
REEDLEY

An Historical Sketch

According to the stories told by the Wech-i-kets tribe of the Yokuts Indians, the Reedley area along the Kings River has been a popular gathering and camping place for hundreds of years. They found the water not only a great comfort in the long hot summers, but also a source of food in the fish it brought and the animals that came to drink. When John Woodhouse Audubon explored this area in 1848, he reported seeing a herd of 1,000 elk feeding on the natural pasturage and drinking the cold water from the snows stored in the mountains to the north.

James Smith spotted this area as a good place to build and manage a ferry for crossing this river in 1855 at what is now the northwest point of the cemetery. He also built a hotel at the top of the bluff on what is now the east end of the "lower-bridge road." When the Butterfield stage came from Visalia and other points south on its way west and north, this offered a safe crossing and a valued rest-stop in this wild, open country of that day.

A Civil War veteran from Ohio, Thomas Law Reed, discovered the flat fields abundant with acres of grasses and flowers and decided that this was just the place to grow wheat. By 1886, he was farming 12,000 acres with 480 completely equipped mules between what is now Reedley (named after him) and Smith Mountain, three miles east. He was harvesting an average of 30 bushels to the acre and was the "Wheat King" of the state.

The rich land was dry a good part of the year, but the river made irrigation possible and soon canals from higher up the river made grape growing and tree fruit farming not only possible but very profitable. Settlement increased, orchards and vineyards flourished and, as more irrigation water became available, the people came from all parts of the world to make a real melting pot of this area.

The Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroads built lines through here and this opened markets for the succulent products that grew in such abundance. All this offered employment and that meant people; people required merchants and schools and banks and churches and Reedley developed as a result, finally incorporating in 1913.

It Started With Wheat



Plowing and seeding on Reed's wheat ranch, winter of 1892.



T. L. Reed's harvesting crews in 1893.



T. L. Reed ranch near present day Reed and Manning Avenues.





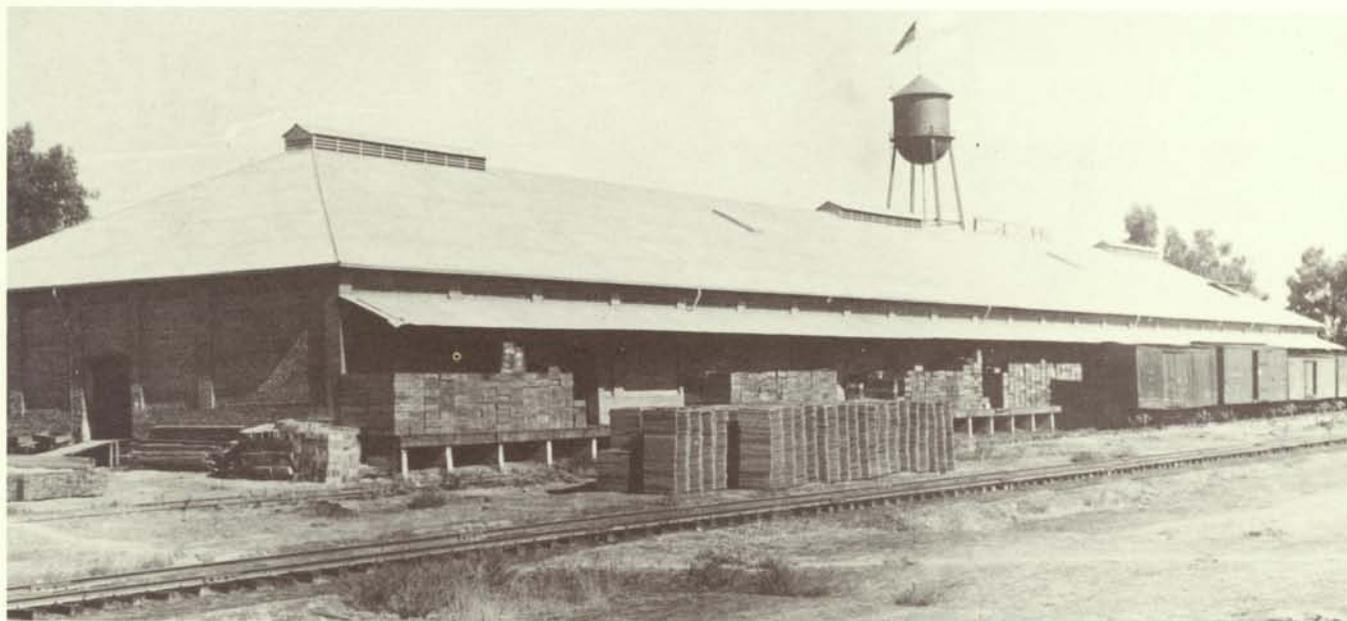
Reed warehouse which had been moved to Reedley from Traver in 1889.



