



Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California
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Bakersfield Schools, 1863-1910, Society and Politics

by Gilbert P. Gia

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In 1863 when Col. Thomas Baker and his family arrived here only about five houses were within a mile of present-day downtown.¹ The Bakers' shelter² had a tule roof, wood-picket walls, a tumbled-down chimney and a floor lumpy with gopher holes, and it was probably among the poorest of dwellings.³ Col. Baker

¹ ***"A Brief History of the Public Schools of the City of Bakersfield. The subjoined article is taken from the annual report of Superintendent D.W. Nelson of the city schools and was written by Miss Virginia Jameson, who is one of the pioneer teachers of the county."*** (*Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 4, 1907); Ferdinand Tracy married Ellen Baker. In 1907 Ellen Tracy lived with her daughter Charlotte Baker Jameson and Charlotte's husband, John M. Jameson (*Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 7, 1907, p 6, col 3-5); John M. Jameson was the brother of Virginia Jameson, author of the 1907 school history. (Source of relationships: John Codd, Kern County Genealogical Society)

² Mrs. Tracy described the tule house as a "shack." It was some short distance north of today's 19th and O Streets.

³ Mrs. Ellen Baker Tracy (1837-1924) said the family arrived at Kern Island (which Bakersfield was then called) on Sep 20, 1863. ("A

started work on an adobe house, but nearly a year passed before the family moved out of the old shack.⁴ Probably sometime after that move Mrs. Ellen Baker started a school in her home. The school is credited as being the first here.⁵ Jameson wrote, "*Could we have looked into that humble house in the autumn of '63 we might have seen eight barefooted children ranging in age from four to 12 seated on overturned boxes...*"⁶

Ellen Baker herself wrote nothing about that school.⁷ Faced with the many challenges in an untamed land, how likely is it that Mrs. Baker

Story of the Pioneer Days in Bakersfield As Told By Mrs. Tracy," undated, transcriber's name not shown, typewritten manuscript, Vertical File, "*Baker Family,*" Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, Calif.); The Baker Homestead was generally between 19th and 26th and M and R Streets. (Kern Co Hall of Records, microfilm, Tract Map Book 1, reel counter 14.8); Historian Frank F. Latta identified the entrance to Baker's 40-acre homestead as just west of the intersection of N and 19th Streets. (Bakersfield Press, Mar 4, 1956)

⁴ Tom Baker manuscript, p 3, (op. cit.)

⁵ Jameson, *op. cit.*; "*In 1863, for a short time, Mrs. Baker taught a few of the neighbor children at her home. They had no books, but Mrs. Baker cut letters out of paper, and resorted to other laborious shifts to help the youngsters up the hill of knowledge.*" Wallace Melvin Morgan. *History of Kern County, California.* Los Angeles, Calif., Historic Record Company, 1914; Morgan's source was probably Virginia Jameson's paper of 1907 which has been referenced often over the years; In 1935 Thomas W. McManus who owned McManus Insurance Agency of Bakersfield inaugurated a KERN Radio weekly series entitled "*Kern County Memories.*" (*Bakersfield Californian*, Jan 29, 1935). In a March episode he borrowed from Jameson's paper of 1907 (McManus radio script, Mar 18, 1935, Vertical File: "*Schools,*" McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, Bakersfield, Calif.)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ In 1896 Virginia Jameson was then one of 12 Bakersfield teachers. See Appendix D for their names. In "*Recollections of a High School District, 1893-1968,*" p 39, Wallace wrote that Ellen Baker's story about coming to this area in 1863 appeared in the Jan 31, 1893 *Daily Californian*, p 1. Gilbert P. Gia was unable to find that article.

taught her neighbors' children? In *Story of the Pioneer Days*, Ellen Baker said her son Tom, born in 1859, came with the family,⁸ but Mrs. Baker did not mention other Baker children. In an interview in 1931 Tom Baker,⁹ then 72, said his little sister Nellie was also in the Baker party.¹⁰ If Ellen Baker's child-rearing responsibilities on Kern Island were limited to a two-year old and a four-year old, then she might have had time to educate her neighbors' children.

In 1863 the residents of Kern Island were recovering from the freak flood of the Kern River, in winter 1861-62, that drove away pioneers like the Lovelaces, as well as others whose names are no longer remembered.¹¹ The Southern San Joaquin Valley gradually repopulated, and by the time the Bakers arrived, Mr. Edward Tibbet,

⁸ "*Story of the Pioneer Days in Bakersfield As Told By Mrs. Tracy*" in Arthur S. Crites, *Pioneer Days in Kern County*, Los Angeles, Calif., Ward Ritchie Press, 1951

⁹ Tom Baker, hand-written, undated manuscript, c 1931, p 2, McGuire Local History Room, vault, "*Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157*," Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

¹⁰ Col. Baker's son James, born 1847, had accompanied his father on an earlier sortie into the Southern San Joaquin Valley, probably about 1860, but James did not come with the Baker party of 1863, nor did Ellen's daughter May Emmeline Whaley, born in 1856. James and May probably remained in Visalia with Col. Baker's older children, Elza Jane Baker, who married in 1855 in Visalia, and William Baker, who married there in 1859. Baker genealogy courtesy of John Codd, Kern Genealogical Society, Kern Co Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

¹¹ Those settlers who stayed included Lewis A. Beardsley, Harvey S. Skiles, the Shirleys, the Gilberts, Lewis Reeder, and Elisha Stephens. The flood realigned the Kern River, which effectively dried-up swampland that had been unfit for cultivation. The Federal government, too, brought on depopulation by its forced relocation of Native Americans to a reservation on the Tule River.

as well as others, were homesteading south of today's California Avenue.¹² The need for a school house was growing.

Many early teachers at Bakersfield had taught in nearby mountain communities. In 1861 when Kern County was still part of Tulare County, a Mr. W.C. Wiggins taught at Tehachapi,¹³ and he might have been the school's first teacher. In 1863 a log school-house was opened between Tehachapi and Brite's Valley,¹⁴ and in 1866, a few months after Kern became a California county, Mrs. Louisa M. Jewett taught at Old Town Tehachapi School.¹⁵ Her service might have made her the first teacher paid from Kern County funds.¹⁶

¹² Wallace Melvin Morgan, p 57-58, op. cit.

¹³ The next teachers were Bob Dozaer [Dosier?] and Miss Jackson. Bender identified other teachers as Mr. Hall, Mr. Doss, Mr. Donnel, Mr. Cornwall, Mrs. Smithick (Smethwick?), Miss Lively (who married Benjamin Brundage), and Miss Combs. Mrs. H.P. (Cora F.) Bender, type-written manuscript (abt 1931,) vault, "Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157," McGuire Local History Room, Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield Calif.)

¹⁴ William Harland Boyd, *Lower Kern River County, 1850-1950: Wilderness to Empire*, Kern County Historical Society, Bakersfield, Calif., 1997, p 180; "The first school in Kern County was taught in the old town of Tehachapi in 1861." (Cora F. Bender paper in "All In The Pioneer Teacher's Day, first historical year book of the Pioneer Teachers Association, compiled by Amanda M. Chase, abt 1934; In 1865, before Kern was organized as a county, a public school was conducted at Glennville. Boyd named W. Perry Wilkes as a teacher there (Boyd, *Lower Kern River County*, op. cit., p 157)

¹⁵ Louisa M. Jewett married Angus Crites. Kern County was created from parts of Tulare and Los Angeles counties on Apr 2, 1866.

¹⁶ *Bakersfield Californian*, Nov 7, 1932. She was a sister of Solomon and Philo D. Jewett.

The first teacher at Havilah was Miss Mamie Combs.¹⁷ In 1867 Havilah's population was nearly 3000, which included 67 school-age children.¹⁸ Harpending wrote, "*It was a brisk center with hotels, livery stables, large merchandise stores, lawyers, doctors, preachers, open gambling houses, hurdy-gurdies, saloons, banks, bagnios [brothels] and the other evidences of advanced civilization.*"¹⁹

About 1866-67 on Kern Island, now called Bakersfield, a log school house was built about three miles south of present-day downtown, which in those days was this area's population center. According to Mrs. Tracy, "*A lady [was] installed as a teacher and about one-dozen barefooted children attended. The school-room was fitted out with rude puncheon seats and home-made furnishings.*"²⁰ The historical record is not clear, but that school might have been the same on the Keith Ranch about two miles south of today's 19th Street and Chester Avenue.²¹ At that place, 20 families paid \$2.50 in monthly tuition for their children to attend the windowless, dirt-floored, 20 x

¹⁷ George Wear, type-written manuscript, about 1931, p 6, McGuire Local History Room, vault, "Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157," Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

¹⁸ "*Mr. G.W. McEwen has kindly furnished us with the following list of children in Havilah District: Number of Children between 5 and 15 years of age, 67; under 5 years of age, 53; Indian Children under guardianship of white persons, 3; Mongolian [Chinese] children, 1.*" *Havilah Weekly Courtier*, Jun 29, 1867:

¹⁹ Harpending, *The Great Diamond Hoax*, p 107; Havilah's public school was first opened in 1867 (Edmund Ross Harrington, *History of the Office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools*. Kern County Historical Society and County of Kern, 1969, p 21)

²⁰ "*Pioneer Life In Bakersfield by Mrs. F.A. Tracy,*" interview with Ellen Baker Tracy, about 1931, typed manuscript, vault, McGuire Local History Room, "Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157," Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield Calif.

²¹ Jameson, "*A Brief History of the Public Schools,*" op. cit.

20-ft log cabin.²² Teacher Paul R. Hamilton of Los Angeles directed a three-month term, but he stayed less than a year, perhaps because the new County of Kern required its public school teachers to pass a competency test.

Pioneer resident Mrs. Grace Ranney replaced Hamilton sometime in fall 1866.²³ Exactly when that log school became a public institution is unclear,²⁴ although it was within the boundaries of the Kern River Island School District²⁵ when it was formed in 1867.²⁶

That year, classes were also conducted in a wood-framed, wood-floored, one-window school house on Miss Rebecca Tibbett's farm about a mile southwest of 19th Street and Chester Avenue.²⁷ In the fall an elderly, well-qualified teacher named Miss Lucy Jackson was the teacher.²⁸ Late in the second year her classroom was "thrown

²² *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 4, 1907, p 6, col 3-5

²³ Eugene Burmeister, *City Along The Kern, Bakersfield California, 1869-1969*, p 31, Kern Publishing House, Bakersfield California, 1969; The log-cabin school was maintained by private subscription through 1867. Boyd, *Lower Kern River County*, p 116

²⁴ When this part of the San Joaquin Valley belonged to Tulare County, there probably was no public school here. (2011 email to Gilbert P. Gia from Tulare county historian William Secrest, Jr.)

²⁵ Col. Thomas Baker was a trustee of the Kern Island School District in 1870. "Our School," *Kern County Weekly Courier*, Feb 15, 1870, p 3.; He was probably one of its first trustees in 1867.

²⁶ Harrington, *op. cit.*, p 318; The average daily attendance in the first term was 17. In 1868 the name Kern River Island School District was changed to Kern Island School District, and in 1882 it was changed to Bakersfield School District. Harrington, *op. cit.*; See Appendix B.

²⁷ *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 7, 1907. Jameson, *op. cit.*; Ellen Baker Tracy in her 1931 interview (Tracy, *op. cit.*) told the same story, although she said the school had a dirt floor.

²⁸ This reference appeared in "Bakersfield School District History Is Interesting Story," *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 8, 1966, and is an almost direct copy of the Oct 7, 1907 *Daily Californian* article. The

into violent excitement" when a rattlesnake appeared on the classroom floor. Children ran in panic except one of the bigger boys who dispatched the viper, but for the next several weeks pupils sat on their benches with feet tucked up in fear of another reptile visitation. Miss Jackson's health declined, perhaps from the snake episode, and by summer 1869 she was no longer teaching.²⁹

In fall 1869 Col. Andrew R. Jackson, who was Miss Lucy Jackson's brother, taught some 40 to 50 pupils at the school on Miss Tibbett's farm,³⁰ but by January the number had grown to 90. A Callie Gilbert was hired to assist Jackson.³¹

County supervisors were mindful of the bulge in student numbers. In spring 1869, construction started on a 40 x 60-ft, one-room, brick school house on the north side of today's California Avenue between

1966 story did not credit Virginia Jameson as the source; In a 2011 email to Gilbert P. Gia, school historian Jerry Kirkland wrote, "*A more careful perusal of my notes revealed that the district was 'established' by the board of supervisors on Nov. 5, 1878. That would imply that no petition was every submitted to the B. of S. requesting formation of district. The board did the same in 1866 when they established school districts in Havilah, Kelso, Tejon, Linn's Valley and Tehachapi.*"

²⁹ Jameson, op. cit.; The story of Miss Lucy Jackson appeared in an article by Gilbert P. Gia in the Oct 2009 Pulse, the monthly publication of Kern Division, California Retired Teachers Assn.

³⁰ *Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jan 4, 1870, p 2, and Mar 8, 1870; The student count was 35 males and 16 females. Nine surnames were Hispanic. See Appendix C for the names. "*Our School,*" *Kern County Weekly Courier*, Feb 15, 1870, p 3; The building also might have been a teacherage. Bakersfield did not incorporate until 1873 so that school house was a county building.

³¹ *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 7, 1907; Harrington, op. cit., p 11

H and Eye Streets.³² But Col. Jackson was not a career teacher; he left teaching before fall 1870.³³

The new, brick school was finished in October 1870, which allowed Mrs. Isabel Lennox, who was teaching at the old school, to enjoy a smaller enrollment.³⁴ In October 1871 Mr. A. B. McPherson taught for two terms,³⁵ and in 1872 he was replaced by Miss Ella Said.³⁶ In

³² *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 14, 1909. The county built the school in Block 395 with the expectation that the town's population would grow toward it.; "The first schoolhouse was built here, down where H and California intersect now." *Bakersfield Californian*, Nov 3, 1921, p 3; Jameson, op. cit., noted that the school was completed at 12th Street in summer 1869; "A. R. Jackson opened school. The next year there were two teachers, A. R. Jackson and Miss Callie Gilbert, and thirty-five pupils." Wallace Melvin Morgan, *History of Kern County*, Historic Records Co., Los Angeles, 1914, p 58-59

³³ Jackson taught 1869-70. Harrington, op. cit., p. 319; In 1865 the state assigned civil engineer Andrew R. Jackson to investigate Col. Baker's claim that he had drained swamplands in this area. Jackson later consulted with Baker on construction of a turnpike road between Bakersfield and Havilah which became known as Baker's Grade, which opened in fall 1867. In 1871 Jackson was the engineer for Baker's levee project, and Jackson was principal engineer in construction of the Kern Island Canal opened in Aug 1874. Jackson delivered a eulogy at Col. Thomas Baker's funeral.

