

Orcutt Union School District
. a look back

1927-1936

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Orcutt Union School District ... a look back (1927-1936)

Introduction

What follows represents but a tiny slice of the history of the Orcutt Union School District - a glance back that offers some insight into how school was kept in the district in the 1920s and 1930s.

The information was gathered primarily through a review of the minutes of trustees meetings between April, 1927 and the end of the calendar year in 1936. The original intent was to survey the first ten years of the district's operations, 1922-1931, but no minutes could be found for the years 1922 through 1925 and most of 1926. Other resources included the newspaper archives of the Santa Maria Library, Bob Nelson's book, Old Town Orcutt (1987), archival material from the office of the Santa Barbara County Office of Education and the Map and the Imagery Laboratory of the University of California Santa Barbara.

If the minutes are a proper measure, board meetings for the years covered in this survey were extremely informal - and understandably so since more often than not the only attendees were the trustees themselves and one or two district employees. Only on rare occasions were parents present. Still, while district business may have been conducted in a manner deemed casual by today's standards, board members appear to have been no less dedicated to providing a quality program for Orcutt's youngsters. Not unlike today, much of the board's time was spent considering matters related to personnel, student activities and paying their bills. And since those years between 1927 and 1936 included a good portion of the Great Depression, the challenges faced by school districts during that period - a period of diminished resources and economic uncertainty - were little different from those facing today's public schools.

In those formative years, board minutes were kept by the clerk, a trustee elected to that position by the other board members. The board president was chosen in a like manner.

Records of these early Orcutt board activities were often sketchy, lacking both detail and continuity and, consequently, from time to time, this writer has offered comments intended to clarify the content, taking care not to alter the document's integrity or historical perspective. These comments are in bold type and so easily recognized.

As readers will note, trustees from this era, likely lacking experience and perhaps uncertain of their roles, relied heavily on common sense to guide their decision making. Individually and collectively, they were inclined to take a direct approach to problem solving, rarely delegating responsibilities and then only to the principal and one or two other employees. They were of an independent mindset and made it clear at times that they did not welcome what they deemed intrusions by the county office.

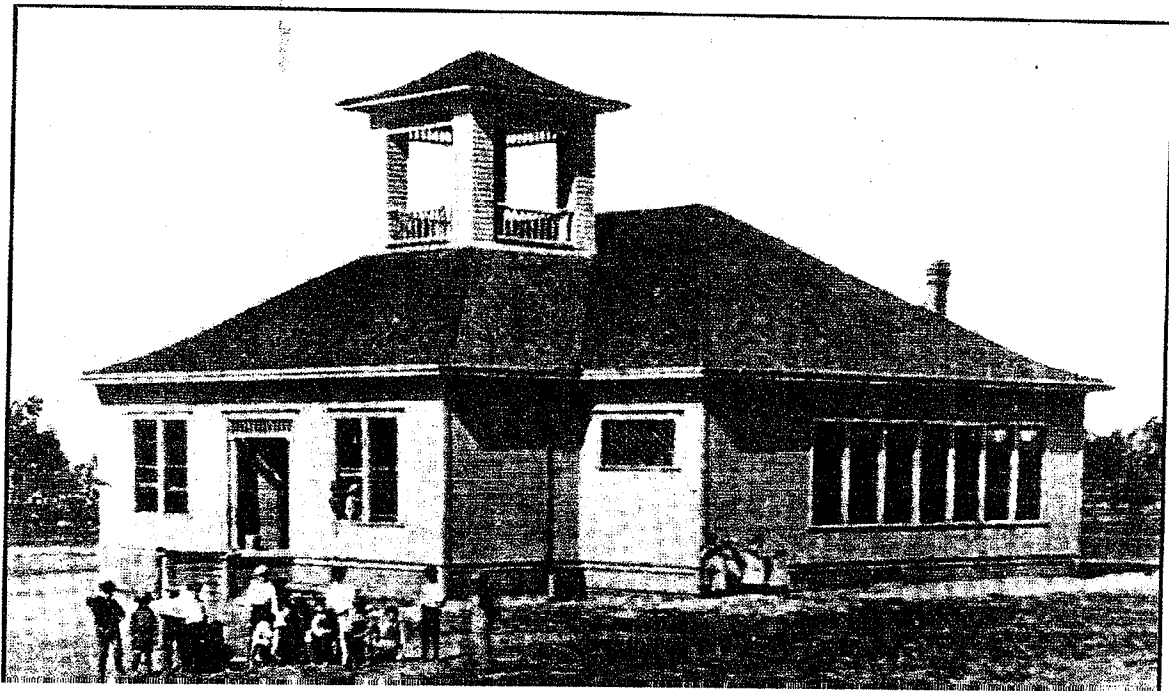
Origin of the Orcutt District

In 1907, the La Graciosa School District, which had been formed in 1884, was renamed the Orcutt School District and apparently the La Graciosa schoolhouse was abandoned at



Student body at the La Graciosa School, c. 1900

that time. In his book, Old Town Orcutt (1987), Bob Nelson states that the La Graciosa schoolhouse was relocated that same year, 1907, to a site next to the Forbes and Johnson Merchandise Store on the southwest corner of Broadway and Clark. That was confirmed in a July 18, 1907 article in the *Santa Maria Times* that reported, "the Forbes and Johnson merchandise store, experiencing a rapid increase in business, bought the old Orcutt schoolhouse and will use it as a dry goods department." Obviously, it was the old La Graciosa schoolhouse they were referring to. Both the Forbes and Johnson store and the old schoolhouse were destroyed by fire in 1910. In 1921, the Orcutt School District and the Newlove School District were "unionized", which means simply that, having received the blessing of the county schools office, the two districts combined their territories and student populations to form a single district, thereafter to be called the Orcutt Union School District.