Into Storage.



Passing through town with Bert Belknap and his ten mule team.

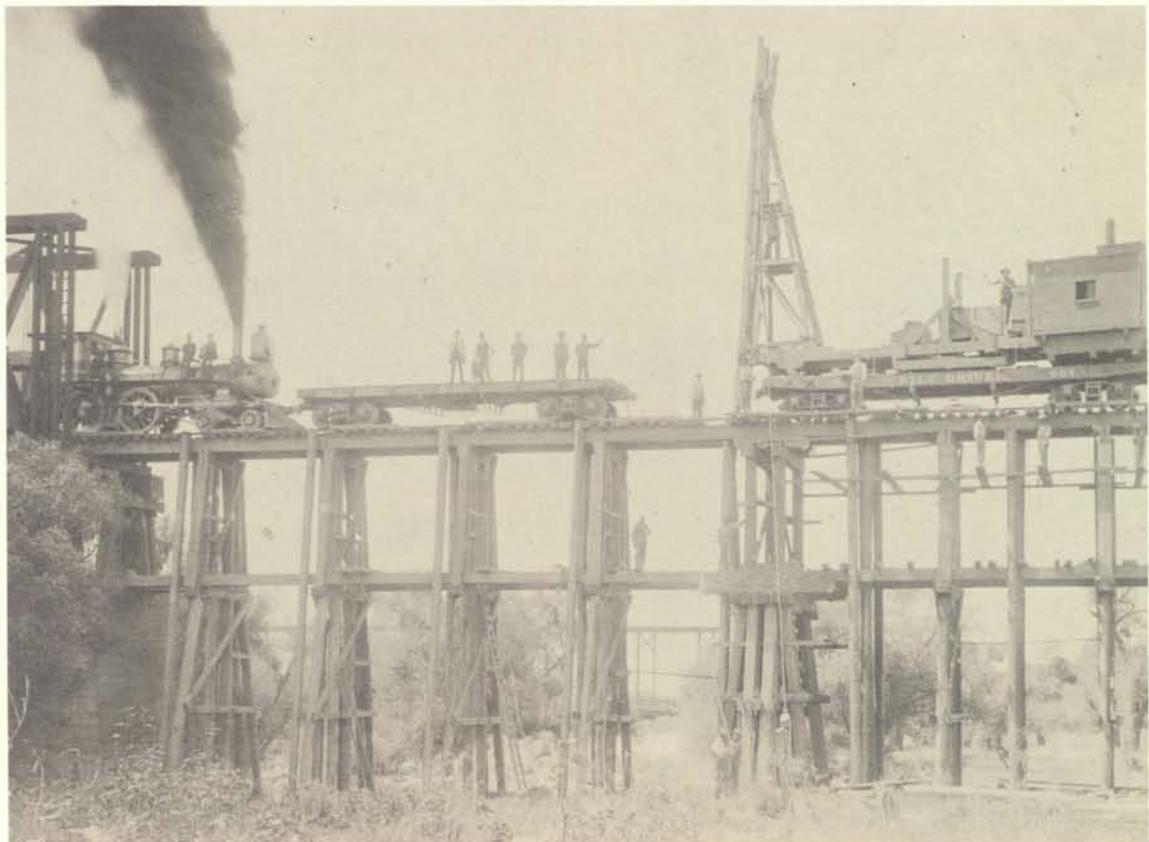


At one time this building, constructed in 1892, was recognized as the largest grain storage house west of the Mississippi.