³⁴ The old school was used for the next seven months. Grades taught were not defined. *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 7, 1907

³⁵ Alexander B. McPherson (b 1839 Glasgow, Scotland) taught at Havilah in 1869 (*Havilah Courier*, Apr 13, 1869) but probably first taught there in 1868. Harrington, op cit, p 21; He taught at Old Town Tehachapi in 1869-70. Barras, op. cit., p 181; McPherson was a member of the Kern County Board of Education 1879-81 and was elected Kern County Superintendent of Schools 1882-84. In the 1883-84 school year he also taught at Beardsley School. In 1884 the Kern County Board of Supervisors declared his office vacated. Harrington, op. cit., p 23; Gilbert P. Gia found no other information about that event.

³⁶ Ella Said, b 1855, Wisconsin-d 1927, Bakersfield, Calif.; She graduated from Santa Clara State Normal School in 1876 and taught three months each in Solano and Mono counties.

1873-74, Lewis A. Beardsley who served with the Second California Cavalry during the Civil War³⁷ taught at the brick school along with Miss Said.³⁸ A newspaper wrote, "*Mr. Beardsley's method of teaching is said to be well calculated to please and interest the young mind.*"³⁹

A male teacher there was immortalized in a newspaper article from 1921. "*It happened in the days soon after the first schoolhouse was built in Bakersfield down where H and California intersect now. The teacher handled the whole small-fry of the town then, and evenings he used to repair to the --ah-- cafe, where he would sit-in at one of the numerous poker games.*"⁴⁰

"*One night it chanced that the teacher happened to find himself at the table opposite one of his big boys. After the youngster took a*

<http://calarchives4u.com/schools>. <http://calarchives4u.com/biographies>; In 1880 Ella Said married William E. Houghton, then an accountant for Miller & Lux. After Mr. Houghton's sudden death in 1894 Mrs. Houghton returned to teaching and was in school service into the 1920s, a career that spanned nearly 35 years. *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 17, 1927; Her sister Kate was also a teacher. *Granddad: Hugh A. Blodget in Early Bakersfield* (Lynn Hay Rudy, 1999)

³⁷ In 1869 he taught at Glennville. Harrington, op. cit., p 319

³⁸ Miss Said probably taught lower grades; Mrs. H.P. Bender said that in 1877 Mr. J.H. Berry replaced McPherson. Cora F. Bender section in George Wear's type-written manuscript, c 1931, "*Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157*" vault, McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

³⁹ *Kern County Weekly Courier*, Nov 9, 1873, in Harrington, op. cit., p 11

⁴⁰ Thelma Bernard, "*Then And Now On The Play Ground,*" *Bakersfield Californian*, Nov 3, 1921

*good-sized pot, the instructor looked at him reproachfully and said, 'Now, I didn't think you'd do that to your teacher.'"*⁴¹

Lewis A. Beardsley was not the unlucky poker player. It was J.H. Berry, and the student poker-shark was Will Gilbert. After Berry's rueful remark about losing the pot, Gilbert reportedly replied, "*You can teach me something, but I can teach you to play poker.*"⁴²

Beardsley was elected Kern County Superintendent of Schools in 1874 and served until 1877.⁴³ County schools grew under his tenure. In August 1875, 95 pupils between the ages of five and 17 filled the six-year-old brick school house, and 111 others under five soon would need schooling.⁴⁴ By March 1875, the school was over-capacity, and a newspaper wrote, "*The present school house was built in 1869, when the population of Bakersfield was scarcely 50 persons, and the little school had but nine scholars.*"⁴⁵ *The scholars now on the list number 65, with an average attendance of 50.*⁴⁶ *The*

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Mrs. H.P. (Cora F.) Bender* section, George Wear typewritten manuscript (about 1931,) "*Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157,*" McGuire Local History Room, vault, Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

⁴³ Beardsley enjoyed the atmosphere of schools, and as superintendent he was a frequent visitor to county classrooms. *Southern Californian-Kern Weekly County Courier*, Mar 20, 1875

⁴⁴ *Southern Californian-Kern Weekly County Courier*, Aug 26, 1875. Three pupils attended private school, which might have been the same school operated by a McPherson, who the *Southern Californian* of Dec 1875 said had 18 students and was preparing to move into the N. R. Wilkinson's building. Lynn Hay Rudy, private database, Bakersfield newspaper citations

⁴⁵ *Southern Californian-Kern Weekly County Courier*, Mar 4, 1875

⁴⁶ George Wear came to Bakersfield in 1875. He wrote, "*There was one school house about 30 ft. square and [it] had one teacher and about 15 pupils.*" George Wear, typewritten manuscript, abt 1931, ,

*population of the town has increased to nearly 1000. The necessity for more room applies not only to the crowded state of the house, but to the fact that new applicants are excluded for want of space, and if a scholar is absent for a few days, when he or she returns, the space is taken by a new one."*⁴⁷

In August 1875 a school bond issue appeared on the ballot, but the school board need not have worried about the outcome: Of 76 votes cast, 65 approved \$5500 for a school house.⁴⁸ A month later Miss Rena Richards of Stockton opened the old school. Attendance increased more that winter, and Miss Kate Said⁴⁹ was hired to assist Miss Richards.

In February 1876, the Board bought property between K and L Streets on Railroad Avenue for a wood-frame, two-story school with connected classrooms and an assembly hall above.⁵⁰ When bricks for

vault, "Historical Society, Oral Histories, Box 157," McGuire Local History Room, Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "It took the timidity out of the Trustees, who had to some extent feared the result. Ten thousand dollars would just as readily have been voted." *Southern Californian, Kern County Weekly Courier*, Aug 26, 1875; In 2010 the amount was equivalent to about \$110,000.

⁴⁹ Kate Said, known as Kitty, married Alexander Mills, superintendent of the flouring mill, in 1880. Lynn Hay Rudy, *Granddad, op. cit.*

⁵⁰ *Southern Californian-Kern County Weekly Courier*, Mar 18 and 30, 1876 and Oct 3, 1878. The wood-framed school was built in City Block 312, which was at about 1300 Truxtun Ave. Just west was K St. and Chester Ave. A few yards farther west was the county court house. The *Bakersfield Californian* of Jun 3, 1954 erred when it noted this about Emerson School: "It contains at the northwest corner the original four-room brick building covered with gray cement that was erected in 1876." (see, *Southern Californian-Kern County Weekly Courier*, Feb 10, 1876.); When Col. Thomas Baker laid out town streets he named this east-west thoroughfare Citizen's

the foundation arrived in late March the firm of Grancie & Palmer started work, but the school was not ready for occupancy by fall 1876.

The old, brick school on California Avenue was reopened under the direction of Mr. James E. Prewett, principal-teacher and 20 year-old Miss Ella Said.⁵¹ Pupils faced a front platform where "*Mr. Prewett sat enthroned, but the little ones, for recitation, retired quietly to the back of the room and recited in hushed tones to Miss Said.*"⁵² Meanwhile, work continued on the new school.

Two months passed before Mr. Prewett and Miss Said opened newly-built Railroad Avenue School to the first class,⁵³ but Mr. Prewett had his mind on other things. Virginia Jameson recalled, "*Mr. Prewett was in those days spending his hours out of school in mastering the subtleties of law, and the cases in court were more interesting than the schoolroom work. He was particularly interested in the famous Jim Hayes murder case,*"⁵⁴ and morning after morning about 10

Avenue. Later, the name Railroad Avenue was chosen in anticipation of the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad, however in Nov. 1874 the S.P. established a station two miles east of Bakersfield at Sumner.; In early 1875 Railroad Ave. was extended east from the court house to the Kern River Flouring Mill. *Southern Californian-Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jan 23, 1875; For the next 25 years Railroad Ave was at least two miles removed from railroad tracks. In 1899 its name became more meaningful when the Santa Fe Railroad built tracks along 15th Street just south of Railroad Ave. In 1903 Railroad Ave. was renamed Truxtun Ave. in honor of philanthropist Truxtun Beale.

⁵¹ Mrs. H.P. Bender said J.C. Prewill was the principal. Bender, op. cit.

⁵² Jameson, op. cit.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Jim Hayes was indicted for murder on Jan 5, 1877, convicted on Feb 6, 1877, and hanged Mar 30, 1877 at the yard of Kern County

o'clock the folding doors would suddenly be thrown open and the assistant would hear, 'Miss Said, I'll be absent from the room a few moments -- please take charge of the class.' And off to the courthouse the principal would go, followed by the older boys, often not to return until early afternoon session began."⁵⁵

*"This interest in the law frequently caused Mr. Prewett to be oblivious to his surroundings. One morning he rode as usual to school, tied his horse in its accustomed place in front of the lot, and was ready to enter the building, when, lifting his eyes, he saw with astonishment that there was no house before him. It had burned to the ground the night before. This was on the 5th of June, 1877."*⁵⁶

Over several weeks an arsonist had tried to burn down Bakersfield.⁵⁷ On the evening of April 30, 1877 someone climbed to the second floor of Mattson's harness shop, ignited a ball of turpentine soaked rags packed in the wall, and dropped the flaming mass to ground level. Before the fire could gain strength, bystanders secured a force

Jail. Dates courtesy David Dyas.; The last official Kern county execution took place under the administration of Sheriff Dallas McCord when, on Dec 16, 1887, Thurston E. Lee was hanged for the murder of William Smith. Kern County Superior Court, Case No. 60, judgment of Judge R.E. Arick, Oct 25, 1887; "Who Killed Thomas Godwin?" David Dyas,

http://vredenburgh.org/tehachapi/data/james_hayes.html

⁵⁵ "According to an early-day pupil, the students could look across the schoolyard to the court house [abt 800-ft west of the school] where the official hangings took place." Harrington, *op. cit.*, p 321;

Mr. James E. Prewett's interest in the law lead to his work as lawyer and Superior Court Judge of Placer County.

⁵⁶ Jameson, 1907, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Some of the following text is from the article by Gilbert P. Gia that appeared in the Mar 2009 *Pulse*, the monthly publication of Kern Division, California Retired Teachers Assn.

pump and hose from a nearby business and extinguished the blaze.⁵⁸ The hook-and-ladder arrived, and firemen distributed Babcock pumps to nearby stores and saloons.⁵⁹

Three hours passed when customers at Rice's saloon saw flames behind the glass door at W.H. Scribner's Emporium and broke into the building and extinguished the fire with Babcock pumps. Firemen determined that the arsonist had forced a wad of combustibles into a hole next to an outside drain pipe.⁶⁰

The next day an infuriated *Kern County Democrat* proposed a "*short shrift and a long rope,*" but the threat was wasted ink because three nights later a pile of brush flamed up between two houses in Chinatown. That fire was also caught early.⁶¹

Prior to the fires a few merchants rejected the call for fire equipment, while others pleaded for town incorporation and taxation to pay for a fire department.⁶² Reluctant wallets opened-wide the day after the Chinatown fire when \$2000 was placed on deposit at Kern Valley Bank for purchase of a new fire engine and the construction of cisterns. Two weeks later new fire equipment arrived.⁶³

Around 10 pm on June 5, 1877 the arsonist made another attempt. Miller Smith who lived north of the new school house was outside

⁵⁸ Modern building codes require fire blocks to compartmentalize hollow walls.

⁵⁹ *Kern County Democrat*, May 4, 1877. The pumps were hand-held fire extinguishers from the Babcock Mfg. Co., New York.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Kern County Democrat*, Apr 27, 1877

⁶³ *Kern County Democrat*, May 4, May 25, 1877.

and noticed a yellow glow coming from behind the school, which was the side facing away from town. A closer look revealed tongues of flame licking around a lower wall. Smith ran for help.

The fire bell rang, the new fire engine was rolled out into the night,⁶⁴ and by the school the pumper tapped into a bank-full ditch. Firemen extinguished the flames, and congratulations were exchanged.⁶⁵ But smoke then started roiling from the upper story, and new fingers of flame appeared near the roof.⁶⁶ The fire had risen inside the walls.⁶⁷

Firemen broke out windows and forced their way into the assembly hall, but orange flames now appeared around the belfry, and minutes later the roof was inferno.⁶⁸ No equipment could extinguish this fire.⁶⁹

An eyewitness wrote, *"The fire burned comparatively slowly afterward, but none the less certainly for nearly an hour, before the once handsome structure sunk in a mass of embers and ashes."*⁷⁰ The school had been *"an ornament to the town and an indispensable*

⁶⁴ *Southern Californian-Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jun 7, 1877

⁶⁵ In 1877 most new fire engines were steam-driven pumpers. Towns with limited funds typically bought the 8 HP pumper from Knowles Steam Pump Works of Warren, Mass. The engine cost \$800, weighed about 4,700 lbs, and could be moved to a fire by horse or man-power. William T. King, *History of the American Steam Fire Engine*. Pinkham Press, 1896

⁶⁶ *Kern County Democrat*, May 25, 1877

⁶⁷ *Kern County Democrat*, Jun 8, 1877

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Firemen could not direct water inside the walls. In 1877 most fire engines were steam-driven pumpers. Towns with limited funds typically bought the 8 HP engines of the Knowles Steam Pump Works, Warren, MA. That model cost \$800, weighed about 4700 lbs, and was moved by horse or man power. King, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ *Kern County Democrat*, Jun 8, 1877

*requisition by the growing educational wants of the community,"*⁷¹
It had burned to the ground before the end of its first term.⁷²

The old, brick school reopened in October 1877 under the direction of Principal J. H. Berry and Miss Ella Said. Attendance was about 60, but that low figure soon rose. A newspaper wrote, *"With the subsidence of the diphtheria and the restored confidence of the community, it is probable that the attendance will be much increased. It is already quite apparent that the primary department of the school will have to be transferred to some other place. The confusion resulting from so many pupils being congregated in one small room, with the two departments reciting in different classes at the same time, is at the same time destructive of discipline and negatory of anything like progress in learning. It devolves upon the trustees to rent a room in some other place for the accommodation of the primary department."*⁷³

Railroad Avenue School was resurrected. Its walls were up in November 1877, the tin roof in place in February 1878,⁷⁴ and in October 1879 the school opened to an enrollment of 89 under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Underwood.⁷⁵ The *Courier-Californian* wrote, *"The families of the town are greatly indebted to these*

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.; *"This last incendiary act exasperates every citizen, and violent measures will be likely to be adopted to rid the town of the festering vagabonds whose life here seem to be spent in efforts at destruction."* *Southern Californian, Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jun 7, 1877; Tramps were convenient scapegoats. In September, a Pat Hogan was caught setting fire to C. Miller's bakery. The fires stopped after his arrest. Lynn Hay Rudy, *Granddad, op. cit.*

