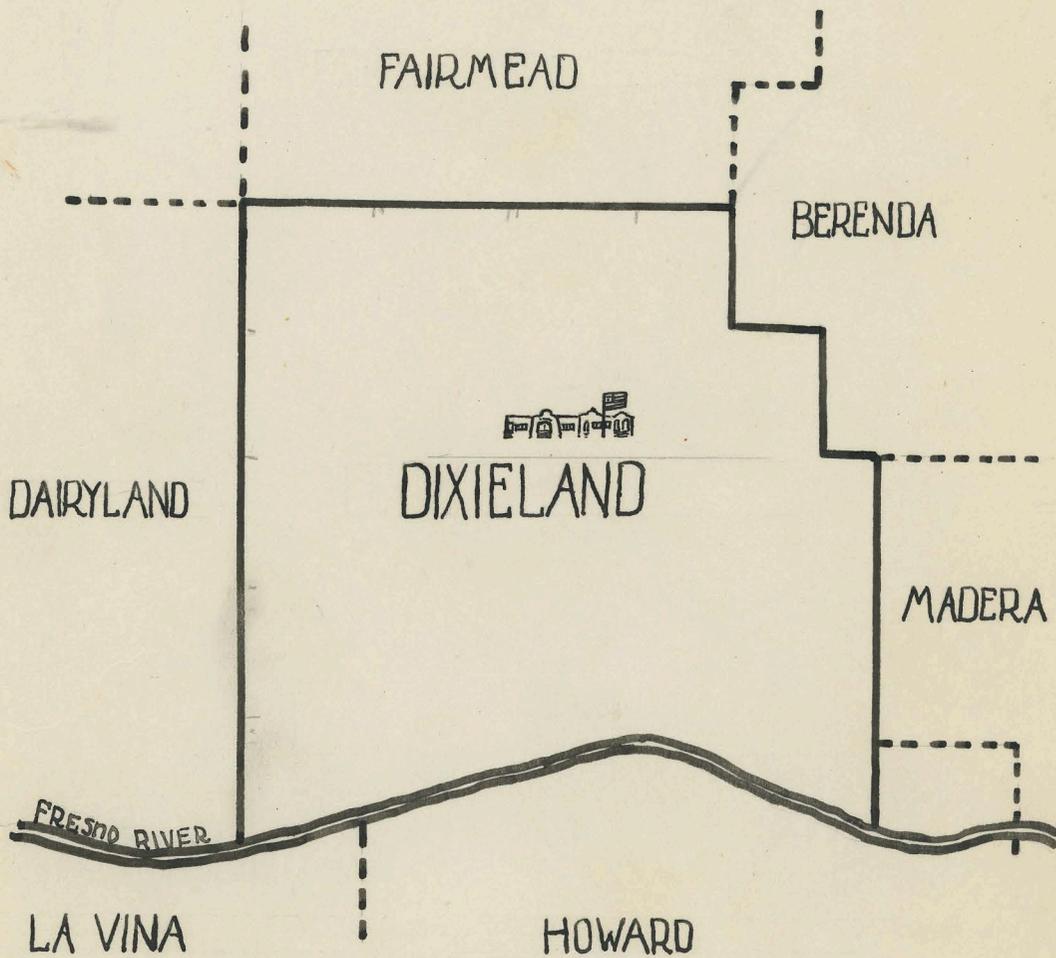
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the pioneer  
families of the Dixieland District.

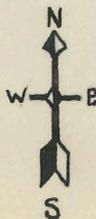
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# DIXIELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

MADERA COUNTY



THE EARLY HISTORY of DIXIELAND

## EARLY HISTORY of the DIXIELAND DISTRICT.

Many years ago, the early Spanish governor at Monterey sent an exploring expedition to the great valley which lay to the eastward, to see what possibilities this land might hold.

The exploring party returned to Monterey with the report that the country was worthless--- that it was impossible to explore it, on account of its flooded condition.

The governor lost interest in the project, and for years the valley lay undisturbed, except for wandering tribes of Indians.