Orcutt's first public school shown in 1910

In July of that same year, the district purchased 13.5 acres from A.C. Soares, which would be the site of the new Orcutt School. District plans called for the erection of a

\$100,000 facility on the site, \$55,000 in bonds having already been approved. A reporter for the *Santa Maria Times* speculated that "most of the men from the oilfields will move their families into Orcutt when these splendid school facilities are provided." The new school opened in the fall of 1922.

By 1933, the Orcutt district had absorbed a number of adjacent districts which, because they were unable to maintain sufficient enrollment, were facing closure by the board of supervisors. (See map, next page) Then, as now, a district that was unable to maintain an average daily attendance of five or more pupils would be declared lapsed, their territory then distributed among adjoining districts. The Washington School District, established in 1881, was the oldest district to be absorbed by Orcutt. Others were Martin, Careaga, Bicknell, Pine Grove, and Betteravia.

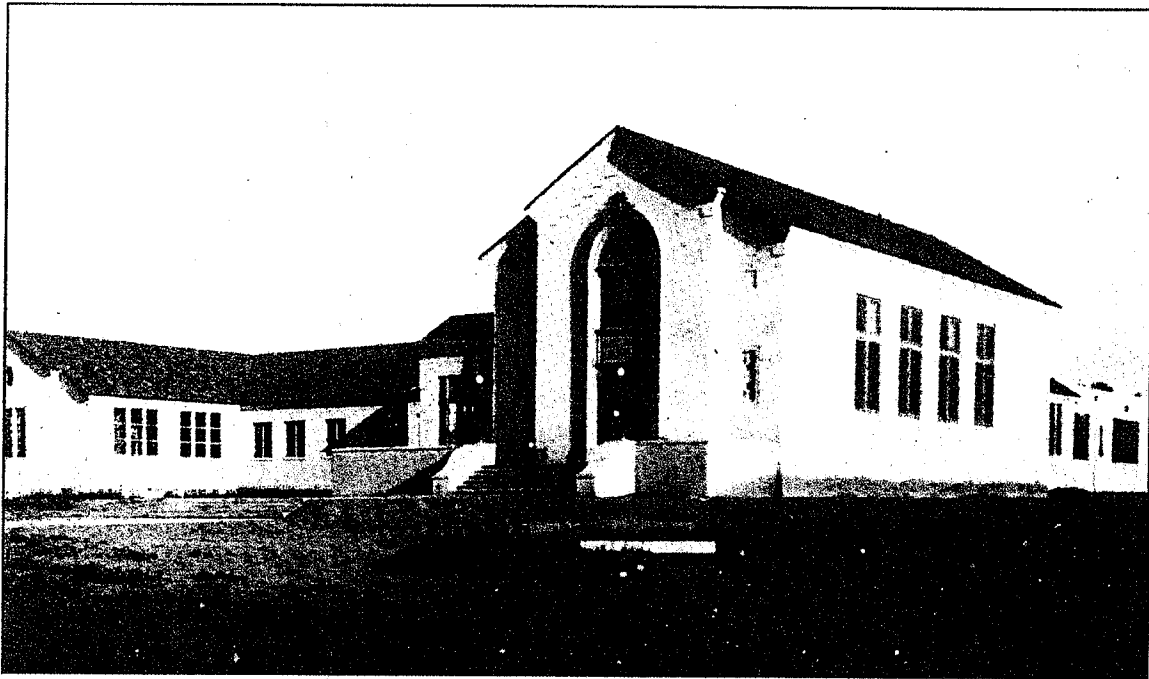
Note: Today, there are 20 school districts and two community college districts in Santa Barbara County. Their combined average daily attendance is better than 66,000 students.

In 1906, there were 60 school districts in the county with a combined average daily attendance of 5,464 students. But the oil boom dramatically altered the demographics of the area and, that year, shifting population clusters had prompted the formation of six new districts - Alcatraz, Betteravia, Careaga, La Mesa, Orella and Lakeview - while at least nine others - Cuyama, Wasioja, Pt. Sal, San Marcos, Bear Creek, Wise, Wood, La Vista and Highland - were forced to close their doors because of low enrollment.

These early schoolhouses were situated in isolated rural areas and often served as both classroom and community center. Typically, all grades were taught in a one (or sometimes two) room schoolhouse and it was not unusual for the student body to be made up almost entirely of the children from just three or four families.

Until such time as safe and reliable mechanical transportation made it possible to collect and transport students from remote areas to a central location, most learning took place in schoolhouses much like those described above. They were built near population clusters, close enough that children could walk or possibly ride a horse to school. The buildings were almost always wood-frame structures, heated during the cold months by a wood burning stove. That proved a deadly combination and few of

these old schoolhouses survive, most having been destroyed by fire.



The striking Orcutt School auditorium, 1923

Beginning of the Survey

1926-27

April 1, 1927: This was the first board meeting of the 1926-27 school year for which minutes are available. The principal purpose of this meeting was to canvas votes from the March election. Mr. Jones and a Mr. Grundell were elected to three year terms. C.A. Davis was elected president for the coming year and Edith Ryan was elected clerk.

April 28, 1927: This meeting was held solely for the purpose of approving the budget.

Note: No further details were offered nor was there a copy of the budget.

May 4, 1927: Present at this meeting were the following board members: Mrs. Edith Ryan, Mr. Davis, Mr. Jones, Mr. Grundell and Mr. Bert Dinnes.

The board voted to close school "on account of an Epidemic (sic) of Measles".

The other item for consideration at this meeting was the "re-election" of teachers for the coming year. All ten teachers were approved for "re-election", as was the principal, Mr. Bruce. The minutes were signed by the clerk, Edith Ryan.

Note: The time and place of board meetings is never mentioned. Mrs. Ryan would have been elected to the position of clerk at an organizational meeting earlier in the year and another trustee (unnamed) would have been elected president at that same time. First names were rarely used in the minutes, trustees being referred to as "Mr." or "Mrs."

1927-28

August 21, 1927: At the first meeting of the new school year, the principal item on the agenda was a review of the bids submitted for a new bus. They were as follows:

Studebaker	\$1,765
Ford	\$958-\$1,073
Graham Brothers	\$1,495
Reo	\$1,950
Junior Reo Speed Wagon	\$1,450

The vote was taken in closed session and the board opted to purchase the Graham Brothers bus.