⁷³ *Southern Californian, Kern County Weekly Courier*, Dec 1, 1877

⁷⁴ *Kern County Gazette*, Nov 1, 1877, Jan 17, and Feb 21, 1878

⁷⁵ *Courier-Californian*, May 1, 1879; Harrington, *op. cit.*, p 319

teachers for the superior conditions of the Bakersfield school, which has attained great prominence since it has been presided over by them."⁷⁶

As for the brick school on California Avenue, the county rented it to F.H. Colton in 1878 as a residence.⁷⁷ It was destroyed by fire in 1885,⁷⁸ but the county kept the 115-1/2 x 264-ft lot for the next 24 years. By 1909 it was commercially desirable property and was sold.⁷⁹

The new school was sometimes more than a center for education. In 1881, Wirt R. Macmurdo and Fannie Craig were united in marriage at Railroad Avenue School because there was no hall large enough in town to accommodate guests.⁸⁰ School also attracted another kind of attention at the turn of the century. *"A highlight of the school term was Halloween. In the weeks before that night, boys talked about someone special to bother or scare, or something special to move. After the Halloween parties were over, evil doers disappeared in quiet groups for the greatest fun of the school year. Homeowners' gates, or whatever else could be lifted, was moved to the four points of the compass, and even outhouses suffered a terrible toll. So many of the little buildings were toppled on Halloween night that a visitor might think a windstorm had struck Bakersfield. The morning after, the roof of Railroad Avenue School was a great point of interest to the town. Year after year, everything that could be taken apart and*

⁷⁶ **Ibid.**

⁷⁷ **"F. H. Colton has moved into the old brick schoolhouse which he has refitted as a dwelling." Southern Californian-Kern County Weekly Courier, Oct 3, 1878**

⁷⁸ **Daily Californian, Sep 19, 1885**

⁷⁹ **Bakersfield Californian, Oct 14, 1909**

⁸⁰ **Daily Californian, Jan 5, 1900**

reassembled appeared on the roof: wagons, buildings, and animals. What a bother it was getting all of it down, but some boys generously volunteered to miss class to help clear the roof.⁸¹

Antics also happened inside the school. "Maud Metcalf, who attended Railroad Avenue in early days, recalled that some girls were just as mischievous as the boys. Young ladies then wore full white skirts, and the hems could conceal lead pellets, and the wide sleeves of blouses could conceal slingshots. Girls used them to aggravate Metcalf's teacher, but she remembered that he never suspected the young ladies of his class."⁸²

Railroad Avenue School prepared for a graduation in May 1891, but the Californian seemed more interested in the lack of parent involvement. "It is strange that parents apparently take so little interest in the school welfare of their children. Occasionally a mother visits the school, but as to the fathers, they are ever conspicuous by their absence. ... There isn't a bright eyed boy or girl attending any school in the land who would not feel happier and prouder and become more diligent, if every now and then the parents visited the school room and listened to the efforts of the pupils. A striking sin of omission now-a-days is the way parents stay away form the schools which their children have to attend."⁸³

⁸¹ ***Historic Kern, Quarterly Publication of the Kern County Historical Society, vol. 4, Dec, 1953, in Harrington, op. cit.; Harrington did not attach a date to those activities, but they were similar to those which occurred in the early morning hours of Jan 1, 1893 and were reported in "A Night Of Devils," Daily Californian, Jan 5, 1893. "On top of the tall pole in front of Tom Owens' saloon was a nice wheelbarrow that did not belong in that part of town."***

⁸² ***Ibid.***

⁸³ ***Daily Californian, May 20, 1891***

On Arbor Day, 1892, 500 pupils gathered to sing in front of the school, and at 1:30 pm 50 student-groups assembled next to the new school building to plant 50 pepper trees. Twelve months hence on Arbor Day, one group would be recognized as having the "*finest and thriftiest representative pepper.*"⁸⁴

That schoolhouse was a satellite for the 1892 Kern County Fair.⁸⁵ One evening in October, Taylor's Military Band played behind lighted classroom windows as "*chattering damsels and their attractive swains*" gathered outside. A large room inside housed a bedroom set, several neatly-crocheted bedspreads, some dainty pillow shams and exquisite needlework, and samples of children's clothing.⁸⁶ Displayed, too, were quilts, fresh canned and dried fruits, and beer and peach brandy. A baby show was also in progress.⁸⁷

The room above the staircase held a display of fine woodwork and a glittering dispenser of Buffalo Beer, "*which the genial Ben Leet and his jolly partner dispense with their usual good cheer to the thirsty.*"⁸⁸ Opposite was an exhibit of drawing and penmanship from the Bakersfield and Sumner Schools,⁸⁹ and in an adjoining room

⁸⁴ *Daily Californian*, Mar 4, 1892. School No. 1 burned in 1885, and school No. 3 on H Street was not yet built. This citation indicates that two school buildings were then on the campus of Railroad Ave School, the old building mentioned (Railroad Ave School No. 2) from construction of 1878 and the new building from construction of 1891-92.

⁸⁵ *Sumner Standard*, Oct 27, 1892

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Leet and Lang were Bakersfield brewers. See "*Bakersfield Breweries, 1866-1920,*" www.gilbertgia.com

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* See Appendix E for East Bakersfield school history.

were photographs by C.A. Nelson and samples of clothing from H. Corday, the leading tailor of Bakersfield.⁹⁰

In the center of a larger room Kern County Land Company displayed the county's choicest fruits, and in an adjoining nook stood a display of Mrs. George W. Wear's needlework that would accompany Kern County produce to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.⁹¹

On an opposite wall were Tehachapi products. *"Here are seen some extremely large potatoes, natural salt, fine wheat, barley and oats. In the center of this room is a large pyramid of built-up sacks of flour ranging from the ordinary size to the salt-bag size from the Kern River Mills. On the north side, George Tou & Co, our Japanese merchants, have installed themselves with a gorgeous exhibition from the Orient."*⁹² In another room was domestic fancy work.⁹³

Railroad Avenue was renamed Truxtun Avenue in 1903. The Hon. Truxtun Beale wrote, *"It will always be gratifying to me to have my name so perpetuated, but what is far more valuable to me is the assurance that it gives me of your good opinion and good will."*⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid. Christian A. Nelson came to Bakersfield in 1887 with E.J. Kelsey and set up a photography gallery on 19th Street. Rudy, *Old Bakersfield, op. cit.*, p 26

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Sumner Standard*, Oct 27, 1892

⁹⁴ *Bakersfield Californian*, Dec 29, 1903, p 6. Truxtun Beale (1856-1936) was named for his great-grandfather Commodore Thomas Truxtun.

<http://memory.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2009/ms009320.pdf>

For a short time Railroad Avenue School was known as Truxtun Avenue School,⁹⁵ but in 1905 it was officially renamed Emerson School.

The building went through several additions and modifications, and by the early 1930s it had as many as 24 classrooms and two newer structures. One was a shop building and the other, which faced K Street, was the administrative offices of the Bakersfield City School District.⁹⁶ Emerson was damaged in the earthquake of 1952, and in 1954 after 77 years of service it was razed for construction of Kern County justice courts and administration buildings.⁹⁷

Later Teachers

In May 1880 the Underwoods left Railroad Avenue School ⁹⁸ and were replaced by another couple, Mr. and Mrs. E. Rousseau. They taught until 1882. In 1882-83 Mrs. W. E. Houghton (nee Miss Ella Said) was the teacher, probably the replacement for Mr. Rousseau, who was elected to the Kern County Board of Education.⁹⁹ Mrs. Eliza N. Rousseau continued teaching for many years. In 1937 the Californian wrote, "*She was recognized as an outstanding teacher, and her pleasing personality gave her wide popularity in the county where she so long resided.*"¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Bakersfield Californian*, Apr 14, 1904

⁹⁶ Gilbert P. Gia interview with Don Suverkrop, Jan 2012

⁹⁷ *Bakersfield Californian*, Jun 3, 1954

⁹⁸ Jamison, op. cit.

⁹⁹ In 1883-84 he was Board president. Harrington, *op. cit.*, p 319

¹⁰⁰ *Bakersfield Californian*, Feb 2, 1937, p 9, (obit)

Later teachers were Thomas Metcalf (1883), Alfred Harrell (1884-87),¹⁰¹ Mr. Ingram (1888), Mr. C. M. Mills (1890-92), Mr. J. W. Evans (1893-95), and in 1896, Mr. D. W. Nelson, who had come to Bakersfield with ten years' teaching experience in county schools.¹⁰²

The list of outstanding leaders must include Mrs. H. P. (Cora F.) Bender (nee McGrann) who taught the first class at Walker Basin School in 1877 and for 53 years was a Kern county educator. She was charter member of the Bakersfield Woman's Club, first president of the Bakersfield City Schools Principal Club, writer and member of the Kern County Historical Society, president of the Bakersfield Chapter, Californian Retired Teachers Association, and a lifetime member of the California Teachers Association.

But of all named, Alfred Harrell had the greatest impact on the course of Kern County education. Born November 10, 1863 in Merced County at a time when California had few educated men, Alfred Harrell received what must have been exceptionally good schooling at Oakland.¹⁰³ He trained to be a teacher, taught at San Joaquin County for one term, and in 1881-82 at age 19 moved to Kern County, where he worked as a grocer and taught school.¹⁰⁴ In 1885

¹⁰¹ Barras wrote that Harrell taught school at Tehachapi in 1885. Judy Barras, *The Long Road to Tehachapi*, p 181; Harrell was appointed to the Board of Education in 1884 to fill an unexpired term, probably after Mr. J.H. Berry was elected Kern Co Superintendent of Schools. Mrs. H.P. (Cora F.) Bender wrote (in cursive hand --the text with line breaks and lacking punctuation,) "I taught with Mr. Harrell 1884-1889 [line break] three teachers only at first [line break] Mr. Harrell [,] self and Miss Jessie Gregory [.]" Bender, "All In The Pioneer Teacher's Day," op. cit.

¹⁰² Jerry Kirkland, *School District Origins in Kern County. Created under the Auspices of Kern County Superintendent of Schools, 2010*

¹⁰³ *Daily Californian*, Oct 30, 1894

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Harrell became principal-teacher at Railroad Avenue School, and in 1886 he was appointed Secretary of the Board of Kern County Superintendent of Schools.¹⁰⁵

He was elected Superintendent of Schools in 1888 and during his tenure inaugurated a modern course of study, lengthened the school year, and initiated personal visits to schools across the county. Because of his work, *"within a space of two years the graduates of the Kern county grammar schools were admitted to any Normal or high school in the State without examination."*¹⁰⁶

Harrell was re-elected in 1890 and in 1892 was the paladin in creation of Kern County High School.¹⁰⁷ He was reelected in 1894¹⁰⁸ and 1898.¹⁰⁹ Harrell retired from the office in December 1898¹¹⁰ but for many decades influenced the course of public education from his editorial desk.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ *Daily Californian*, Oct 30, 1894, Mar 5, 1895

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *"It is largely due to his efforts and influence that the Kern county high school was created and under his personal supervision that the building was constructed and equipped."* *Daily Californian*, Dec 22, 1898. (Some rules of capitalization now in use were not in place in 1898.)

¹⁰⁸ E.T. Goodyear, principal of the high school, ran against Harrell in the 1894 election for Superintendent of Schools. *Daily Californian*, Jan 19, 1898

¹⁰⁹ Morgan, op. cit., p 240; *"The Californian has passed into the hands of the democracy and will be its organ. E.M. Roberts to furnish capital, Alfred Harrell will be majordomo, and Mr. Jastro will have an eye out for business."* (*Morning Echo*, Sep 4, 1896, as cited in the *Morning Echo* of Sep 4, 1910. The 1896 *Morning Echo* is not extant.)

¹¹⁰ *Daily Californian*, Dec 22, 1898

¹¹¹ He bought the newspaper in 1897 but before that was an occasional contributor to the local press. Earlier still, Harrell was

In 1897 community standards in hiring and retention of teachers came to a crossroads when a Kern City teacher Miss Annie Christenson was found to be married. The revelation prompted Editor and Superintendent Alfred Harrell to write, *"There is no regulation in Kern against married women holding positions in the public schools, and doubtless Mrs. Joyce will continue uninterruptedly to serve the community as a teacher."*¹¹²

In 1904 Harrell again supported female teachers. He wrote, *"We think the Sacramento paper is wrong about [women teachers] being inimical to the welfare of the schools. On the contrary, it may be safely said that the women who now teach in the schools are better prepared by far than were the men of thirty years ago, and indeed, here may be the solution of the question of why men are giving way to women in this work. The man who would prepare himself for a calling can choose some occupation in which the remuneration is greater than it is in teaching; he therefore does not choose to take up school work. On the other hand, the man who is not prepared educationally to teach is being, or has been, crowded out by the woman who has qualified herself for the best paying occupation that is open to her. Nor do we think that in this condition, there is ought to excite alarm. Women are better teachers than men naturally, and the schools of the county are in better condition under an almost exclusive teaching force of women that ever they were before."*¹¹³

part owner of the Kern County Democrat (*Daily Californian*, Mar 5, 1895).

¹¹² *Daily Californian*, p 1, Oct 9, 1897

¹¹³ "As to Women Teachers," *Daily Californian*, Feb 18, 1904

School Discipline

Bakersfield was fond of teachers like Mr. Beardsley and Mr. and Mrs. Underwood, and it tolerated those like Mr. Prewett, but then there were teachers like R.E. Corinn. In 1889 Mr. Corinn was hired as schoolmaster at Old Town School in Tehachapi,¹¹⁴ and in short time it became apparent that he drank, cursed, and beat pupils.

In January 1891 county superintendent Alfred Harrell summoned Corinn to a review hearing, but he did not attend. Harrell testified that he had observed Corinn on several occasions "*in a beastly state of intoxication in the Caliente Hotel.*" After Harrell, two men and three women swore that Corinn habitually used profane language in the classroom.¹¹⁵

Why had it taken so long to call Mr. Corinn to task? Decades later, Arthur Crites explained that Corinn had been hired as an enforcer for out-of-control schools.¹¹⁶ And Crites had first-hand knowledge because in 1890 he had been one of Corinn's pupils at Caliente¹¹⁷ when Corinn came to replace a teacher who had quit. Crites wrote, "*I saw him take a lad by the hair of his head, hold him up, and then thrash him until he could not stand up, then throw him over into the corner.*" Crites himself once escaped a thrashing at Corinn's hands because Corinn's signature "*hair grip*" failed on Crites' short hair.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ The following was adapted from an article by Gilbert P. Gia which appeared in the Oct 2007 *Pulse*, a monthly publication of the Kern Division, California Retired Teachers Assn. Most of the information about Corinn came from Harrington, op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Harrington, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ Arthur Crites, *Pioneer Days in Kern County*

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Caliente School's most defiant pupil was *"Toughy Oiler"* who took pride in living up to his nickname, at least until Corinn gave him the treatment. The teacher thrashed Toughy and then told him, *"Now go home and tell your folks, and if any of them care to come around, I will give them a worse licking than I've given you, and this whether they are up a tree, or on horseback, or afoot."* Crites said he never knew a parent to take the challenge, but Mr. Corinn caused so much resentment that the Caliente school board asked him to leave.