In that portion of the Great Valley, which is now called Dixieland, coyotes and rabbits abounded in great numbers, and the wild ducks and geese, in their yearly flights to the warm south, stopped to rest and feed on these flooded plains.

The melting ~~snows~~ from the mountains filled the rivers and streams, and sent them rushing down to the valley laden with rich soil. The streams, overflowing their banks, flooded the country, and left rich deposits of fertile soil on the flooded land.

The miners of " '49" in their eager search for gold, looked disdainfully on the valley-- not for a moment dreaming of the wealth it would bring.

Early in the nineties, Miller and Lux acquired acres of rich land along the banks of the Fresno River. A large portion of this land belonged to Buchineau. Besides this, there were a few settlers living miles apart, who raised fields of grain; chiefly, barley, wheat and oats. Among these early settlers were the Posts, Cooks, Gordons, Spangles, Richeys, and Buchineaus.

The buildings on the ranch now owned by Carl Muller, were about the first in the district. The land and buildings belonged originally to T.C. Richey. Mr. Richey was a grain farmer, and in 1909 farmed 3600 acres. He planted barley in that part of the land in which the school house now stands.

Another early settler, Mr. Post, planted forty acres of peaches, 30 acres of grapes, and 28 acres of alfalfa.

The children of these families went to school in

Berenda, and the housewives did their shopping in Merced. Mail for the district was received at the Fairmead post office. Mr. P.E. Dahl was the first mail carrier.

EARLY COLONIZATION of the DISTRICT

## EARLY COLONIZATION OF THE DISTRICT

In 1912, the Fairmead Cooperative Land Company acquired the land comprising what is now the Dixieland district, and subdivided it into 10, 20, 30, 40, 60, and 80 acre lots. These lots were sold for \$ 100 an acre and upward. The initial payment was one-fourth of the purchase price, and the balance was due at the end of four years at 7% interest.

The Company advertised the land widely, and settlers came from Kansas, South Dakota, Washington, Oklahoma, and from districts in California.

Many of the settlers were of the Mennonite faith. As a special inducement, the company reserved the land for Mennonites only, for a two year period. However, the settlers came in too slowly to suit the Company, and the restriction was taken off.

Among the first settlers to enter this new district, known as Fairmead Colony No. 3, were the Janzens, Peters, Lichtis, Fullers, Horders, Wilsons, Schroeders, Robbins, Wards. These settlers at first lived in tents and small shacks, while they leveled ~~on~~ the land and dug wells. The water level was between ten and thirty feet from the surface at various places, and pumping plants were used by the farmers. Many of the farmers still use their pumping plants, due to the high cost of electricity.

The land companies advertised the land as alfalfa land, and the early settlers tried raising this crop.

The venture did not turn out to be particularly successful, so they turned to others. Some began to grow peaches, others engaged in dairying. Mr. Henry Janzen began an experiment in the growing of wine grapes, which ended successfully. The following year, 1916, Mr. Paulstene grew grapes on a large scale. Since that time, grapes have been one of Dixieland's most important crops, and the district has done its part in producing the raisin crop of the country.

Dairying was another industry in which the people of the district engage. This has continued through the years, and today, dairying is one of the most important and profitable occupations in the district.

During the spring of 1913, a church was built by the Mennonite members of the community on land which the company had given them for that purpose. The first pastor of the church was Mr. Cornelius Wittenberg.

People traveled on foot, on horseback, or with horse and carriage. The roads, for the most part,

were mere wagon tracks. No bridges were built across the creeks, and people drove through the sandy creek beds. In winter it was impossible to travel on many of the wagon roads because the creeks were filled with water.

THE DIXIELAND SCHOOL



NEW AND OLD MENNONITE CHURCH

## DIXIELAND SCHOOL

Before the erection of the present school at Dixieland, the children from the surrounding vicinity were forced to go to the Berenda district, a few miles distant. This trip was accomplished by walking, on horseback, or in horse-drawn buggies.