A Mr. Milborn was present "to discuss his contract".

August 24, 1927: Mr. Milborn submitted his resignation but the minutes did not reveal Milborn's position or the reason for his resignation. Also at this meeting, Mr. Bush was empowered, with Mr. Pope's approval, to oversee all bus and janitor work.

Note: Mr. Bush was the grandfather of Robert Bush, the Orcutt district's current superintendent. Mr. Pope is frequently mentioned in the minutes and apparently he held a position of authority but his title is never revealed.

August 26, 1927: Board agreed to cancel the district's earthquake insurance. It also determined that, henceforth, there would be a charge of \$1 per night for use of school facilities unless the event was for charity.

September 7, 1927: Mrs. Grossman was appointed registrar at \$10/day for 6 days.

October 12, 1927: This was the last meeting of 1927. There was some discussion but the board took no action.

Note: No minutes could be found for the period between October, 1927 and May, 1928.

May 5, 1928: This was an organizational meeting. Mr. Davis was elected president and Mrs. Ryan elected clerk, both to serve for the next school year.

All teachers were "re-elected" at this meeting also.

Note: Mr. Jones had resigned from the board in April and was replaced by Mr. Correll. The composition of the board then was: Mr. Dinnes, Mr. Grundell, Mrs. Ryan, Mr. Correll and Mr. Davis.

June 4, 1928. Special meeting. Mr. Pope announced that \$85 per pupil had been apportioned by the Board of Supervisors.

There was discussion at this time of the "situation at Careaga". That discussion included the possibility that school would be discontinued there and the Careaga students would begin attending Orcutt. No action was recorded.

1928-29

July 11, 1928. Mr. Cole and Mrs. Barea of the Careaga School District were present.

Note: It would appear that the purpose of their visit was to arrange for the Careaga students to begin attending the Orcutt School since a month later, at their August meeting, the board opted to give Careaga "a contract for the coming year".

It was not stated at this time but later there would be mention of a fee being paid by Careaga for having their students at Orcutt. Careaga was also obliged to arrange transportation for their students to and from school and they would approach the high school district to assist them in that regard.

The last item considered at this meeting resulted in the approval of a motion "to offer Casmalia \$700".

Note: The minutes do not elaborate.

September 5, 1928: Special meeting. There was discussion and, it appears, agreement to hire an additional teacher for seventh grade and to make Mr. McKenzie a principal/teacher. Mr. Pope was advised that another teacher should be hired.

October 10, 1928: The district approved the purchase of a Jacobsen Junior for \$230.

Note: It is not confirmed but the Jacobsen was probably a tractor.

(No minutes were found for the period between Oct. 10 and January 1, 1929)

January 1, 1929: The board authorized Mr. McKenzie to hire a kindergarten teacher.

March 29, 1929: Board election. The following day, the ballots were canvassed and approved. No change in board composition.

April 10, 1929: Three trustees from Careaga (Cole, Barea and Avila) were present at this meeting. They offered to guarantee the Orcutt district \$2,700 if Orcutt would contract with them for the 1929-30 school year. The offer was accepted. Two trustees from the Washington School District (Toy and Webster) were also present. The Orcutt board agreed to contract with them "on the same 10% district tax". That same offer was made to the Pine Grove School District.

Note: The nature of an arrangement for a "10% district tax" is unclear. What is clear is that these districts were struggling to stay open. Pine Grove would join with Orcutt in 1932, Careaga, Martin, Washington and Bicknell in 1933.

May 8, 1929: McKenzie's contract is renewed, his salary raised to \$2,700. The teaching staff was "re-elected" except for kindergarten, which was scheduled for a half day only. Janitor and bus driver contracts were renewed, as well. Additionally, a motion was passed in favor of hiring a music teacher for 2-1/2 days per week.

May 22, 1929: There was a clarifying statement issued by McKenzie: "We are to get services of the music man for two half days per week".

June 4, 1929: The board approved installation of "cork carpet in the classrooms and corridor" and the refinishing of students desks at the rate of \$1.75 per desk.

1929-30

October 13, 1929: At their first meeting for the 1929-30 school year, the board authorized McKenzie to put screens up in the hot lunch room. In a discussion of holidays, they declared November 29 a holiday and set Christmas Vacation from December 21 to January 6.

December 10, 1929: Mr. Humboltz was given a new contract as bus driver, his salary to be \$25 per month.

February 4, 1930: The board agreed that "school will be dismissed for the remainder of the week if attendance is as low on February 5 as it was on February 4."

Note: One can only surmise that the low attendance was due to the presence of a contagious disease, flu or measles, perhaps.

February 11, 1930: The board received a financial report on the hot lunch program. Bank deposits amounted to \$698 and there were expenditures of \$642. There was consideration given to starting a free lunch program but no action was taken. The board also considered a request for an unidentified outside group to use the hot lunch department and corridor for card sales. The request was "unamiously" approved.

March 22: The board voted to dispose of an overhead ladder.

Carrole and Rojas announced their candidacy for trustee position.

April 9, 1930: For the first time, there is mention of the use of warrants to pay the district's bills.

Canvass of election returns.

May 25, 1930: The board approved the "re-election" of all members of the teaching staff. They also officially recognized May Day as a holiday. Davis was elected president, Mrs. Ryan elected clerk.

May 11, 1930: The board signed an agreement with the Bank of Italy that established a program called Thrift in School to begin in the fall. The board agreed, too, that contracting districts (Pine Grove, Washington, Careaga and Bicknell) be "given contracts for 20% for next year."

Election of board officers. Dinnes elected president, Ryan elected clerk.

McKenzie's contract renewed.

June 4, 1930: Trustees from the Careaga district were present. Following some discussion, the Careaga trustees consented to a "10% special tax".