Crites continued, *"In 1890 and 1891 he taught in the little mountain school of Joiner in the Linn's Valley area, again as the replacement for a teacher who'd been driven off by obstreperous pupils."* Scholars at Joiner School then wrote on slates, which were stiff boards about the size of notebook paper, and a skilled pupil could sail one across the classroom. The second or third day after Corinn took charge he turned his back on the class, and one of the boys *"skated a slate off the back of his head."*¹¹⁹

Without showing the least sign of emotion, Corinn strolled between the benches, grabbed a boy by the hair, jerked him up and began thrashing him. As Corinn worked the pupil over, four other boys started a fight. Corinn finished his first task, turned his attention to the tumbling match, jerked the boys out one at a time, and thrashed them each in turn. Five obedient scholars sat on their benches until 4 pm, but the slate-thrower stayed until five. The next day, all parents kept their children at home.

A few days into the boycott R. E. Corinn was reading at his desk in the empty school house when he looked up to see a rawboned

¹¹⁹ **Ibid.**

farmer enter the room. He was a school trustee and the father of one of the boys who had come home considerably the worse for wear. The man was larger and younger than Corinn and lit into him with words to the effect that he did not like the way his son had been treated and he "*did not propose to put up with such treatment.*" The moment the words left the farmer's mouth he must have realized he had underestimated Corinn's tolerance for criticism.

Crites did not explain exactly what happened, but a good guess is Corinn swore at the farmer and lunged at him over the desk. The young father escaped from the classroom, but Corinn was close behind. Mr. Corinn blocked the gate. The father climbed a tree, whereupon Corinn obtained a book and chair from the classroom and set-up under the tree to read. Crites explained that by afternoon no blood had been shed.

Trustees at the next Linn's Valley School District meeting informed Corinn that there were not enough pupils to keep the school open and that he was dismissed. Notably, Corinn had signed a six-month contract. He sued and collected.¹²⁰

The county could not fire Corinn for whipping pupils nor fire him for using profane language, but they could fire him for drinking. On July 7, 1891 Corinn appeared before Superintendent Harrell and learned that his teaching certificate would be revoked if he continued using intoxicating liquors. It was too much to ask of the man.

Corinn might have moved to Los Angeles, but land records show that in July 1896 a certain Ray E. Corinn was in Kern County contesting

¹²⁰ Corinn appeared in court, appealed the decision, and was awarded \$140. *Daily Californian*, May 25, Aug 26, 1891

water rights on San Emidio Creek. At the start of the 1896-97 school term Corinn was hired by the Robertson School near McFarland. If he remained true to his nature, he instilled into that classroom a heavy ration of fear and obedience.

In summer 1897 Corinn accepted a teaching job at Garlock, near Randsburg, and in September, Mr. R. E. Corinn, in perfect health, according to the Daily Californian, departed Bakersfield for Garlock School. The following day, he took ill and died there under doctor's care. Kern County Coroner Helms determined the cause of death as *"either of alcoholic peritonitis or opium poisoning."*¹²¹

About a month later the Daily Californian published *"Corporal Punishment Must Go"* and followed it a day or two later with a letter of support from Harrell's friend Leo G. Pauly, a member of the high school board.¹²² After that letter came a flurry of others, one from teacher Walter J. Haggard, who wrote, *"But alas, there are in every large school, and in some small ones, a few who are not simply mischievous, not merely forgetful, but who are innately low, mean and vicious; boys who five, ten or twenty years hence will fill the county jails or the State penitentiaries, boys who are saucy, impudent and disrespectful, full, in fact, of condensed cussedness. The average boy is a combination of swagger, conceit, impudence and wild western cowboyism."*¹²³ Accusing Pauly of being blind to

¹²¹ *Daily Californian*, Sep 15, 1897

¹²² Pauly attended school as a youth at Tehachapi and later taught there. He graduated from San José State Normal School in 1896 and became principal at the Tehachapi school and at the Kern City School east of Bakersfield. He was a member of the Kern County Board of Education 1896 -1917. Barras, Judy, *The Long Road to Tehachapi*, p 181

¹²³ *Daily Californian*, Oct 2, 1897, p 1

the real world, Haggard wrote, "*If the millennium would but dawn and the lion and lamb would lie down together, we might succeed without corporal punishment.*"¹²⁴ Haggard then cited four books on school management to support his claim, but he neglected to mention that all of them were decades old, one dating back to 1866.

Rosedale teacher Olivia M. Bedinger entered into the debate when she wrote about the ill effects of corporal punishment on all involved. Haggard replied and said that Bedinger's letter was sentimental gush. Alfred Harrell let Pauly have the last say. Pauly noted that corporal punishment had been abolished in most eastern states 20 years earlier. He questioned, "*Why do our western teachers perpetuate a custom that should pass from civilized society?*"¹²⁵ Corporal punishment in Bakersfield City School District continued until the 1970s.

H Street School

In February 1890 enrollment at Railroad Avenue School exceeded 200 students,¹²⁶ and in mid-month the Daily Californian called for construction of a new school.¹²⁷ In March voters approved a school bond,¹²⁸ B. McDougal & Sons submitted the winning design, and in April 1891 completed plans for a two-story school that had a foot-

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *Daily Californian*, Oct 6, 1897

¹²⁶ Feb 8, 1890, L.H. Rudy, private database. The following increases occurred between 1887 and 1891: Kern County school districts, 36 to 49; number of teachers, 38 to 57; children enrolled, 1036 to 1742; length of school term, in months, 7 to 8 and to 9; branches of curriculum, 9 to 21. (*Daily Californian*, Apr 9, 1892)

¹²⁷ *Daily Californian*, Feb 15, 1890

¹²⁸ *Daily Californian*, Mar 29, 1890

print in the shape of a 113 x 88-ft Greek cross. Light and fresh air reached all classrooms, including the portico and central hall between the first and second floors that housed the 15 x 16-1/2-ft library.¹²⁹ Plans showed four classrooms on each floor and a bell tower atop the school.¹³⁰

Not apparent was the heating system. *"In the roof directly over the central hall a place is allotted to Knowles patent concentrators, by which with a system of reflectors, air is heated, thereby creating a draft for each room through tin flues provided for that purpose. To complete the ventilation system, two sets of register plates are provided for each of the class rooms, one a little above the floor and another near the ceiling."* The Californian boasted that the new structure *"will be architecturally and in point of convenience the finest school building in the San Joaquin valley."*¹³¹

Although the plans were in place, the public could not agree on where the school should be built. A writer to the Californian¹³² suggested Reeder Hill at 15th and E Streets, which was five blocks west of Chester Avenue, but a subsequent letter complained that the site would put money in someone's pocket.¹³³ School trustees H.A. Jastro, H.P. Olds, and F.A. Tracy rejected the Reeder Hill site in

¹²⁹ In 1896 Mr. Nelson was appointed director of the district's new school library, and he *"expressed the determination to make this a feature of the schools and an attraction to the general public in the future."* (*Daily Californian*, Aug 13, 1896)

¹³⁰ *Daily Californian*, Apr 9, 1891

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Daily Californian*, Jun 6, 1891

¹³³ E.R. Harrington, *op. cit.*, erred in stating that Bryant School burned in the great town fire of July 7, 1889. Bryant was not built until Oct 1892.

July,¹³⁴ perhaps because the public grumbled over why all public buildings were built south of 19th Street.¹³⁵ In the end, trustees selected a site on H Street, eight blocks north of Reeder Hill. It was former Kern County Land Company property.¹³⁶

Construction continued for a year. In July 1892 the *Californian* wrote, "*The new school bell was rung for the first time yesterday afternoon through the vigorous brawn of the giddy janitor. Its tone is anything but musical.*"¹³⁷ Seven-room H Street School was ready for occupancy in the second week of September.¹³⁸ It could accommodate up to 500 pupils, and in October it absorbed all of Railroad Avenue's upper grades.¹³⁹ Perhaps because of the influx Mayor Henry Jastro installed an iron fence around the building.¹⁴⁰

The staff¹⁴¹ was made up of Principal C.N. Mills, Miss Virginia Jameson, Miss Annie M. Tracy, who had 53 Fifth Graders, and Miss Edith V. Bennett who had 39 Sixth and Seventh Graders. Miss Jesse B. Gregory taught Seventh and Eighth, and Mrs. Marguerite McCray taught Eighth.¹⁴² Over at Railroad Avenue School, Miss Miller had 13

¹³⁴ *Daily Californian*, Jul 27, 1891

¹³⁵ *Daily Californian*, Aug 15, 1891

¹³⁶ *Daily Californian*, Aug 28, 1891; *Weekly Californian*, Apr 11, 1891.

Rudy, *op cit*

¹³⁷ *Daily Californian*, Jul 8, 1892. On Aug 16, 1892 the school's bell was tested.

¹³⁸ *Daily Californian*, Sep 8, 1892

¹³⁹ *Daily Californian*, Jan 30, 1893

¹⁴⁰ *Daily Californian*, Oct 7, 1892; Jastro's daughters Louisa and May attended the new school. *Daily Californian*, Jan 30, 1893

¹⁴¹ Jameson and the others were called assistants.

¹⁴² What is now termed Grade Eight was then Grade One. The Seventh Grade had 53 pupils, and the Eighth 62. The names of each teacher and each pupil appeared in "*The Public Schools*," *Daily Californian*, Jan 30, 1893; *Sumner Standard*, Sep 6, 1892

First Graders. Eighteen children were enrolled in Second Grade, 40 in Third, and 38 in Fourth.

H Street School, built for \$25,000, was plumbed for running water and was considered modern for its time,¹⁴³ but it was probably the last public school in Bakersfield built without other utilities.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand it had a heating system that would be appealing to the Green Revolution of a century later.

George H. Tay & Co. of San Francisco installed the Backus system in summer 1892. *"It is a very elaborate affair, in one sense, and yet when once understood it is seen to be very simple and apparently very effective in its action."*¹⁴⁵ The explanation that followed might just as well have described the workings of a Model-T Ford cooling system.

The water tank in the cupola arrived via gravity-flow from Scribner's water tower at 17th and Chester. Water in the cupola descended to a brick boiler in the basement and from there into 343-ft of 1-1/2-in gas pipe. Convection caused the heated water to rise through piping to the classrooms above. There, parallel tubes in wall-mounted racks

¹⁴³ ***Weekly Californian*, Apr 11, 1891; *Weekly Californian*, Jan 30, 1893; Information about H Street School came in part from Gilbert P. Gia's article in the Jan 2009 *Pulse*, the monthly publication of Kern Division, California Retired Teachers Assn.**

¹⁴⁴ **In 1890 a Bakersfield company manufactured coal gas for lighting, and some of it powered a small, steam-driven dynamo that generated electrical power. Not until 1897 did the hydroelectric plant at the bottom of Kern Canyon deliver appreciable electricity to Bakersfield. George Lynch, *"Bakersfield's Hydroelectric Plant."* *Kern County Historical Society Quarterly*, fall 2005, Vol 55, No 3; Natural gas as known today was not available for domestic use here until after 1900.**

¹⁴⁵ ***Daily Californian*, Jun 21, 1892. This system probably worked in harmony with the Knowle's patent concentrators described earlier.**

transferred heat to the classrooms. Gravity returned the cooled water to the basement.¹⁴⁶

The Californian wrote, "*A trial was made of this system on Saturday last, and seven stacks of four-foot wood were used during the morning, by means of which all the water in the pipes was heated, and such circulation was established that each radiator pipe became too hot to hold the hand upon. It seems to be a very successful method, and such has been its record elsewhere.*"¹⁴⁷

In 1896 Railroad Avenue served grades one through three, and H Street School served grades one through nine. Bakersfield's only two schools had combined enrollments of 378 pupils and 11 teachers, while the rest of Kern County had 54 school districts and 2300 pupils.¹⁴⁸

Bakersfield grew rapidly. In 1890, the population was about 2600, but discovery of oil on the Kern River north of town fueled a population explosion. In 1899, the town still had two schools, but the enrollment was 690,¹⁴⁹ and by 1900, the town's population had nearly doubled to somewhat more than 4,800. In 1901, \$12000 was

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. The building's basement was "*ten feet in the clear, with floor of concrete.*"

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ *Morning Echo*, Sep 15, 1896; About 2900 children were of school age. *Daily Californian*, Dec 25, 1895; See Appendix D for teachers' names.

¹⁴⁹ *Daily Californian*, Apr 26, 1899, as mentioned in the *Bakersfield California*, Apr 26, 1939; One thousand ten children in Bakersfield were under 17, and 691 were between the ages of 5 and 17. The *Daily Californian* added, "*16 Negro children and 22 native born Mongolians [Chinese].*" The grammar and primary enrollment was 710, which was "*a substantial increase over the attendance at this time last year.*" *Daily Californian*, Sep 25, 1902

set aside for improvement of Railroad Avenue School.¹⁵⁰ On March 3, 1902, Tenth Street School opened in the Lowell Addition on Orange Street just west of D.¹⁵¹ In 1902 Truxtun Avenue School (formally Railroad Avenue School) became a 12-room school. A shop department was added, which included sewing, cooking, paper cutting, cardboard work, and drawing.¹⁵² In 1904 the town's three schools were renamed. Railroad Avenue became Emerson, Tenth Street School became Lowell,¹⁵³ and H Street School became Bryant.¹⁵⁴ By 1910 Bakersfield's population increased by 300%, and its schools served more than 1500 pupils.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ *Daily Californian*, Mar 13, 1901

¹⁵¹ About a block north of today's St Francis Church on H St.

¹⁵² *Bakersfield Californian*, Oct 4, 1907. Manual training was called *sloyd*.

¹⁵³ Nov. 12, 1901 (Lynn Hay Rudy. *Old Bakersfield: Sites and Landmarks, 1875-1915*. 2000. Jenner, Calif.); Probably not named for poet James Russell Lowell, 1819-91. An A. F. Lowell owned acreage west of Chester and south of California Ave which was developed by Wilmot Lowell as the Lowell Tract, a holding of the Lowell Land & Improvement Co (*Daily Californian*, Jun 1, 1894, in Rudy, op. cit.).