Such an arrangement, however, was far from satisfactory. The people of the district came to the realization that the children should receive their schooling nearer home.

There was, at this time, a small one-room building, the Mennonite Brethren church, which served not only as church, but as a community hall, and general meeting-house as well. There seemed to be no reason why this building should not be utilized in the further capacity of school house, at least for the time being. Accordingly, in September of 1913, school was opened in this building. Previous to that time, however, a petition had been started by Mr. Peters, living a half-mile from the immediate vicinity, for the erection of a school building.

The land was to be donated by the Cooperative Land Company, who had offered the community a choice of two sites. The present location of the school was finally decided upon, at a meeting held at the home of Mr. Ritchie, and the erection of the building was begun at once.

School, therefore, opened in the Mennonite Church building, but only to last a month, until completion of the new building.

The land, as said before, was donated by the Land Company. Up until that time, the two acres had been used by Mr. Ritchie for the purpose of raising barley. Mr. Ritchie was given the contract for the building, which was to cost \$ 3500.00.

On completion of the new school building, in October 1913, the children moved in. This building contained only two rooms, quite sufficient for the needs of that time. There was a stage at one end, and folding doors between the two rooms.

The first teacher, employed by the trustees, Mr. Ritchie, Mr. Peters, and Mr. Isaak, was Miss Lenna Skaggs, of Madera, now Mrs. Cardwell of Chowchilla.

The school, on Mr. Peters' suggestion, was named the Munich School, after the city in Germany. This name, however, lost favor on the breaking-out of the World War, and in 1914, was changed to "Dixieland", on a petition of Messrs. Withrow and Hobbs, two neighboring ranchers from Arkansas.

In 1916, a third room was added, due to an increasing number of children. The second teacher employed in the school, was May Woods, who lived in Berenda, and rode daily to school in a horse-drawn buggy.

It soon became apparent that the additional room did not provide sufficient space, so a fourth room, now the first-grade room, was built on in 1921. At the same time, the Auditorium and lavatories were added. These latter were remodeled and a dressing room added in 1937.

The present Dixieland School is a far cry from the little one-room Mennonite church, which marked the first step towards the education of the children of the early settlers.



DIXIELAND SCHOOL

Today, these children are provided with a playground containing swings, a slide, and other modern playground equipment. They have baseball diamonds, and basketball courts on which to play. There are well kept lawns in front of the building, as well as attractive shrubs and flowers.

The school rooms themselves are provided with modern, up-to-date furniture and equipment. Practically everything necessary to the securing of the best education of the child is available.

There are buses which carry the children to and from school--- a great advantage over the days of horseback riding, or walking, on the part of the children.

In general, it may be said that great progress has been made since those early days; but there is more to it than that. Still greater progress can be made in the future. With the cooperation of the ranchers, the teachers, and all of the people intimately concerned in the Dixieland School, continued improvement and progress is possible.

This progress will be not only in the school itself, but in the district; progress that will be reflected in the lives of the children, in the lives of their parents, and ultimately, in the nation itself.

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FACULTIES of the DIXIELAND SCHOOL

FACULTIES of the DIXIELAND SCHOOL

1913-14 Lenna Skaggs

1914-15 Lenna Skaggs (principal) May Woods

1915-16 Eliza Wright (principal) Myrtle Mc Grath,  
Leila Schmidt

1916-17 Eliza Wright (principal) Leila Schmidt, Agnes Briscoe

1917-18 Clayton Clawson (principal) Ruth Brooks, Mrs. Lepha  
Laymon.

1918-19 Helen Emmrick (principal) Hazel Hedges, Lepha Laymon.