Note: We can only assume that the tax was imposed on Careaga district residents and revenues thus generated used to compensate Orcutt for the added expense of providing schooling for the Careaga students.

At this same meeting, Mr. Bush had his contract extended and Mr. McKenzie was given a \$60 raise.

June 11, 1930: It was agreed to begin the music program and Mr. Hayes (apparently the music teacher) was given a 10 month contract for \$750.

June 25, 1930: Bids were opened for the replacement of the "present GMC bus chassis". Bidders were Mack, Reo, Fageol, Ford, Dodge, White and International. The low bid was submitted by Fageol for \$1,681.

June 28, 1930: The board approved the construction of an oiled gravel walk on Dyer Street to Pinal.

Jones Book Store contacted to renovate 100 desks.

August 13, 1930: Mrs. Chapman was hired to supervise the hot lunch program, to be paid \$2 per day.

1930-31

October 27, 1930: The Fageol bus was not large enough. The county agreed to take back the bus and allow value paid toward purchase of larger bus. No decision at this time.

November 12, 1930: The Friday after Thanksgiving was declared a holiday.

The old GMC chassis was offered for sale to Fred Bush for \$10 without the magneto, \$25 with magneto and axle.

December 10, 1930: Mr. Bush paid \$25 for the chassis, including the magneto and axle.

March 14, 1931: Mr. McKenzie reported that the tennis courts are to be finished with concrete.

April 3, 1931: Canvass of ballots from March 27 election. Board is now constituted as follows: C.A. Davis, Mr. Dinnes, Mr. Correll, Herman Balmes (who replaced Ryan), and Mr. Rojas. (In August, Rojas will resign and be replaced by Mrs. Ada Patten)

April 8, 1931: May Day once again declared a holiday.

May 2, 1931: Board approved the teaching staff for rehire.

McKenzie was authorized to purchase furniture for the teachers' rest room. (The school had ten teachers at this time: One man, one married female and eight unmarried females)

May 13, 1931: Mr. Bush's salary raised to \$190 per month. Mr. McKenzie was rehired as the principal at \$239.62 per month.

June 10, 1931: Board agreed to hire a dentist, Dr. Leland Smith, to do dental work for the coming year. Board also agreed to take care of children from the Pan American Lease provided there was no objection from Casmalia.

May Grisham was granted ten additional sick days and also was paid the difference between her salary and the salary of the substitute teacher, or approximately \$1.50 per day.

1931-32

August 18, 1931: Ryan resigns. Board approves purchase of BK Boosters on the two White buses.

The budget was approved as written. (These minutes were signed by "C.A. Davis, Clerk per L.H. McKenzie").

September 9, 1931: Mrs. McKennen allowed to take home any left over food each Friday.

October 14, 1931: May Grisham to be paid \$1.50 per day until legal limit is reached at end of 5 months.

November 11, 1931: November 27 declared a holiday

December 9, 1931: Considered applications for bus driver or general work. All bus drivers must have physical exams by licensed physician.

January 13, 1932: Only business recorded was the signing of warrants.

March 9, 1932: A temporary budget was presented by Principal McKenzie and approved by the board.

The board members for the 1932-33 school year were listed as: Correll, Davis, Balmes, B.T. Dinnes and Patten. (Correll would be replaced by Ernest Righetti following the board election in 1933).

April 1, 1932: Canvass of votes from March election. Certified and mailed to county supt.

April 13, 1932: A request for a leave of absence by May Grisham was denied.

Voted to purchase cloth window shades for classrooms and also purchase 6 bus tires.

May 5, 1932: Bert Dines elected to president of board, Mrs. Patten elected clerk.

May 11, 1932: Maximum salary for teachers for grades set at \$1,600 per year, minimum at \$1,400 per year, kindergarten teachers to receive \$1,350. Principal's salary set at \$2,400 per year.

The board also declared that all teachers employed by the Orcutt Union School District "must live in the Orcutt district."

Accepted resignations of Miss Hart and Miss Cleek.

May 18, 1932: Contracting districts "agree to contract with Orcutt for next year if their budget can be reduced by the same percentage as Orcutt's."

Note: No further explanation offered.

June 7, 1932: Board approved a budget of \$28,292. Three new teachers hired.

July 18, 1932: Bus insurance to be let for bid.

Public meeting on budget. Discussion of "matters pertaining to school economy."

1932-33

August 10, 1932: Bids advertised for bus and building insurance.

August 19, 1932: Herman Balmes resigns from board.

Bus insurance contract awarded to Tomasini Insurance, premium to be \$560.69.

August 25, 1932: Building insurance also awarded to Tomasini, premium to be \$357.00.

Board declared that all auto repairs were to be done locally, if possible.

School calendar compiled by Mrs. Edwards was accepted by board.

Note: Mrs. Edwards was Muriel Edwards, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools.

September 21, 1932: Discussed "several matters pertaining to school business."

October 12, 1932: Discussed new report cards and marking system.

Note: The district begins feeling the effects of the Depression.

November 9, 1932: Sick leave for teachers is cut from ten days to five. Pay for substitutes set at \$7 per day. Lewis Crain appointed to board.

Davis to interview prospective new trustee.

December 14, 1932: Letter to Mrs. Edwards asking that Lewis Crain be appointed trustee to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Herman Balmes.

January 11, 1933: A petition is to be sent to the State Legislature regarding decreases in school appropriations.

Board announces major salary reductions: Kindergarten teachers to receive \$1,250 per year, all others \$1,400. Principal to receive \$1,900. "These are maximum figures, to be decreased if further reductions in budget is necessary."

The board approved a motion to relieve May Grisham of the requirement of having to live in Orcutt.

February 8, 1933: McKenzie instructed to see about re-erection of "Drive Slow" signs on Pinal Avenue.

Decided to have old phonograph repaired.

A tree purchased by Orcutt Womans Club to be planted in front of school.

March 8, 1933: Discussed with P.T.A Executive Board the funds for the dental clinic. Program appears to have been abandoned and request made to return funds to district.