¹⁵⁴ "New Names For The City Public Schools," *Daily Californian*, Apr 14, 1904. The school was probably named for poet William Cullen Bryant, 1794-1878. In 1912 the school's roof burned and was replaced. Bryant continued in use until 1931 when it was condemned for school use. For the next five years it housed state social service offices. The building was razed in 1936 (*Bakersfield Californian*, Mar 9, 1936, p 9). Bakersfield's first fire station was condemned in 1938 (*Bakersfield Californian*, Mar 8, 1938, p 9), and in 1939 Central Fire Station No 1 was erected on the footprint of old Bryant school.

¹⁵⁵ The fourth school built was Hawthorne, opened in September 1910. Its site is now the junction of P St. and Freeway 178 on-ramp.

Kindergarten

In January 1908, Miss Evelyn Pluss rented a room at Emerson School and furnished it with diminutive tables and chairs she brought from Chicago.¹⁵⁶ A few days later, her private-pay Kindergarten opened for four, five and six year-olds at a tuition of a dollar a week, which included door-to-door pick up by carriage at 9 am and return to home by noon. In May, Emerson classrooms were overcrowded, and by fall a vacant schoolroom for the Kindergarten was not available.¹⁵⁷

Local demand for Kindergarten remained strong. In 1911, a similar program was opened at the Woodsmen of the World building, but that one included parenting classes that enjoyed enthusiastic support. This Kindergarten matched the best in any large city.¹⁵⁸

In May 1914, Alfred Harrell printed a multi-column report about the nation's Free Kindergarten Movement, an article that may have helped advance the next step: a publicly-supported Kindergarten for Bakersfield.¹⁵⁹ In April 1915, the Franklin School Parent-Teachers Association petitioned the city for a Kindergarten,¹⁶⁰ and in the fall the county board of supervisors approved a property tax of ten cents

¹⁵⁶ *Bakersfield Californian*, Jan 10, 1908

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Bakersfield Californian*, Nov 14, 1911. The following was adapted from the author's article that appeared in the Jan 2011 *Pulse*, a monthly publication of the Kern Division, California Retired Teachers Assn.

¹⁵⁹ *Bakersfield Californian*, May 11, 1914

¹⁶⁰ *Bakersfield Californian*, Apr 5, 1915

per \$100 of assessed valuation to fund seven Kindergartens in the Bakersfield School District.¹⁶¹

In October, city school teachers, pupils and state normal-school officials held a Saturday institute at Lincoln School to showcase modern teaching methods. State guidelines had *"undergone radical changes"* and *"the end of them is not yet."* Some of the changes made teachers responsible for physical education, recreation, and *"restful play to quicken the mind and the powers of perception."*¹⁶²

Early on a Saturday in October, Lincoln School teachers and Principal Martha Nye chaperoned 75 tots to the school for the Kindergarten and primary folk-dancing demonstration. Administrators had wisely chosen Lincoln School to highlight Bakersfield's cosmopolitan diversity. Although its parents came from ten countries, the little dancers were *"sublimely indifferent in their childish innocence as to their racial and national differences."* The performances, *"from the simplest in kindergarten to the more measured and intricate ones of the higher grades,"* resulted in *"a most inspiring spectacle"* as kindergartners danced *"Ladies and Lassies"* and *"Wash My Dolly's Clothes."*¹⁶³

The event also proved the school's impact on its families. Sentimental visitors who watched the little multi-racial performers moving in democratic equality appreciated the public school's mission as *"smelting pot."*¹⁶⁴ Others foresaw that *"the innocent little dancers unconsciously represented an interesting and important*

¹⁶¹ ***Bakersfield Californian, Sep 20, 1915***

¹⁶² ***Bakersfield Californian, Oct 27, 1915***

¹⁶³ ***Ibid.***

¹⁶⁴ ***Ibid.***

sociological problem." The Californian expected that in a generation or two the common education would create a new kind of American citizenry.¹⁶⁵

The phrase "*in a generation or two*" was understated. The school had already changed children and their parents, and that fact was reflected in the appearance of the tots, many of whom the newspaper had said were from "*lowly homes.*" Mothers had dressed their offspring in their cleanest, ironed white-clothes and adorned their little girls' hair with ribbons and flowers. The Californian concluded, "*A better-groomed set of small children could not have been shown.*"¹⁶⁶

HAWTHORNE SCHOOL

In July 1910, Boudreau & McKinnon was finishing up its work on the new Hawthorne School at 24th and P.¹⁶⁷ The surrounding dirt roads had been freshly oiled, and the final touches on the school were progressing normally. What was not normal was what newly-appointed school superintendent D.W. Nelson had decided to do with one of the classrooms: He had reserved it exclusively for Chinese students not performing to grade level.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ *Morning Echo*, Jul 30, 1910. The boundaries of Hawthorne's district were 19th to 34th and Chester to Union (*Morning Echo*, Sep 7, 1910); Hawthorne School was demolished after the earthquake of 1952. Today the site is a freeway ramp at 23rd and O Streets.

¹⁶⁸ About 1750 elementary pupils were enrolled at Bakersfield's six schools in 1910: Emerson School, 239; Lowell at 10th & H, 366; Bryant at 20th & H, 239; Washington at Baker & Nile, 489; Lincoln at

In September 1910, 40 Chinese children were expected to enroll. This represented about two percent of the city's grammar school population,¹⁶⁹ although that single-digit gave no hint to the impending backlash from the Chinese community.

The Bakersfield school board had published a list of assigned teachers,¹⁷⁰ and one was Harriet F. Buss, a respected Bryant School teacher who had also taught Sunday school at First Congregational Mission Church School in Chinatown. Buss was assigned to Hawthorne School to teach the newly created "*Oriental Class*."¹⁷¹

Chinese parents met on Sunday at the Chinese temple at 20th and K Streets and laid plans to boycott the school.¹⁷² The next day the Bakersfield Californian interviewed businessman Sing Lee,¹⁷³ who told the newspaper that in previous years Chinese pupils were enrolled in every class at Bryant School, and their English acquisition had been rapid. Lee said parents were concerned that Chinese-only classrooms would fail to adequately teach English to their children.

Beale & Eureka, 138; and Hawthorne at 23rd & P, 108. *Morning Echo*, Sep 13, 1910

¹⁶⁹ Statistics from the 1900-1920 U.S. Census show that the number of Chinese in Bakersfield peaked about 1910.

¹⁷⁰ *Bakersfield Californian*, Sep 6, 1910

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² On Monday few children were in Miss Buss' classroom.

Bakersfield Californian, Sep 13, 1910

¹⁷³ Lee Hong Sing was the oldest and wealthiest Chinese settler in Bakersfield. He died in 1922, reportedly at the age of 107. "No man was more respected by thousands of townfolk. His purse was always open at the request of charity; he raised a family of girls who have proved to be a credit in the schools where they attended; he was honest although he ran a lottery game. Few men, and I make no exceptions, from the courthouse to the poorhouse, who have not at some time in Sing Lee's life marked a ticket to try their luck. --'Doc' Wilson." *Bakersfield Californian* Jul 14, 1922

Their fears were based on what had happened in 1886 when a church from San Francisco opened a mission school at 23rd and L Streets. The class had few English speakers, and none of the Chinese speakers learned much English.¹⁷⁴

The Californian presented both sides of the dispute when it wrote, *"It is argued by the influential Chinese residents that the segregation of the Oriental students will tend to curtail their education in that children will not be so easily able to acquire a good knowledge of the English language. The board on the other hand, feels that the Chinese children will be benefited in a larger degree if given instruction in a school, where they are in the charge of a special teacher. Miss Harriet Buss, in charge of the Oriental school, has taken special pains this summer to study the Chinese schoolwork in San Francisco and is well fitted to give the proper instruction."*¹⁷⁵

Sing Lee told the Californian that Chinese parents refused to give up what they most valued in the public schools: Exposure to English-speaking pupils. The newspaper countered, *"That the teacher of the Oriental school will have more time to devote to the instruction of the Chinese children is not recognized."* The Californian criticized Lee for failing to see the wisdom in the segregation and for failing *"to 'sabe' how all the grades can be said to be in one room and allow the teacher ample time to look after the interests of each child."*¹⁷⁶

The reporter asked a small Chinese boy standing nearby if he knew anything about what was going on, and he replied that he had heard

¹⁷⁴ ***Bakersfield Californian, Sep 13, 1910***

¹⁷⁵ ***Ibid.***

¹⁷⁶ ***Ibid.***

that no Chinese children would attend school that week, but he thought maybe next week they would.¹⁷⁷

Why was Sing Lee speaking for the Chinese community? Years earlier he had started in business at Taft, but by 1910 he operated a successful laundry at Bakersfield. Sing Lee's stature of 5 foot, 11 inches, his wealth, and his gravitas made him a logical spokesman, but the school board also heard from Toy Din and Jung Sam Yick, men who were almost as prominent and well known in the English-speaking community as Lee. Toy emigrated from China in 1875, settled in San Francisco, moved to Montana, and in 1896 opened a grocery store in Bakersfield. Jung Sam Yick, 31, was a labor contractor for the Kern County Land Company, but in 1910 he also owned and operated a grocery store on 18th Street. Chinese residents were especially indebted to Jung Sam Yick because he was personally responsible for bringing many of their countrymen to Bakersfield.¹⁷⁸

Bakersfield's racial climate in schools had changed since 1896, when the town bragged about its pupil diversity. After Perry, Oklahoma, experienced racial violence when African-American students were excluded from its public schools, the Bakersfield Californian invited Perrites to see how well Bakersfield schools worked. *"There are in our public schools, side-by-side, students of American, English, Irish, Scotch, Swedish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Greek, Colored, Chinese and Japanese descent, and various intermingled races, yet all live in peace and harmony. While there are occasional scraps that are bound to occur in the best regulated*

¹⁷⁷ **Ibid.**

¹⁷⁸ **William Harland Boyd, *The Chinese of Kern County, 1857-1960.* Kern County Historical Society, Bakersfield, Calif., 2002**

schools, they are never on national or color lines. The example of Bakersfield in this regard is respectfully held up to the rest of the world in general, and Oklahoma in particular."¹⁷⁹

Reality was less so peaceable for Asians and particularly less for the Chinese who had endured three tumultuous decades of discrimination in California. In 1860, the state legislature barred all Asians from public schools, and in the next decade Chinese regularly were blamed for the state's economic ills. Politicians running for re-election warmed to the inflammatory rhetoric, although not those who knew Chinese as individuals. In a speech delivered before the National Labor Convention on August 6, 1870, Gen. Edward F. Beale of Kern County said,

*"I have known the Chinese intimately as wealthy tenants, and employed them as a working people, and have found them admirable as both. They are, as a rule, a most valuable class of immigrants, and certainly the most industrious and quiet operatives. As to their not coming except as servile laborers, that is absurd. They will come just as other emigrants come, if you will let them, and with this difference, that our other immigration brings us nothing with which we are not already acquainted, whereas they bring with them to us and for our profit, a thousand new and valuable ideas."*¹⁸⁰

The Hawthorne School boycott by Chinese parents was short-lived. During that period, three local incidents contributed to its failure. Early on Sunday morning of September 6, when shots were heard from Chinatown, The Morning Echo concluded that Tong warfare from San Francisco had arrived in Bakersfield. Further, the

¹⁷⁹ *Bakersfield Californian*, Jan 15, 1896

¹⁸⁰ *Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jan 21, 1871, p. 3

newspaper chastised the Chinese for not offering the police *"the slightest information."* The second event was on September 10, when Ah Fong the porter at the Monte Carlo Club, was caught pilfering from the club's open safe. The third incident happened September 13, when immigration officers from Los Angeles arrested 25 *"Celestials"* in Bakersfield who could not prove they were legal residents.¹⁸¹

In an open letter to readers of the Californian, Secretary of the School Board C. C. Brower stated the city's position, which included this: *"Some of our Chinese fellow townsmen seem to think that our schools are intended primarily for their benefit."*¹⁸²

Brower emphasized the extra burden placed on teachers in the lower grades who had pupils who could not speak English.¹⁸³ *"In fact,"* he wrote, *"one of our teachers has informed me that she practically has to form a separate class of the children within her own class, and to give them separate instructions."*¹⁸⁴ Brower emphasized that in larger cities where many children were deficient in English, children were assigned to separate schools and taught *"under specially qualified teachers using scientific methods of instruction."*¹⁸⁵

The State law stood behind the board's decision. It authorized separate schools and classes, such as at Hawthorne, and when so established, non-English-proficient children had to attend them. In compliance with the law, the board had assigned a qualified teacher for the children. *"Miss Buss, besides her experience more or less in*

¹⁸¹ Celestials meant Chinese immigrants.

¹⁸² *Bakersfield Californian*, Sep 13, 1910

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

teaching the Chinese, spent part of her vacation in visiting the Oriental schools of San Francisco, acquiring valuable information thereby, and returned thoroughly imbued with the enthusiasm over her appointed work. The school is in existence, and will be maintained, and the law provides for the rest."¹⁸⁶

Bower then accused the Chinese of caring little for the welfare of the larger Bakersfield community. *"It remains to be seen whether our Chinese fellow townsmen are amenable to the same laws with which our American people cheerfully comply. Viewing the subject in the proper light, our American parents have so far as known offered no objection to the necessary changes, and we presume them to be quite as deeply interested in the subject as are the Chinese.*"¹⁸⁷

The Morning Echo inserted its own forecast, which did have some connection to English proficiency. *"An ultimatum has been issued by the Board of Education to the effect that the school law requires that all Oriental children in any city shall attend one school, and it is likely that unless the local Celestials comply with the law, they may come in conflict with the state authorities. [Furthermore] under the supervision of Miss Harriet Buss, they would obtain perhaps better education in the exclusive class of their own than when attending another school in a large class of American boys and girls.*"¹⁸⁸

A broad social phalanx faced the Chinese community: California school law, an implacable board of education, two local newspapers, negative news stories, and 50-years of repressive history. On September 17, Toy Din, Lee Hong Sing, and Jung Sam Yick spoke

¹⁸⁶ **Ibid.**

¹⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

¹⁸⁸ **Ibid.**

before the board, and The Morning Echo later reported that the three came away *"fully convinced."* It wrote, *"President Blodget and other members of the Board and Superintendent Nelson went into the matter very fully and were successful in convincing Toy and his associates that the action of the board had been for the interests of the Chinese."*¹⁸⁹ The next day, 24 Chinese children showed up at Hawthorne School.

