



Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California

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Then And Now on the Play Ground

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Do you remember the days when we were turned loose along about 10:30, and again at 2:30, when the whole school swarmed out with a whoop for recess? The older boys and the principal organized a baseball or basketball game, and recess lasted just as long as they could keep the principal interested and make him forget to go in and pull the old bell rope.

The rest of us small fry joined in harum-scarum games of "pom pom pull-away" or hide and seek, or maybe if we felt musical, it was "London Bridge Is Falling Down" or "We're Marching Round the Love Ring." (Didn't you used to love to play that with its pretty song and graceful figures, like an old dance?)

In the spring the boys played marbles to the feverish forgetfulness of everything else, and the girls jumped rope and played hopscotch --the walks would be marked up for blocks around!



But that is all changed now, and the kids say that what we used to do isn't a patch on the fun they have now. Organized games--supervision--that's the watchword today.

What is being done at the Emerson school in the way of playground work is a good example of the last cry in children's play. Recently the regular morning and afternoon recess has been done away with, and, instead, each room has a certain play period, just as it has its regular arithmetic or history period.

The boys and girls are each organized into games, under the general supervision of Oscar Edwards, playground director. Just now the popular game for the girls is indoor baseball, which occupies time to the exclusion of everything else. The rivalry between the rooms is keen but good-natured, and interschool games are now put on. The girls are also planning to agitate for the laying out of tennis courts, and some of them are interested in football, though that has not become as generally popular as baseball.

The boys are favoring handball at present, with a modified form of football as a close second. There is also an unseasonable outburst of marbles, which are usually played only in the spring.

The young fellows at the school have a firm friendship for the men of the city fire department, who, when the dust becomes about ankle deep on the playground, respond right willingly to an S O S, and come with their big hose and give the grounds a thorough wetting.

The elaborate playground apparatus which many of the city and country schools have is also far removed from the single swing or "teeter-board" of our school days. Now there are rings and trapezes, revolving ladders and giant girders, slides and patent swings to harden youthful muscles and add zest in the play.

Yes, it's all very far removed form the old days when a deadly feud existed between the boys of Bakersfield and the lads of "Kern City." Then the youngsters only crossed Union Avenue, the dividing line, in gangs of 15 or 20, for [because] a lone straggler invited almost certain destruction.



Still longer ago occurred an incident which the "old-timers" love to tell, which happened in the days soon after the first schoolhouse was built here, down where H and California intersect now. The teacher handled the whole-smallfry of the town then, and evening he used to repair to the --ah-- cafe, where he would "sit in" at one of the numerous poker games.

One night it chanced that the teacher happened to find himself in the game with one of his big boys. The youngster took a good-sized "pot" and the instructor looked at him reproachfully and said, "Now, I didn't think you'd do that to your teacher."

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