April 7, 1933: Canvass of votes from March election.
Results: Newlove: Righetti - 5 votes, Patten - 5 votes
Orcutt: Righetti - 40 votes, Patten - 39 votes

Board declared in favor of 9 month school year.

April 12, 1933: Present are: Dinnes, Davis, Crain, Correll, Patten and Ernest Righetti, trustee elect.

Coordinating Committee recommends to board that all teachers be rehired, if possible, with some to be employed part time.

Board agreed to act as the Game Committee at the P.T.A. picnic in May.

May 1, 1933: Board announces that "As of this date, teacher sick leave is eliminated and the substitute will receive the salary of the absent teacher."

Dinnes elected board president, Ada Patten to serve as Clerk.

Dental clinic officially abandoned.

May 9, 1933: All teachers required to give one day's notice before returning to school after an illness.

Salaries listed for all teachers (by name) and the principal. It was stated that these were maximum figures that were subject to reduction if there was a need for a budget cut.

Clerk instructed to write letters of dismissal to teachers Messick and Lynn.

Mr. Righetti offered two cows for loan to the district to supplement milk for the lunch program. Clerk is instructed to write to Dr. Main regarding milk donation by Righetti.

District will run a bus to picnic if Mr. Bush is willing to drive.

May 10, 1933: The following day, May 11, was declared a minimum day to allow children to attend the circus due to its "educational value".

Set pay for substitutes at the same level as beginning teacher's salary.

Lakeview School District, approached earlier about joining with the Orcutt district, declined the offer.

May 17, 1933: Bicknell representatives met with board to discuss contracting for students to attend Orcutt School. Present were two trustees and several residents of the Bicknell district and the president of the high school board of trustees. It was agreed that, pending an agreement with the high school whereby they would transport the Bicknell students, Orcutt would agree to provide educational services for those students for the 1933-34 school year. Bicknell to levy a 10 cent tax to pay transportation costs.

May 24, 1933: Special meeting called by teachers to discuss matters pertaining to salary and school programs. Teachers present at a board meeting: May Grisham, Hazel Kirkhall, Elizabeth Conlin and Edna Schultz.

An agreement with the Bicknell trustees was "solidified".

Trustees for 1933-34: Dinnes, Crain, Righetti, Patten and Davis.

May 30, 1933: Special meeting. McKenzie instructed to "ask Mrs. Edwards to bring contracts with her next Thursday."

Note: It is assumed that the contracts are for agreements with Bicknell et al.

Board met with teacher Kermit Lynn, who had earlier been notified of his dismissal. Lynn, accompanied by his father and his aunt, asked the board to reconsider his dismissal. (They did, in fact, reconsider but did not change their decision).

May 31, 1933: Special meeting called by president Dinnes. Only other board member present was the clerk, Mrs. Patten. Also present was Miss Taggart and Mr. Ormsby. There was a discussion of Lynn's rating and that of other teachers and the principal. Taggart and Ormsby recommended that the board meet with a number of other teachers "whose work was not showing satisfactory improvement."

Note: Taggart and Ormsby worked out of the county office. Lelia Ann Taggart was the Director for Rural Education and George Ormsby was a general supervisor and also Supervisor of Attendance.

June 6, 1933: Reviewed teacher applications. Applicants to visit with board before decision to hire is made.

June 12, 1933: There was a discussion to determine the feasibility of putting the clocks on electricity. No decision was made.

June 28, 1933: Budget for 1933-34, as prepared by Mr. Dinnes, was presented and accepted.

July 19, 1933: Trustees from Bicknell (Mrs. Page, Mrs. Deleisseques); Pine Grove (Lincoln Eames); Washington (Mrs. Remsburg, Mrs. Webster); and Careaga (Mr. Cole, Mrs. Barea) districts were present. All were advised that their petitions had to be signed and returned to the County Superintendent's office by July 28 in order to complete unionization by August 21.

Also present was Mrs. Edwards, who met with trustees of contracting districts and advised them that districts that do not unionize or maintain their own school would receive no apportionment from the state for 1934-35.

A new teacher was hired for \$1,500 per year with the understanding that he would also be required to drive the bus.

1933-34

August 23, 1933: Turned over bank account for hot lunch program to Mrs. Gann.

Agreed to serve hot chocolate free for those eating at school.

Determined teacher grade level placements for coming year and advised Mr. McKenzie to notify teachers of their assignments.

September 6, 1933: Agreed to comply with the National Recovery Act of 1933 by putting employees on as short a work schedule as possible, a maximum of 40 hours per week.

Agreed not to discontinue teacher supervision of buses.

Agreed to eliminate mid-year promotions.

September 13, 1933: In an effort to better monitor available funds, the board agreed to divide the year into nine equal parts, then keep records of expenditures each month.

October 11, 1933: A meeting of the board was called to "discuss problems pertaining to school matters". All teachers were required to attend.

November 8, 1933: Discussed possibility of establishing a new merit system.

Miss Taggart to work out new etiquette project.

November 20, 1933: Fred Bush advised the board against shifting old body off the bus onto a new chassis. Mr. Bush suggested that a new bus should be bought or rented.

January 10, 1934: McKenzie to write to Mrs. Edwards to see if surplus in teachers' salary fund could be used as bonuses for teachers who intend to attend summer school.

McKenzie to request inspector from State Department of Education to inspect buildings for earthquake soundness.

January 17, 1934: Discussion and agreement on an awards system whereby a letter will be presented to children who earned points for working in the hot lunch program.

McKenzie has submitted a CWA application requesting a sum of \$3,727 be spent for improvements on school buildings and grounds.

Note: CWA (Civil Works Administration), a part of Roosevelt's New Deal, was unveiled on November 8, 1933. It created manual labor jobs for the unemployed. These were construction jobs, mainly improving or constructing buildings and bridges but also schools. The program, which spent \$200 million and created jobs for 4 million people, was terminated on March 31, 1934.

No indication of the nature of the work to be done by CWA for the district.