In June 1911, The Echo printed the names of 127 eighth graders who had passed the high school entrance exam. Among the predominantly Anglo-Saxon surnames were the names Silvery Carrillo, Isabella Claudino, Frank DeSoto, and John and Frank Pacheco, but the roll showed no Asian advancing to Grade Nine. In 1917, the first Asian name appeared in the list of graduates from Kern County Union High School. It was Henry J. Toy.¹⁹⁰

Kern County High School¹⁹¹

Before 1891, most Eighth Grade graduates who wished to attend the University of California had to leave Kern County to find a preparatory high school.¹⁹² In 1891, the 29th Session of the State legislature created the High School Act, which gave regions and municipalities the right to cooperatively establish and fund county

¹⁸⁹ *Bakersfield Californian*, Sep 18, 1910

¹⁹⁰ *1917 Oracle*, yearbook of Kern County Union High School

¹⁹¹ The authoritative history of Kern County high schools is J.S. Wallace's *Recollections of a high school district, 1893-1968: an informal history of the Kern County Union High School and junior college district, 1893-1968*

¹⁹² *Fourteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of California, 1890*; In 1890, 24 county high schools operated in Calif.

high schools.¹⁹³ The Overland Monthly lauded the action of the otherwise ineffectual 29th legislature:

*"The late legislature of California left a bad name behind it; yet achieved some good that better legislatures had failed to do. It is likely that after its evil is interred with its bones, the good it did will live after it in the form of two acts of an 'epoch-making' nature. One is the ballot reform act, on which we have already commented; the other the county high school act. This act enables the supervisors of every county, on petition, to call upon the county, or a section of the county, to vote whether to tax itself for the establishment and maintenance of a high school."*¹⁹⁴

Since the abolition of State aid [to] high school[s], this most vital portion of the educational school systems has been defrauded of growth; and outside of a few municipalities the promising children of families of small means have either been stopped short in their schooling upon leaving the district school, or else compelled to obtain college preparation under the greatest disadvantages.

We remember one instance in which every member of a graduating class from a village public school desired to study farther, and the parents desired to have them do so, and were able to dispense with their services for several years longer, but not to pay for their private tuition, nor to send them to board in a city and attend high school, even had it been advisable to send boys and girls

¹⁹³ By 1904, 150 high schools were open in Calif. The state legislature that year funded high schools with a permanent, annual county tax of 1-1/2 cents per hundred dollars, possibly from taxation of assessed personal property. *Sunset Magazine*, Apr 1904, v XII, p 557

¹⁹⁴ *Overland Monthly*, May 1891, p 555

*away to board among strangers. A county high school opens the door to boys and girls.”*¹⁹⁵

In June 1891, the *Californian* studied the County High School Law and asked, “*Why should we not have a high school department in Kern County?*”¹⁹⁶ The question might have come from Alfred Harrell himself.¹⁹⁷ Looking back on that year, Harrell’s newspaper wrote, “*Mr. Harrell was directly connected with the framing of the County High School bill, and an earnest advocate of its passage.*”¹⁹⁸ As soon as it became a law, a day prior to the next succeeding election, he secured the necessary petition,¹⁹⁹ out of which grew the Kern County High School, which, by careful management and by the excellent work done, has already been partially accredited to the State University. Thus, instead of an isolated school here and there in the county, the educational system has been so perfectly expanded under Mr. Harrell’s able administration as to cover the entire ground from the primary county school to the doorway of the University of the State.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ *The Californian*, Jun 12, 1891

¹⁹⁷ Harrell acquired the *Daily Californian* in 1897 and ten years later renamed it the *Bakersfield Californian*. Cora Bender wrote that she taught under Harrell at Emerson School in 1909 (“*Native Daughter Gives 53 Years to Kern County*,” Cora F. Bender, *California School Yesterdays*, 2nd Historical Year Book of the California Retired Teachers Assn., 1935

¹⁹⁸ Sacramento newspapers on several occasions noted that Harrell had registered at Sacramento hotels.

¹⁹⁹ The petition asked that a bond initiative appear on the Nov 1892 ballot. That month voters approved \$15000 to fund a high school for Kern County.

²⁰⁰ *Daily Californian*, Oct 30, 1894. This article quoted the *Bakersfield Gazette*.

Although Kern County voters had not yet funded a high school by May 27, 1892, that day the first graduation of the "*high school department*" took place in Principal Mills' classroom.²⁰¹ The Daily Californian reported, "*There were visitors enough to fill the large room, and shortly after 2 p.m. Principal C.N. Mills opened the exercises with a short speech in which some home truths were forcibly told. He said among other things that during the past term but twelve persons had visited the school, seven of whom were non-residents, and of the remaining five, home people, and not one was parent or guardian of any attending pupil. This is certainly a gross neglect. A parent's occasional presence cheers the child and spurs it to greater zeal, while such woeful inattention must surely discourage the pupil and by so much, defeat the aims of school training.*"²⁰²

Sixteen songs and recitations made up the program. The presentations began with the chorus singing "*Happy Are We Today*" followed by Miss May Stark reading her essay "*On the Threshold.*" Others were Ward Cotton reading his paper "*Ancient and Modern Warfare,*" Miss Lena Huntington reciting "*Kentucky Belle,*" and Miss May Hutchins reading "*The Shoreless Sea.*" The chorus then performed "*The Old Oaken Bucket,*" and that was followed by "*Character and Habit*" read by Miss Hattie Carlock. "*The Decorating Mania*" was read by Miss Lula Norris, "*Scenes of My Youth*" was sung by the chorus, "*Emerson*" was read by Miss Myrtle Walker, and that

²⁰¹ Daily CA, Jun 1, 1892. One was 15 year-old Ward Colton, and another was May Stark, who was in the first graduating class of Kern County High School in 1894. See also, Edwin J. De Mello, "*History of the District prepared by Mr. Edwin J. De Mello for the Bakersfield Californian Centennial Edition,*" monograph, archival holding of Bakersfield High School.

²⁰² *The Californian*, Jun 1, 1892

was followed by a declamation by Edgar Strong entitled "*Idyll of the Public School.*"²⁰³

Five students awaited their turns to speak when Miss Nellie Pavey appeared at the podium and "*in well chosen words presented Professor C.N. Mills with a very handsome gold scarf-pin.*"²⁰⁴ After the applause Miss Hattie Yoakum read "*Children in Literature,*" but just as she finished, the regular order was again interrupted by Jerome Price, who on behalf of his classmates presented Miss Virginia Jameson with a "*very handsome thermometer. Miss Jameson was completely surprised, but responded very gracefully.*"²⁰⁵

Jerome Price remained at the podium to sing, and Miss Myrtle Foster followed him with a recitation of "*The Little Black Eyed Rebel.*" Charles Fay read a paper entitled "*Alexander Hamilton,*" and Walter Beard read "*Thomas Jefferson.*"²⁰⁶

With student performances concluded, Professor Mills presented eight diplomas to those "*who graduated this term and are no longer school children.*" They were Misses Hattie Carlock, Mary Hutchins, May Stark, Myrtle Walker, and Hattie Yoakum. The boys were Walter Beard, Ward Colton and Charles A. Fay. The graduates joined in

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.; "*The class that graduated Friday from the Bakersfield high school designed and adopted a class pin.*" Each student wore a gold, class pin ordered from San Francisco. The diamond-shaped pins bore the class motto *Onward*. Attached was a small chain connected to a second pin with a star-shaped head engraved with the initials of the wearer. "*The design is very neat and tasty.*" *Daily Californian*, May 25, 1892

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

singing "America," and the exercises and term closed."²⁰⁷ *"The high school building"* was used again in August 1892, when the Good Templars reorganized their group and held their first meeting there.²⁰⁸

Alfred Harrell was not alone in his support for an accredited Kern County high school. In July 1892 the Daily Californian wrote, *"There are many to be sure (for this is financially a favored county) who can afford to send their children away, after graduating from the grammar school, for instruction in the higher branches. But again, there are those who cannot afford such expenditure, and yet their children are just as much entitled to the advantages of a common school education as the daintiest child of the wealthiest parents... The trustees would undoubtedly allow the now empty building on Railroad Avenue to be used for some time to come by high school teachers and pupils."*²⁰⁹

In October 1892, Superintendent Alfred Harrell gathered signatures to place a high school bond proposal on the ballot, and he hurriedly submitted them to the Kern County Board of Supervisors. The bond which appeared on the ballot of November 1892 asked voters to fund \$15,000 for a Kern County high school. The Californian urged, *"Do not forget when you go to vote that it requires a majority of all the votes cast to obtain a High School of Kern county. ... Voters of Kern county, do not neglect such an important matter as this. It will not be an expensive matter, as the building can be had suitable for*

²⁰⁷ *The Californian*, Jun 1, 1892

²⁰⁸ Noted on Aug 19, 1893

²⁰⁹ *The Californian*, Jul 13, 1892. The opening of H Street School relieved crowding at Railroad Avenue School.

such a school until such time as necessity will require something more extensive."²¹⁰

Results of the election: votes in favor of the bond, 1274; votes against, 286.²¹¹ *"As the result of a petition to organize the county into a high school district canvassed by Mr. Alfred Harrell, the first [official] high school classes were taught 1893-1894."*²¹² The statement is succinct, but the background takes longer to describe.

Immediately following the election, the board authorized \$600 to rent two upstairs rooms at Railroad Avenue School for the high school classes.²¹³ Desks, tables and chairs came in the first days of January 1893,²¹⁴ and *"short, chubby, good-natured, black-whiskered"* Prof. Philip Eden of Pasadena arrived about the same time to assume the job of teacher-principal.²¹⁵ Eden had been recruited from out of town, but his assistant, Miss Catherine Crusoe, known as Kitty, was a local educator, *"a rather remarkable woman and an excellent teacher."*²¹⁶

²¹⁰ *The Californian*, Nov 1, 1892

²¹¹ *Weekly Californian*, Nov 5, 1892; J.S. Wallace, *op. cit.*; William Harland Boyd, research folders file *"Schools, The High School,"* typed manuscript. McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

²¹² Lambert, *op. cit.*

²¹³ Edwin J. De Melo, *History of the District, Kern County Union High School District, 1893-1966, for the Bakersfield Californian Centennial Edition*, Bakersfield High School, Historical Collection; J.S. Wallace, *op. cit.*

²¹⁴ *The Californian*, Jan 4, 5, 1893

²¹⁵ *The Californian*, Jan 26, 1893

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Historian Sam Wallace wrote that the first high school classes started January 12th, 1893 for 30 to 35 pupils,²¹⁷ but Alfred Harrell said they started on January 9th.²¹⁸ The date of opening "*with all pomp and grandeur*" was Monday January 9, 1893.²¹⁹ By the end of the week, 44 students had enrolled.²²⁰

Students like Miss Daisy Mitchell of Fresno²²¹ and Miss Addie Nicholson of Tehachapi had moved to Bakersfield to attend the new high school,²²² and they probably were not disappointed in their effort. Days into the first month "*at the High School*" students formed a literary society and concluded a reading of literary papers that became a biweekly event.²²³ At the end of January, enrollment was 32 students.²²⁴

On Washington's Birthday at Railroad Avenue School, the high school boys played football against the grammar school boys and lost. Unabashed, later that month the high school hosted a literary presentation for friends and parents.²²⁵

²¹⁷ J.S. Wallace, *op. cit.*

²¹⁸ *The Californian*, Jan 26, 1893; "*This evening winds up the first week of the county high school*" *The Californian*, Sep 14, 1894).

²¹⁹ *The Californian*, Jan 4, 1894

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *The Californian*, Mar 2, 1894

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ "*The High School Literary Society*," *The Californian*, Jan 28, 1893; In May, students published a newspaper called *The Cyclone*. Rudy, *Granddad*, assigned the date May 27, 1893.

²²⁴ *The Californian*, Jan 31, 1893

²²⁵ *The Californian*, Feb 23, 1893

Newspaper coverage on the high school's first month was brief. In January 1893, *The Californian*²²⁶ published two one-liners and two longer articles about it, but coverage was paltry compared to the newspaper's most heavily reported stories of January, which had to do with the new East Side Canal, the opening of the Bakersfield-Asphalto Railroad, and an invitational field trial for dog owners.²²⁷

Why had the newspaper not written more about the high school in its first month? The special jewelry, pomp and formality, and the newspaper's extensive coverage of the graduation of May 1892 show that although Kern County then did not have an official high school, the "*high school department*" at Railroad Avenue School offered high-school level classes, and the community was aware of it.²²⁸ Thus, a framework for the high school was already in place before passage of the bond election,²²⁹ and the new high school classes

²²⁶ The town had at least three newspapers then. Only *The Californian* is extant today.

²²⁷ *The Californian*, Jan 16, 1893. Financial problems at the newspaper might have been why it missed the high school's opening. The Kern County sheriff sold *The Californian* on Jan 16, 1893 in concurrence with a court order to satisfy a judgment. The issue of the 17th identified the buyer as Kern Valley Bank and explained that the newspaper was incorporated on the 16, with J.M. Reuck continuing as manager. *The Californian*, Jan 17, 1893

²²⁸ In a commencement address delivered May 31, 1918 at Kern County Union High School, senior debating champion Ogden Reavis noted that until 1892 " *the higher education of Kern County, a two years' extension of the regular grammar school, was given in a special class of the grammar school. The nearest high school was located in Visalia, some seventy-five miles from Bakersfield.*" *Bakersfield Californian*, Jun 1, 1918

²²⁹ "State superintendents of public instruction, various of the state's teachers' institutes and organizations, newspaper editors, and others petitioned for a constitutional amendment to fund public high schools. Partial relief came with the Caminetti Act (1883), which allowed elementary schools to add 'grammar grades' courses

were not unique news to the Californian. The high school-like classes in place before the bond election explain the remarkably short period of time between the election and the date the new high school classes opened.²³⁰

In an interview Harrell gave in his later years, he mentioned those postgraduate offerings at Railroad Avenue School.²³¹ *"During the first years of the high school, Mr. Alfred Harrell, principal of the grammar school, established two high school classes which were known as his 'Advanced Classes.' They were taught so thoroughly under his instruction that they were able to complete the three-year high school course in two years."*²³²

In July 1892, The Californian supported a high school for another reason. *"The higher grade pupils, in the valley at least, would be taken from the grammar schools, thus relieving them and allowing the entire care and attention of the teachers to be devoted to the*

that would prepare students for the 'scientific' (i.e., modern) courses of study at the University." Geraldine Jonçich Clifford, *Equally in View: The University of California, Its Women, and the Schools*. Center for Studies in Higher Education and Institute of Governmental Studies Press, University of California, Berkeley, 1995

²³⁰ A high school teaching certificate was granted to Mrs. Carrie D. Ryan in Nov 1891 (*The Californian*, Nov 21, 1891); The high school program was authorized sometime before Dec 16, 1892: *"Special meeting of the Board of Trustees, Dec 16, 1892. In the matter of the Adoption of High School Course: Ordered that the following course be and is hereby authorized for the new County High School - to wit: Scientific, Literary."* Kern County Superintendent of Schools, *Minutes, 1892 - June, 1924*, Superintendent of Schools, Warehouse, Bakersfield, Calif.