1919-20 Carrie Rice (principal) Laura Sheldon, Alice Teall

1920-21 Hazel Appling (principal) Doris Shaw, Elizabeth Barrett,  
Anne Smith

1921-22 Hazel Appling (principal) Helen Shaw, Doris Shaw,  
Gertrude Grotophorst

1922-23 Mrs. Clayton Clawson (principal) Gladys Showers,  
Ruth Young, Edith Showers

1923-24 Irma Tilden (principal) Eliza Gordon, Mary Garbedian,  
Alice Reynolds

1924-25 Ruth Blayney (principal) Mary Garbedian, Frances  
Nisson

1925-26 Same staff as in 1924

1926-27 Same staff with addition of Isabel Yocum

1927-28 Same staff as in 1926

1928-29 Ruth Blayney (principal) Midlred Fortune , Clara High,  
Isabel Yocum.

1929-30 Ruth Blayney (principal) Isabel Yocum, Clara High,  
Juanita Grace.

1930-31 Ruth Blayney (principal) Clara High, Isabel Yocum.

1931-32 Gertrude Jorgensen (principal) Clara High,  
Kathleen Tipton.

1932-33 Same staff as in 1933

1933-34 Juanita Grace (principal) Grace Fuller, Clara  
High

1934-35 Same staff as in 1934

1935-36 Juanita Grace (principal) Clara High, Helen Mc-  
Pheeley

1936-37 Elizabeth Dann (principal) Clara High, Sue Lord,  
Substitutes-- Frae Grassle, Beatrice Rea

1937-38 Elizabeth Dann (principal) Clara High, Sue Lord,  
Beatrice Rea, Kathryn Younger

1938-39 Elizabeth Dann (principal) Clara High, Kathryn  
Younger, Lucina Stanford, Grace Parker.

DIXIELAND TODAY



COTTON



COTTON

COTTON RACK





COTTON CABINS

## DIXIELAND TODAY.

Dixieland today takes on a very different appearance. Flowers, trees, and shrubs have covered the bare grounds around the homes. Graded and oiled roads have replaced the wagon tracks.

Kelly's Store, in the center of the district meets the needs of the people. Madera also serves as a shopping center, and the city of Fresno is easily reached, in these days of the automobile and good roads.

The church is being replaced by a new one on the ground adjoining it.

Many of the original settlers still live in the district while others have moved away.

The Dixieland District has an energetic and enterprising Farm Bureau, and the schoolhouse has been the center of many interesting meetings.

In the first county fair held at Madera, the Farm Bureau and its Home Department won the sweepstakes for its display of products raised in the district. Among these home products displayed were flowers, fruits; oranges, lemons, grapefruit, various kinds of grapes, apricots, peaches, plums, nectarines,

pomegranates, figs, quinces, melons; berries of all kinds; nuts (almonds and walnuts) grains; alfalfa, wheat, barley, oats, and garden vegetables.

The boys and girls in school belong to 4H Club, and are learning to be good future farmers.

In 1935, 3 Model Dairies, belonging to Martinazzi, Garst, and Pedroncelli, were built. These dairies sell mainly to the Danish Creamery and Golden State Creamery.

It was in 1928 that experimental work in the raising of cotton was first begun by the Benson brothers. These experiments proved quite successful, but due to the fact that the nearest cotton gin was in Bakersfield, a rapid development of cotton growing was prohibited, because of the expense of hauling. However, as soon as gins were built within a reasonable distance, the growing of cotton once more flourished. Of all the types grown, "acale" proved most successful and it is that which is grown on most of the ranches of the district today.

Thus we see that grapes, cotton, and dairying have replaced most of the early grain raising on the ranches. Some grain is still raised today, however, by some of the farmers. But it is to these other three that most of the agricultural development is devoted, and which is responsible for the increasing population of the district, especially cotton which brings pickers every season from several states in the Union.

On the ranch of Avon Davis, registered stock; horses and cattle, are successfully raised. Mr. Davis began in 1920 with a few head of cattle, and today has an excellent reputation as a breeder.

In general, it may be said that the Dixieland District has as diversified farming as may be found anywhere; from its herds of cattle to its wide fields of cotton; from its green vineyards to its spreading grain fields. It is a true agricultural district; one to be proud of now, one which will merit even greater praise, in the future.



AN OLD RANCH



THE DAVIS RANCH



BRIDGE NEAR SCHOOL



KELLY'S STORE