Mr. Ormsby met with board to present outline for a student awards program.

February 14, 1934: McKenzie reported that CWA work for the school had been approved.

March 14, 1934: McKenzie to write to Mrs. Edwards regarding earthquake inspection.

April 6, 1934: Special Meeting to canvass votes. The results were: Dinnes 41 votes; Crain 44 votes; Mrs. Byrd Smith 1 vote.

Discussion continued on earthquake inspection and distribution of salary surplus.

April 11, 1934: It was decided that board members would conduct their own inspection of building to see if state inspector was necessary.

Requested \$25 from PTA to supplement hot lunch program until end of the year.

Agreed to apportion balance of excess in teacher salary fund at next meeting.

May 1, 1934: Special Meeting for the purpose of electing officers for 1934-35 school year. Dinnes elected president, Patten elected clerk.

Present were: Davis, Dinnes, Crain, Righetti and Patten.

May 9, 1934: McKenzie resigns and is given letter of recommendation. He is replaced by Horace Rutherford.

Salary surplus distributed as follows: Hays (Music teacher) to receive \$15, each teacher to receive \$37.50, McKenzie to receive \$50.

Voted to rehire present teaching staff.

May 17, 1934: Agreed to maintain same salary schedule

Pending matters: Selection of new principal, consider hiring Mrs. Gann as vice-principal.

May 24, 1934: Agreed to hold summer school "due to the emergency that exists". Classes to be held from 9-12 each day as soon as school is out. Taught by Mrs. Gann and limited to students recommended by teachers.

Note: It appears that the emergency was, in fact, a strong recommendation from "the supervisors" (Taggart and Ormsby) that the district retain some 50 or 60 eighth grade

students because they were not prepared to go on to high school.

May 30, 1934: Met with Nowell Dice, principal applicant. To meet with one other applicant, Mr. Randolph, on Saturday.

Miss Taggart to meet with parents regarding grade promotion.

June 2, 1934: Met with Randolph. Selection of new principal pending.

June 7, 1934: Board opted to disregard the recommendation by the Board of Supervisors that 50 to 60 eighth graders be subject to retention (word used was "retardation"). Feel that summer school will bring them up to standard and the board will instead abide by the recommendation of the teachers regarding promotion.

Horace Rutherford hired as new principal.

Mrs. Gann given gas allowance for trip to Santa Barbara to purchase materials for summer school.

Mr. Bush outlined work to be done over the summer. Authorized to purchase paint and have bus tires recapped.

Clerk to write to "clock people" asking that electrical system be installed.

Dinnes and Crain to supervise summer school.

June 27, 1934: Preliminary budget approved and sent to county office.

July 19, 1934: Agreed to sell old lawnmower.

Decided to overhaul well immediately.

July 29, 1934: Building and bus insurance placed with R.E. Tomasini.

1934-35

August 1, 1934: Budget hearing. Present were 3 board members and 2 patrons, Frank Carlson and Mrs. R.L. Lyon.

August 29, 1934: Requested that the clerk write to Mrs. Edwards regarding the title to the building of districts that have been annexed by the Orcutt district.

September 8, 1934: Discussed asking for a student teacher.

Rutherford reported that he had been advised by the county superintendent of school's office that his opposition to their recommendation that 42 students be retained was unethical. He was further advised that the county school board had the power to withhold the diplomas from those students. Following his report, the board opted to abide by the recommendation for retention handed down by the county office.

Agreed that May Grisham be allowed to hire either Mrs. Hart or Mrs. Taylor to ride the bus for her.

Mrs. Patten reported a telephone conversation with Mrs. Edwards. Advised by Edwards that excess teacher funds must be used for emergencies only.

If there is a student teacher, he/she could live in housekeeping room.

Authorized wiring of rooms to accommodate use of motion picture machine.

September 18, 1934: Board received a letter from Mrs. Edwards regarding retardation (retention) in which she stated that "the children retained will, with reasonable effort from their teachers and the pupil, be able to complete the eighth grade without further retardation."

Received notice from the county office that the non-apportioned salary funds were not to be distributed as planned but had to be used for emergencies only.

Rutherford authorized to purchase two small mimeograph machines.

Patten reported that she had been assured by Mrs. Cameron that it was not the desire of the county office to "run" the school but merely to give help when possible.

Rutherford interviewed a cadet teacher willing to spend 4 months at school if allowed a small wage sufficient to buy his groceries. Rutherford to take it up with county office.

October 9, 1934: Mr. Bush has the opportunity to purchase a used motor from Fageol that would provide enough power to "take the hill run".

Board agreed to purchase a new hectograph.

Note: A hectograph was an early duplicating machine that used a glycerin coated layer of gelatin to make copies of typed or written material.

Discussed matter of supervisors using school building, students and teachers to put on demonstration. No action taken for "lack of unanimity".

Rutherford to see about having some work done at school through the SRA Program.

Note: State Relief Administration (SRA) was a make work program for the unemployed and funded by the state. It was much like the WPA and other federal programs that had been created under Roosevelt's New Deal.

October 11, 1934: Meeting with Mrs. Cameron regarding giving demonstrations at school on October 26. Permission was granted.

There was discussion centered on county office supervisors desire to "run" the school instead of helping the principal run the school. Dinnes spoke of the lack of cooperation on the part of the supervisors during the past year.

Mrs. Cameron once again emphasized that it was the desire of the county office to work "in full harmony" with the board and the principal.

November 1, 1934: Bush advised purchase of new Lycoming engine for Fageol bus. Cost to run \$498 plus freight and installation.

November 14, 1934: Granted permission to take 8th grade classes to Santa Maria to see the new city hall.

December 12, 1934: Board looked at report cards for those "retarded" children.

Signing of warrants.

January 9, 1935: Change of bus schedule discussed. Decided to have Mr. Drumm make two trips in the afternoon to eliminate need for Mr. Radford as an after school driver. Want to move toward eliminating Mr. Radford entirely after report that he failed to observe a caution sign and had almost wrecked the bus.