²³¹ *Daily Californian, May 4, 1894. "Alfred Harrell has been given a life diploma, usually awarded for ten years' teaching."* William Harland Boyd papers, "Education" file, McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

²³² Lambert, op. cit.

strictly grammar grades of teaching."²³³ That statement might have arisen from unavoidable tensions between the grammar school pupils and their teachers on the one hand and the Advanced Class and its teachers on the other. After all, they all worked under the same roof. A newspaper article from 1895 alluded to contentious relationships at Railroad Avenue School that led to Principal-teacher E.T. Goodyear's resignation.²³⁴

One Kern County Union High School commencement speakers in 1918 said, "*This was the first county high school in the state, and the first school to take advantage of the new state law providing for the organization of county high schools. Previous to this time the higher education of Kern county [sic], a two years' extension of the regular grammar school was given in a special class of the grammar school. The nearest high school was located at Visalia, some seventy-five miles from Bakersfield.*"²³⁵

The elaborate graduation of May 27, 1892 that preceded Kern County High School was a celebration of just such a special class. In 1883, the State legislature under leadership of Rep. Anthony Caminetti²³⁶ allowed county voters to approve a local, preparatory

²³³ *The Californian*, Jul 13, 1892. The grammar grades corresponded to today's Grades 5-8.

²³⁴ *Daily Californian*, Sep 23, 1895

²³⁵ *Bakersfield Californian*, Jun 4, 1918

²³⁶ "Anthony Caminetti was the true educational progressive whose bold vision has defined democratic education in America." Howard Erdman, William R. Ogden, "Reconsidering William Rainey Harper As 'Father Of The Junior College,'" *College Student Journal*, Sept, 2000 v. 34, no. 3, Project Innovation, 2000; See Appendix F for Caminetti biography.

grammar school program called the Grammar School Course.²³⁷ Its purpose was to help students prepare themselves to enter the Scientific department of the State University.²³⁸ Those new grammar grades *"would take the place of the usual grammar grades"*²³⁹ and would be *"filled out into a complete course ... by having a reasonably good preparation in grammar and composition in our own language; of arithmetic; of algebra, to include quadratic or equations of the second degree; geometry, up to solid geometry, or geometry of three dimensions; English literature.*

California had few high schools in 1883, but the Caminetti Act was *"in nowise intended to interfere with High Schools in their work of complete preparation for any and all of the Colleges of the University."*²⁴⁰ On the contrary, the goal of the new course was to make higher education more accessible to rural students. *"Outside the large cities there are few High Schools, and the resident of the country is compelled at heavy expense to send his children from home to fit them in a preparatory course."*²⁴¹ The Caminetti Act also allowed local boards of education to grant teacher certificates to graduates of the Grammar School Course.²⁴²

²³⁷ Newspapers sometimes referred to the Grammar School Course as the High Grammar Grade or the Caminetti Course.

²³⁸ *Sacramento Daily Union*, Mar 16, 1883

²³⁹ *Sacramento Daily Union*, Apr 9, 1883

²⁴⁰ *Sacramento Daily Union*, Apr 9, 1883

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Mendocino Dispatch-Democrat*, Oct 18, 1889; State Normal Schools also trained future teachers. Minns Evening Normal School at San Jose, a private institution, became California State Normal School in 1862. Today's the site is California State University, San Jose. The State's second Normal School campus was at Los Angeles, 1882, followed by one at Chico in 1887 and another at San Diego in

In 1890, 281,319 children between the ages of 5 and 17 years were enrolled in California public schools, and of that number, 3558, or about 1.25%, attended one of the several Grammar School Courses.²⁴³ The small percentage reflected the inequity in State funding for the course: \$3 per pupil per year, based on school district population. Because smaller districts received little State money, they could not afford to fund a Grammar School Course.²⁴⁴ In 1891, a State school law abolished the Grammar School Course certificate by rolling it into the County High School certificate.²⁴⁵

The legislation of 1891 also ended state funding for the Advanced Class, and thus ended funding for local higher education in Kern County. That explains Harrell's alacrity in pursuing passage of the high school bond,²⁴⁶ but another reason was those Grammar School Course students who had not yet graduated. A newspaper at Oakland addressed the plight of such students in the suddenly-defunct Grammar School Course. It wrote, "*The cutting off of the tenth or last grade of the high school or Caminetti [sic] course at Haywards will work a hardship upon a splendid class of pupils unless the people are able to secure a continuance under the new County High School law. The continuance of a public high school at*

1897. www.experiencefestival.com/a/california%20state%20university%20-%20history/id/4887828

²⁴³ *Woodland Daily Democrat*, Aug 12, 1890

²⁴⁴ *Oakland Daily Evening Tribune*, p 1, Feb 13, 1891

²⁴⁵ *Oakland Daily Evening Tribune*, p 1, Apr 25, 1891. These certificates might have been certificates to teach public school. See also, "*Certification of Teachers, Address by State Superintendent [Samuel T.] Black, The Feature of Yesterday's Session of the State Teachers' Association*," *Sacramento Daily Union*, Dec 30, 1897

²⁴⁶ "*The fight for high schools was a long one, and not until 1902 did Californians vote annual state funds for them.*" *A.A.V. History of Public Education in California*, www.cde.ca.gov/nr/re/hd/yr1961hd08.asp;

Haywards is of great importance to the surrounding county, producing as it does a host of bright young people anxious for highest citizenship, but unable to go abroad for this course that will afford it."²⁴⁷

Newly-created Kern County High School opened its doors in January 1893 and finished up in late May 1893 for the summer.²⁴⁸ *"The two departments of this school closed Friday the 26th with impromptu literary exercises."*²⁴⁹ *"County Superintendent of Schools Harrell, Secretary of the High School Board, was present and at the close of the exercises favored the school with a few well chosen remarks. He pronounced the High School a success. ... Next term classes will be organized in every study of the course; there will also be a class prepared for graduation."*

A few days later, the Californian announced that the high school was "no longer an experiment" and that it "has come to stay." Added was the egalitarian statement, *"In addition to preparing its members for admission to the state university, the authorities having the high school in charge purpose widening the scope of the work to embrace a thorough business and commercial course for the benefit of those not deserving specially to prepare them themselves of college work."*²⁵⁰ Several years passed before that happened.

²⁴⁷ *Oakland Daily Evening Tribune*, Apr 9, 1891. The grade level(s) taught by the Grammar School Course at Railroad Avenue School is not clear from the research. The ages of graduates of Jun 1, 1892 were probably similar to that of their classmate May Stark, who then was 16 years of age.

²⁴⁸ *Daily Californian*, May 6, 1893

²⁴⁹ *Daily Californian*, May 27, 1893

²⁵⁰ *Daily Californian*, Jan 31, 1893

Railroad Avenue School did not remain unused in the summer. On July 1st the Lovers of Literature Society met *at the high school*, and on the 18th an ice cream fund-raiser was held there for "*a deserving mother*,"²⁵¹ but the most important educational news occurred late in August, when county supervisors proposed a bond issue of \$250,000 to expand the county courthouse and build a new hospital, county jail, and high school building.²⁵²

The first complete year of the high school program began on September 4, 1893, with E.T. Goodyear as teaching principal and Miss Crusoe as his assistant.²⁵³ The start was auspicious, and the Board of Supervisors affirmed the newspaper's statement that the high school "*has come to stay*" by purchasing chemical apparatus for the laboratory class.²⁵⁴ The Californian did not publish much about the high school's activities in 1893-94, although in January and February it noted that the girls' literary society, "*bearing the mystic name of 'A.M.E.'*," was meeting at student homes. At one evening event, they hosted the high school's "*Young Men's Debating Club*," and at another Professor Goodyear and Miss Kittie Crusoe were present, both of whom took part in the word games. Present, too, were Ella Fay and Addie Nicholson.²⁵⁵

The new high school collaborated with the University of California on the high school's coursework. In April, Frederick Slate, professor of

²⁵¹ "*Bakersfield Schools. The High School*," *Daily Californian*, May 18, 1893

²⁵² *Daily Californian*, Aug 22, 1893. The hospital and high school projects were funded.

²⁵³ Those women named as assistants were in fact teachers who had attended state normal school.

²⁵⁴ *Daily Californian*, Sep 5, 1893

²⁵⁵ "*A.M.E.*" *Daily Californian*, Jan 29, Feb 27, 1894

chemistry and physics at Berkeley, duly examined the scholars and stated they were doing excellent work.²⁵⁶ In May, the County of Supervisors authorized Secretary of the Board Alfred Harrell to purchase necessary chemical apparatus for the school.²⁵⁷

On Friday May 18, 1894, the first graduation of the county-funded high school was held at Niederaur Hall, *"the upstairs portion of the old German's furniture store situated at the corner of 19th and K Streets,"*²⁵⁸ and family and friends crowded the auditorium. Center stage was E. F. Goodyear and Miss Crusoe, and to their left were the graduates, Ella Fay, Adele Nicholson, and May Stark. At right stage sat Superintendent of Schools Alfred Harrell and next to him Frank Graham and J.H. Berry,²⁵⁹ members of the county board of education.

"The Kern City orchestra commenced the exercises with an overture. Then Professor Goodyear with felicitous remarks likened the three coming graduates to the three caravels with which Columbus set sail over unknown paths seeking prosperity and happiness. Senor Louis Carrera, accompanied by Professor Taylor,²⁶⁰ then gave a baritone solo, which was loudly applauded. The address of Superintendent Alfred Harrell was thoughtful, impressive and most timely. He

²⁵⁶ *Daily Californian*, Apr 11, 1894

²⁵⁷ Minutes of the Board of Supervisors, Sep 4, 1893

²⁵⁸ Lambert, op. cit.; Jacob Niederaur, b abt 1842, Ohio-d 1902, Los Angeles, Calif., was son of a cabinet-making family and a musician in the 38th Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. He established in 1863 at Bakersfield as a furniture maker and became the town's first mortician. His funeral business was in the basement under Niederaur Hall. Niederaur family built the Woolworth's Building on that corner in the late 1930s.

²⁵⁹ Berry taught at Keene 1888-90. Barras, op. cit., p 181.

²⁶⁰ Taylor was a professional musician.

portrayed the opportunities, possibilities and advantages which the opening of the High School offered to the youth of this county, and in strong and stirring words urged all who could, not to neglect such chances."²⁶¹ Ella Fay, Adele Nicholson, and May Stark went on to become teachers.²⁶²

Historian J.S. Wallace wondered why the women had been given credit for four years of study when the nascent high school had been in existence for only a year and a half.²⁶³ He knew they had taken advanced work from Alfred Harrell before the county created the official high school program,²⁶⁴ but the three diplomas were not as premature as Wallace thought; until June 1899 the high school course was three years.²⁶⁵

Rooms at the High School building at Railroad Avenue School closed for summer but reopened a few days later for the annual election of school district trustees.²⁶⁶ When the board met in fall 1894, they formed plans to erect a high school building. "*Notice to Architects: Plans and specifications for a County High School Building to consist*

²⁶¹ *Daily Californian*, May 19, 1894

²⁶² May Stark taught at Mountain View School. *Daily Californian*, Apr 16, 1895; Boyd in *Lower Kern River County, 1850-1950* wrote that the other two graduates also became teachers.

²⁶³ Wallace, *Recollections of a high school district, 1893-1968: an informal history of the Kern County Union High School and junior college district, 1893-1968*

²⁶⁴ Wallace Melvin Morgan, *History of Kern County, California*, p 8

²⁶⁵ Kern Co Board of Supervisors, minutes, Jun 5, 1899, line item no. 63; "[T]here is too much curriculum to learn in three years." *Daily Californian*, Jun 15, 1899

²⁶⁶ *Daily Californian*, May 23, 1894. This confirms that Railroad Avenue School was the first high school building.

of four class rooms, and assembly hall²⁶⁷ and all other necessary rooms, to be erected at a cost not to exceed \$14,000 to be received by said board on Dec 5, 1894... HS Packard, Clerk of Board. " ²⁶⁸ In the third week of December, Costerisan & Son won the contract.²⁶⁹

The board had reasons for moving with such haste. The bond election of November 1892 made funds available; the high school had proved its vitality; Railroad Avenue School lacked space for a growing enrollment;²⁷⁰ and there was the question of Railroad Avenue School's structural soundness.

Foreman of the Kern County Grand Jury W.H. Scribner insisted "*There is not a particle of damage in the building,*" ²⁷¹ but subsequent inspections found problems. Iron rods in the attic had been installed entirely across the structure in both directions, and the brick walls in the west and south wings were plainly out of plumb. Plaster in the rooms had fallen away, too, and the second-story floor was uneven from the pressure of unsupported wall-partitions below.²⁷²

Architect McDougal, who some years back had prepared and sold the plans for the building, sided with Scribner that there was nothing to

²⁶⁷ Railroad Avenue School and H Street School had been built without an auditorium. "*This need for an assembly room or hall should not be overlooked by the architects who are drawing plans for the new High School building.*" "*Assembly Room Needed,*" *Daily Californian*, May 22, 1894

²⁶⁸ *Daily Californian*, Nov 28, 1894

²⁶⁹ *Daily Californian*, Dec 17, 1894

²⁷⁰ The school census of 1894 for Bakersfield counted 651 pupils of school age and 338 less than five years of age (*Daily Californian*, May 16, 1894).

²⁷¹ *Daily Californian*, Dec 12, 1894

²⁷² *Ibid.*

fear from the condition of the school, and he added there was "*not a brick building in town which, if examined, will not show defects of the same kind.*"²⁷³ After that discussion, Railroad Avenue School remained in use.

The high school started for 1894-95 with 44 students in four classrooms at Railroad Avenue School. Eighteen were members of the "*junior or beginning class,*"²⁷⁴ seven were in the middle class, nine were seniors of the upper class, and ten were "*special pupils taking selected studies.*"²⁷⁵

The site selected for the new high school building was a vacant field adjacent to California Avenue on the grounds of the demolished, county hospital.²⁷⁶ Costerisan & Son filed blueprints and specifications on March 4, 1895, and the next day they won the contract for four classrooms and an assembly hall.²⁷⁷ Men, wagons, and horses were on the grounds in late March,²⁷⁸ and within the

²⁷³ **Ibid.** The school was remodeled and used many more years as a grammar school.

²⁷⁴ The composition of 11 males and 7 females was representative of the entire class of 1893-94.