January 16, 1935: Granted permission for Mr. Lawson to use monies set aside for manual training for purchase of new jig saw.

February 13, 1935: Rutherford started a new program for last hour and a half of each day.

Board to contact Lakeside district trustees regarding consolidation.

Attendance report: 35 students absent today.

March 19, 1935: Rutherford to see Principal Bruce regarding loan of wheelbarrows for SRA workers while on school grounds.

To begin charging 1 cent per cup for hot chocolate.

Board asked Rutherford to get a bus drivers license.

April 4, 1935: Meeting to canvass ballots. There were 14 ballots cast. Chester Davis re-elected to new three year term.

April 23, 1935: Rutherford presented rating sheets for teachers and a proposed budget.

SRA men to commence work this week. Program organizers encouraged to select local unemployed men.

May 1, 1935: Election of board officers. President: Dinnes, Clerk: Patten.

Another mention of need to require teachers to live in the district. Placement of teachers delayed pending discussion with Rutherford.

Principal to supervise hot lunch program next year.

Salaries for grade teachers set at \$1,400 per year plus \$50 for those who have attended summer school. Principal salary set at \$2,000 plus \$50 for attending summer school.

SRA Project: Rutherford to have plans ready for supervisor. To include building of new library on outdoor stage, new door for hot lunch room and derrick for water well.

May 8, 1935: Ordered that no outside cars to be repaired in school garage.

Delayed placement of teachers for next year.

May 15, 1935: Bush's new salary to be \$141.70 per month for 12 months and 2 weeks vacation.

To offer Pine Grove School and outbuildings for sale for \$50.

To deed Washington schoolhouse back to landowner.

May Grisham granted permission to live in Santa Maria for next school year but must establish residence in Orcutt for following year.

Boy Scouts given permission to use auditorium for entertainment to raise money for uniforms.

Discussion of rental or purchase of new bus.

June 20, 1935: Teacher assignments for next year to be decided by Rutherford.

Another teacher, Mrs. Dunlap, advised that she has until July 1 to make decision to move to Orcutt.

July 10, 1935: Agreed to paint three old buses.

Contract let for new electric pump for water well.

Old White bus to be sold for \$250.

July 19, 1935: Approved budget adjustment. Added \$3,000 for new bus and new library on outdoor stage.

1935-36

August 6, 1935: New K teacher hired: Faith French Delamartar.

Budget hearing. No attendees from public.

August 28, 1935: Anna McGullig hired to sub for Edna Schultz at \$1,300 per year.

August 25, 1935: Board members assigned specific areas of responsibility.

Patten: Cafeteria	Dinnes: Work projects
Crain: Transportation	Davis and Righetti: Budget/finance
Davis: Legal	

September 18, 1935: Signed warrants and transportation agreement.

September 25, 1935: Discussion of overloaded buses. Check with high school to see if they will transport 10 or 12 Carreaga students.

Letter from DMV: Bus driver Radford denied new driver's license.

October 9, 1935: Mr. Bush met with board to discuss his duties.

Mid-year classes left as they are at present. Principal given permission to move up some of the overage boys.

Note: There is another large gap here between October of 1935 and March of 1936. Minutes then become very sketchy as the end of the calendar year approaches.

March 18, 1936: Board goes on record as opposing the use of any physical means in the correction of children. Any teacher violating that rule will be asked to resign.

April 8, 1936: Board sends a strong reminder that all teachers must live in the district. No exceptions.

May 13, 1936: There was discussion (in open session) of dismissal of a teacher, Miss Conlin.

May 21, 1936: Hired Joe Nightingale to teach junior high. He also was to drive the bus.

May 27, 1936: Miss Conlin forced to resign because of the new retirement law.

Patten resigns as of the end of the school year and is replaced by Mrs. Siler.

August 14, 1936: Board passed a resolution stating that never, at any time, had they considered hiring Mr. Rutherford as district superintendent.

Note: At this point the district has been in existence for some 14 years yet this is the first mention of a district superintendent. Rutherford, denied the position, tendered his resignation at the very next meeting.

November 12, 1936: Crain resigns from the board and is replaced by Orin Ford.

End of Survey

Afterword

During the years surveyed - between 1927 and 1936 - there is an obvious refinement in the sophistication of these boards and the manner in which they conducted district business. On the other hand, they also reveal ongoing conflicts with the county superintendent of schools, Muriel Edwards, and others who worked out of that office. There is a sense that the county office is trying to "run" the Orcutt program, rather than offering support and guidance. As revealed in the minutes, the Orcutt board did, in fact, ignore a directive from Mrs. Edwards regarding the retention of those 40-60 (the number varies) eighth graders deemed unprepared for the high school program but then relented when advised that the county board had the power to withhold diplomas.

While not covered in this survey, in October and November of 1941, just prior to the beginning of World War II, another conflict arose which prompted an exchange of letters between Edwards and the Orcutt board of trustees. In October of 1941, at a time when war was all but a certainty and the nation was experiencing an explosion of patriotic fervor, an undesignated number of Orcutt students, because of religious beliefs, suddenly refused to salute the flag or say the Pledge of Allegiance. All were immediately expelled from school. The letters tell the rest of the story. The first is a lengthy plea from Edwards filled with philosophical meanderings, the second, a terse reply from the board. Copies of these letters are labeled Appendix 1.0, 1.1 and 2.0 at the end of this document.

An unresolved issue: Most of the information gathered for this brief history, although less comprehensive than anticipated, was nonetheless straightforward. There was, however, one imponderable: In the years covered by the survey, the minutes make no mention of a district superintendent, the single exception being the board's statement regarding Horace Rutherford (See p.27). Robert Bruce and Lendel McKenzie obviously had leadership roles but both are referred to as principals and it appears, in fact, that both were teacher/principals. However, a document found in the district archives, and compiled by a very reliable source, lists district superintendents from 1922 through 1991 (See Appendix 3.0). First on that list is Ralph Reiner, who served during the 1922-23 school year.

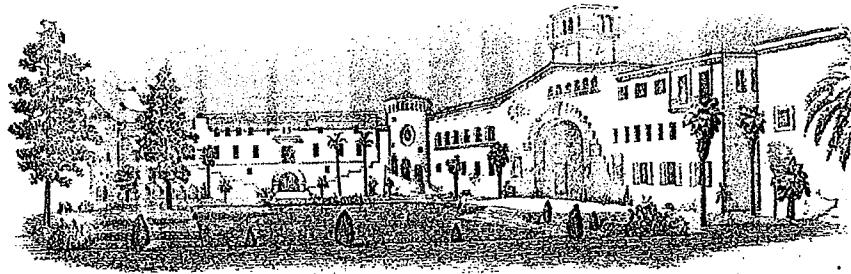
He was followed by Perry Cole, superintendent from 1923 through 1925; then Robert Bruce from 1925 through 1927, Lendel McKenzie from 1927 through 1935 and Horace Rutherford from 1935-1937. Why their names are not found in the minutes is a mystery, one I will leave for someone else to solve.

Jerry Kirkland
January, 2013

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

MURIEL EDWARDS
SUPERINTENDENTL. R. FURROW
CHIEF DEPUTYPAUL GRIM
ASSISTANT DEPUTYELIA ANN TAGGART
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONGEORGE W. ORMSBY
GENERAL SUPERVISOR AND
SUPERVISOR OF ATTENDANCEOLGA L. REED
GENERAL SUPERVISORJEROME T. LIGHT
SECONDARY COORDINATOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



BOARD OF EDUCATION

WILLIAM J. WILSON, PRESIDENT
SANTA MARIAMRS. ETHEL H. BAILEY
LOMPOCHAL D. CAYWOOD
GOLETAMRS. EMMA G. WOOD
CARPINTERIAMURIEL EDWARDS, SECRETARY
SANTA BARBARASANTA BARBARA COUNTY
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

November 19, 1941

To the Trustees
Orcutt Union School District
Los Alamos School District

Dear Friends:

A recent Attorney General's ruling covering the compulsory education law, and the rights of boards of trustees to compel conformance to regulations, makes it necessary for the attendance department of my office to act in the matter of the expelled children in your district. Your rights as trustees have not been in question at any time.

I have reason to believe that the parents of the expelled children desire that they return to school. I have made the parents understand that if the children return to school it must be without prejudice from home.

May I ask you to look at this problem as a learning situation? I need not tell you that frequently, learning is a slow process. We have this difficulty with some pupils in reading; with others in arithmetic, and so on down the list of subjects.

I have discovered that the children throughout the county — the children who do salute the flag, are awakened to the realization that they should so express and so exemplify the deeper meanings, the spirit of patriotism, what the flag means to them, that those meanings and that spirit will carry conviction to the others. I know that the teachers would like to have your confidence in them.

Because it is my conviction that all of us wish, especially in these times, to do everything possible to foster love and hope rather than hate and fear, I am asking that the children be received at school without a time stipulation in conforming to your regulation. I assure you from my heart that the children, the teachers and I will endeavor to create the kind of learning situations that will satisfy you all. It is my belief that those who approved your action would also approve your patience and forbearance.

Is it not more desirable to expose the children to the principles of

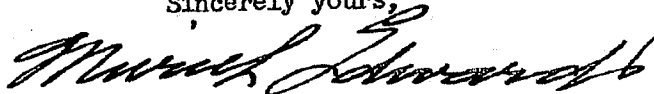
Appendix 1.0

government as taught in our public schools than to isolate them to the promulgation of other ideals?

I shall go with Mr. Ormsby to your districts on Monday, and we hope to meet the issue. If the expelled children return to school, it is my purpose to speak to the teachers and to all of the children. I shall be happy to have you present at that time.

I am making my request for the return of the children without a time stipulation, as an educator, as an official with a responsibility, and as a loyal American who would contribute to our children the deeper meanings of freedom and love of country, that we all sorely need for our own enrichment and our nobler living.

Sincerely yours,



Muriel Edwards
County Superintendent
of Schools

ME/bl

CC Mrs. Hylde R. Siler
Ernest Righetti
James Abeloe
Carl Carlson
Byron J. Billington
Mrs. Iva M. Fields
Alfonso A. Scolari
Frank A. Schelling

November 24, 1941

Mrs. Muriel Edwards
County Superintendent of Schools
Santa Barbara, County Schools
Santa Barbara, California

Dear Mrs. Edwards:

In consideration of your letter of November 19, 1941 the Board of Trustees of the Orcutt Union School met at the Orcutt Union School on November 24, 1941.

The Board decided that when the children concerned agree to salute and pledge allegiance to the United States flag, as requested on October 8, 1941 by the Board, the children may return and will be accepted without prejudice.

Every effort is being made by members of the Board to persuade the parents of these children to allow them to return to school and receive the social and educational benefits which deserve and to which they are entitled.

Sincerely,

Clerk of Board of Trustees

November 24, 1941

At a special meeting of the Board, with all members present but Mr. Abeloe, the Board of trustees considered a letter from Mrs. Edwards, County Supt. of Schools, and composed the above reply.

Meeting adjourned with no other business transacted.

Hylde R. Siler, Clerk

ORCUTT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

January 14, 1991

TO: Karen Holtz

FROM: Jack Garvin

SUBJECT: Superintendents of the Orcutt Union School District

Ralph O. Reiner	1922 - 1923
Perry Cole	1923 - 1925
Robert Bruce	1925 - 1927
Lendel McKenzie	1927 - 1935
Horace Rutherford	1935 - 1937
Hugh Bruce	1937 - 1945
Edward Crabtree	1945 - 1946
Joe Nightingale	1947 - June 1959
Harry Moore	June 1959 - June 1971
Amos Strawhun	July 1971 - June 1976
Robert Lindstrom	July 1976 - October 1979
Jack Garvin	November 1979 to present