²⁷⁵ ***Daily Californian*, Sep 14, 1894**

²⁷⁶ The bid of \$13,937 by F.W. Hickox of Bakersfield was \$1,030 lower than that from Charles Lindgren (***Bakersfield Californian*, Mar 5, 1895**); The county's hospital grounds were at today's Elm Grove at Bakersfield High School. The hospital was demolished and a new one built on 19th near Oak. Julius Chester donated to the school Board the land formerly occupied by the hospital (Lambert, op. cit.); ***Daily Californian*, Mar 5, 1895**

²⁷⁷ ***Daily Californian*, Jan 21, 1896, Feb 2, 1896.** A map dated Nov 25, 1898 places the new high school in City Block 362, which is bounded by 13th, 14th, F and G Streets. Map Drawer, McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, Bakersfield, Calif.

²⁷⁸ ***Daily Californian*, Mar 13, 1895**

week Cole Jewett had finished the cellar.²⁷⁹ About 12 months passed when, on June 3, 1895, Bakersfield Masonic Lodge 224 laid the cornerstone for the new building.²⁸⁰ The school had not been designed for electric lighting, but that summer county supervisors had it installed.²⁸¹

The assembly hall was not ready in June 1895 for the second graduation of the county high school. Of 46 high school students then attending Railroad Avenue School, nine received diplomas of graduation at Armory Hall from Judge A.C. Conklin.²⁸²

The high school building was not finished by the end of summer, but Professor Goodyear and Miss Crusoe opened the doors on September 23, 1895²⁸³ to 30 students, "17 in the junior class, 10 in the

²⁷⁹ Basement: Apr 9, 1895. Kern County Board of Supervisors required contractors to post a bond of 5% of bids as surety that they would start work within 10 days of acceptance and finish "faithfully." *Daily Californian*, Mar 27, 1895

²⁸⁰ Cornerstone laid on July 3 (Lambert, op. cit.); The school was built for \$13000 (about \$250000 today) and was adequate for a few years. The next high school building was erected in 1908 on F Street on the same block.

²⁸¹ Aug 5, 1895. Boyd wrote that in 1900 electric lighting was added in 1900. McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, vertical file, William Harland Boyd. typed manuscript, "The First High School"

²⁸² *Daily Californian*, Mar 13, 1895. Jun 4, 1895. Graduates were Charles Colton, Arthur Crites, Helmuth Gardett, Clifford Greeley, George Hunter, Lester Laird, Millie Gardett, Agnes Montgomery, and Fannie Warner.

²⁸³ Lambert, op. cit.; Notice of the starting date appeared in the Board minutes of Jul 8, 1895; Goodyear and Crusoe were re-elected as teachers at the high school at salaries of \$110 and \$85 per month, "a slight reduction what they were last term." (*Daily Californian*, Jul 18, 1895); Basement laboratories for physical and chemical sciences were placed in use at the end of October (*Daily Californian*, Oct 26, 1895).

intermediate class, and 3 in the senior class."²⁸⁴ Most students had their sights set on Stanford or the University of California, but the board, as promised a year earlier, planned courses for those with no interest in university admission. In January 1896, the board discussed a business-oriented curriculum and in February instructed Superintendent Alfred Harrell to inquire with commercial schools in the state for guidance in establishing such programs.²⁸⁵

The third annual commencement of the high school exercise was held June 12, 1896 before a large and appreciative audience. The event was held off-campus at Armory Hall but was none-the-less significant; graduates were the first to have taken classes at the new high school building.²⁸⁶ *"The stage was very prettily decorated with flowers and greenery, and the class colors of blue and gold, twined about."*²⁸⁷ Professor J.B. Newell noted that *"it was not the object of the High school to produce prodigies, but students, boys and girls, who think and investigate."*²⁸⁸ Newell made that statement knowing that in fall 1896 the high school would offer a commercial

²⁸⁴ J.B. Newell succeeded Goodyear. *Daily Californian*, Jan 19, 1898

²⁸⁵ On Jul 8, 1899 the Board added a complete commercial course to the High School work. *"[T]hat all pupils who are residents of Kern County and are prepared to do the work be permitted to take the commercial course even if they do not hold the proper credentials entitling them to take up the regular High School work, and at the discretion of the principal, pupils be permitted to take part of the work only if they so desire."* Board Minutes, Jul 8, 1899. The provision provoked distain from the academic course students.

²⁸⁶ *Daily Californian*, Jun 13, 1896; Lambert, op. cit., wrote that the graduation was held in May 1896 at Scribner Opera House on Chester Ave.

²⁸⁷ *Daily Californian*, Jun 13, 1896

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

course of subjects that would teach business skills.²⁸⁹ The ceremony concluded with Superintendent Harrell presenting diplomas to Claude R. Blodget, M. Edith Riley, M. Walter Dinkelspiel, Essa E. Davis, and Charles G. Smith.

Discovery of oil in Kern County before 1900 had attracted workers and speculators from across the country, and the influx soon produced a need for more schools. In 1900 the urgency was greater. The Californian wrote, *"At the present time there are many oil operators and workmen in the fields who desire to locate their families in Bakersfield and the demand for houses and rooms is unprecedented; and there is not a house or a room to be had in the city. It is true conditions just now may be said to be abnormal, but it is confidently expected that they will not change in the near future. So long as every effort to discover oil is successful, so long will the rush to Bakersfield continue."*²⁹⁰

Management of Kern County High School required a firm, guiding hand, and such a candidate was found among its teaching staff.²⁹¹ Students reluctantly appreciated math teacher C.C. Childress (called "C-Cube" behind his back,) and the Board of Supervisors must have been impressed by him, too, because in 1898 Childress was appointed principal. The July 1900 staff was made up of five teachers: T.W. Miles, Principal of the Commercial Department;

²⁸⁹ "... that a new course be added to the High School work to be known as *The Commercial Course to take effect July 1, 1895.*" Board of Supervisors, Minutes, Feb 3, 1896. The minutes of Jul 11, 1895 added Mrs. Taylor to the teaching staff with Newell and Kitty M. Crusoe.

²⁹⁰ *Daily Californian*, Jan 19, 1900, p 2, c 1

²⁹¹ In Sep 1898 teachers at the county high school were CC. Childress, Mrs. H.S. Craig, and Irene Muller. Alfred Harrell was the clerk. *Daily Californian*, Sep 17, 1898

George H. Taylor, Music; Mrs. Kate Rardon, Stenography and Typewriting; C.F. Wright, History and Political Sciences; Maude Hyman, Physics and Chemistry; and Mrs. H.S. Craig, Latin and English.²⁹² Principal C.C. Childress also taught. For three consecutive years he stayed the course, but in 1901 he resigned --reason unknown-- to accept a position at Hanford.²⁹³

The next principal was Leroy Bliss Peckham, but he fell into disfavor for expelling star football players, and he followed that by suspending 13 boys for refusing to exit their classroom before female students, which was one of Peckham's school rules. Until that disruption happened, the Board had supported him, but now it concluded he had used poor judgment. Peckham was given 30 days notice before being released from his position.²⁹⁴

In January 1903, after much administrative jockeying, Childress was enticed back as principal, and he restored law-and-order. One morning, Mr. Duty the janitor noticed something moving under a hedge. He peeked and there found Principal Childress on his hands and knees scouting for students cutting class. Another incident of his dedication to the job occurred one morning while the principal was on the school sidewalk with a visitor. A student smoking a cigarette appeared from around a corner, and Childress asked him where he was going, to which the youth replied, "*That's none of your damn business.*" It was the wrong answer. The visitor vividly recalled

²⁹² Board Minutes, Jun 2, 1900, line item no. 86

²⁹³ "*The Board received a communication from C.C. Childress saying that he could not accept the principalship of the high school.*" *Minutes of the regular session of the Kern Co Board of Education, 1892-June, 1924*, dated Jul 6, 1901, p 487

²⁹⁴ A full explanation of the Peckham incident appears in J.S. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p 20-24.

Childress seizing the offender by the neck, throwing him to the concrete and ordering him to *"get the hell back to class."*²⁹⁵

Childress held the upper hand, but at the cost of eternal vigilance. In a scouting mission around town for truants in 1908, he came upon more than 15 boys playing pool at the Arlington saloon. *"When they saw the stern visage of their principal peering through the swinging doors a merry scramble took place that emptied the pool room speedily."*²⁹⁶ The next day the boys could chose between two options: Leave the high school for good or submit to a *"good old fashioned hickory stick switching at the hand of the principal."*²⁹⁷

Earl Warren, the Bakersfield High School student who became Governor of California and Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, was in the last row of his class in 1908 discussing a math problem with Childress. As C-Cube was returning to his desk, a student named Stoner, perhaps the son of City Trustee Stoner, turned and accidentally kicked C-Cube in the shins. Student Omar Cavins, Class of 1908, was present that day and recalled, *"C-Cube grabbed Stoner by the back of the coat and just banged his head up and down on the desk. They'd hang principals for doing that nowadays."*²⁹⁸ In 1908, C.T. Conger replaced C.C. Childress.

By 1908, the diverse high school program was living up to the Board's promise of 1893 to provide practical classes that would make it possible for students to earn immediate livelihoods *"if*

²⁹⁵ *Earl Warren's Bakersfield: oral history transcripts / and related material, 1969-1970*

²⁹⁶ *Bakersfield Californian*, Mar 6, 1908

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Earl Warren's Bakersfield: and related material*. Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, 1969

obliged to do so before he is able to proceed with his university and professional courses."²⁹⁹ Thirty-two shorthand students had use of 18 "typewriting machines," and Prof. Mason's stenography students put them to use: after taking down Principal Conger's morning speeches at the assembly hall, they transcribed them "upon the typewriter." Because Conger's talks ranged widely in vocabulary and topic, the commercial pupils were practicing what they eventually would have to do in business or government.

One talk that Principal Conger gave in 1908 was addressed to both the community and the students. "*People who sometimes think the high school a very costly institution cannot fail to realize that this practical work going on side-by-side with purely academic work makes the local high school a many-sided institution where any and every boy or girl in the county can acquire at public expense the kind of training best adapted to their needs.*"³⁰⁰

Turning to the assemblage, Conger related the story of a young man who had emigrated from Russia to America and struggled in the New York ghetto while at the same time attending night school. He excelled in shorthand and typing. Principal Conger then held up a letter of thanks from the same young man and explained that three years earlier he had been a student in Prof. Mason's commercial class at New York. The letter writer said that his steno rate of 175 words a minute had landed him a well-paying job in the New York court system.

²⁹⁹ The following is based on an article from the Dec 11, 1908 *Bakersfield Californian*. Much of the text also appeared as an article by Gilbert P. Gia in the Mar 2011 *Pulse*, the monthly publication of Kern Division, California Retired Teachers Assn.

³⁰⁰ "*High School Doing Practical Work in Stenography,*" *Bakersfield Californian*, Dec 11, 1908

"Now," said Conger, "what is the moral of the story? Just this, that if this poor, humble, foreign Jewish lad can raise himself up from obscurity to a position of honor and responsibility paying \$2000 a year through his own efforts and by availing himself of the educational advantages freely offered, what may we not reasonably expect from you, living under ideal conditions, well housed, well clothed, well fed, and surrounded by loving care? The same opportunities exist for you, and it is only a question of whether you are willing to make the necessary preparation for responsible and well-paid work. The surest way to succeed in life is to work, work hard and earnestly and faithfully in your studies, and prepare for your vocation." ³⁰¹

Appendix

A. Footnotes in this paper which are shared by two consecutive pages are unavoidable formatting issues of Microsoft Word 2010.

B. Email from Jerry Kirkland to Gilbert P. Gia in 2011: "A more careful perusal of my notes revealed that the district was 'established' by the Board of Supervisors on Nov. 5, 1878. That would imply that no petition was ever submitted to the B. of S. requesting formation of district. The Board did the same in 1866 when they established school districts in Havilah, Kelso, Tejon, Linn's Valley and Tehachapi. Still no record of election of board of trustees or building of a schoolhouse for Kern River Island SD."

³⁰¹ **Ibid.**

C. In 1870, 35 pupils were enrolled. Included were Adams, Baker, Crawford, Lundy, Patria, Pettus, Ranney, Shelley, Shirley, Tibbet, Ward, Arujo [Arrajo?], Collins, Contreras, Gilbert, McKenzie, Reeder, Troy and Verdugo. (Wallace Melvin Morgan, *History of Kern County*, Historic Records Co., Los Angeles: 1914. p 58-59)

D. Teachers employed in Bakersfield schools in 1896-97 were D.W. Nelson (principal), Miss Jamison, J.W. Evans, Virginia Jameson, Miss Edith Maples, Miss Harriet E. Yoakum, Miss Maud M. Metcalf, Mrs. Harry McCray, Miss Mary Hutchins, Isabel Williams, Mrs. F.W. Miller, Mrs. E. Rousseau, Miss Belle Gorham, Miss Eva G. Colton, Mrs. E. Houghton, and Miss Linda Alverson, "S.D.T." "Miss Alverson was selected to do special work." (*Daily Californian*, Jul 1, Jul 7, 1896).

E. Bakersfield and Kern City (formerly Sumner) were distinct communities with their own schools until the two communities merged in December 1909. The Fuller School at Baker and Sumner streets in Sumner (today's East Bakersfield) was privately funded. The first public school at Sumner was built about one-half-block west of Baker Street on the north side of L, later named Lake Street.

In 1891 the excavation of the East Side Canal required that the Baker and L [Lake] Street school be moved. The Library Association bought the school and moved it to 1013 Baker Street near Kentucky Street. The building was moved again to Monterey and Miller Streets where it served as a church. The Episcopal Church of Bakersfield bought the vacant

lot on Baker Street and built a church. (*Daily Californian*, Jan 13, 1900, Oct 6, 1905)

Two-story Baker Street School was opened March 2, 1895. This location is now the offices of Bakersfield City School District at 1300 Baker Street.

Beale Street School south of the railroad tracks was opened in 1902, renamed Lincoln in 1910 and later became a junior high school. Today the site is Owens Intermediate School at Eureka and King Streets.

F: Anthony Caminetti, born in 1854 in Jackson, California, attended the University of California, Berkeley, became District Attorney of Amador County (1878-82,) served in the California State Assembly (1883-85,) was a member of the State Senate (1885-87,) and was a U.S. Representative (1891-95.) He served in the State Assembly (1897-1901.) Caminetti was Code Commissioner (1897-99,) a member of the State Senate (1907-13,) and in 1913-21 was U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration. "As immigration chief he displayed a naked Eurocentric xenophobia and argued that the U.S. Congress should end all immigration of Chinese, Japanese and Malays because they represented the 'Asiatic menace.'" In 1915 he was assigned to the National Employment Bureau, and in 1917 appointed as a member of the War Industries Board. After the war he was sent to Europe to investigate conditions there. He practiced law at Jackson, California until his death in 1923. Wikipedia.

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