Railroading



First train into Reedley at the Southern Pacific Depot in 1888 (Demolished 1972).



Finishing the Southern Pacific Railroad Bridge across the Kings River at Manning Avenue.



Agent F. M. Wasgatt and "Hank" Rasmussen in Southern Pacific office, 1911.



The Santa Fe came to Reedley in 1897. (Demolished 1981.) Note Arlington (later Grand) Hotel in background.

Diversification



Cutting peaches at the Bollinger Ranch.



Grape packing in the early nineteen-twenties.

The Beckwith Fig Plant on 13th Street near railroad tracks, employed 84 people.



Porter Brothers, shippers of raisins, green and dried fruit.





Dry yard at Bollinger Ranch.



California Peach Growers Plant.



Interior of California Peach Growers.



Mount Olive State Experimental Farm where first olive trees in the valley were planted.

Reedley Pioneers



James Smith, builder of Smith's Ferry and Hotel in 1855.



Mrs. James Smith, landlady at Smith's Ferry Hotel from 1855 to 1874.





H. F. Winnes in front of the Hotel Grand.



John Marlar at his livery barn on his Petaluma Cart.

A. P. Wedel and Pharis Hunsberger with 45 pounds of Reedley's finest.



Some Early Homes



The F. S. Knauer house, Reedley's first, on F and 11th Streets, was built in 1888 and also served as first post office.



The T. J. Bauder home on Reed Avenue, dates from 1888-89.



Built by Mutersbaugh before 1890, this is 808 North Avenue in 1904 with owners, the O. F. Besaw family.



808 North Avenue as remodeled in 1905 and still standing.



Arthur Back home on J. Street, built in 1905.



August Eymann home, 1905.



The Ed Reed home on Reed Avenue, 1905.



The J. Bergthold residence.



Daniel T. Eymann home, 1905.

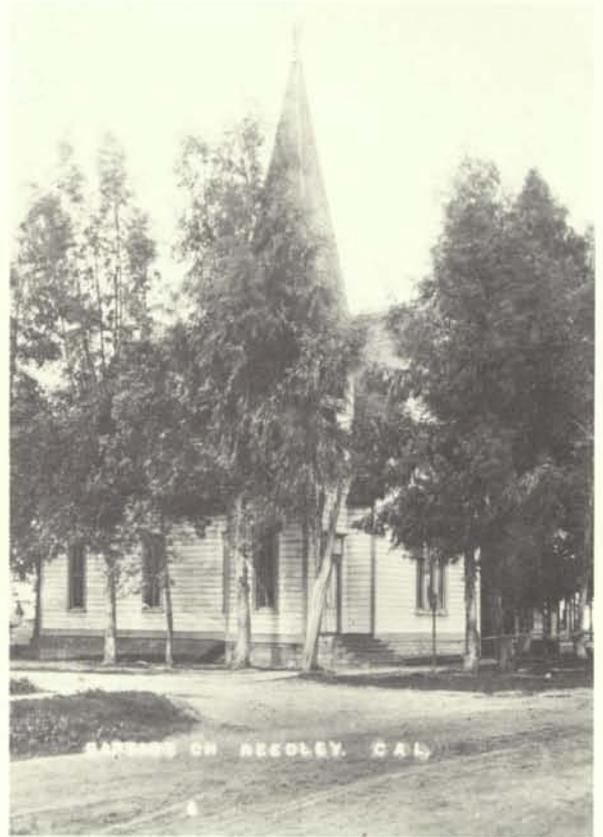


Unusual snow comes to Reedley on January 1, 1910.

Some Early Churches



Reedley's first church, the United Brethren, was built in 1889.



The First Baptist, built in 1891. (Picture circa 1908.)



In 1906 the First Mennonites built the church which still stands. Several additions have been made during the years.



Original Mennonite Brethren Church dates from 1908.



The Methodist-Episcopal Church (1892) and Parsonage built in 1901.



St. Anthony's Catholic Church was constructed of native rock from Smith Mountain. Occasion of the picture was confirmation Sunday, May 21, 1911.

Education

LOCAL SCHOOLS...



Graduating class of Washington Grammar School 1910. Exercises were held in the Opera House on 10th Street.



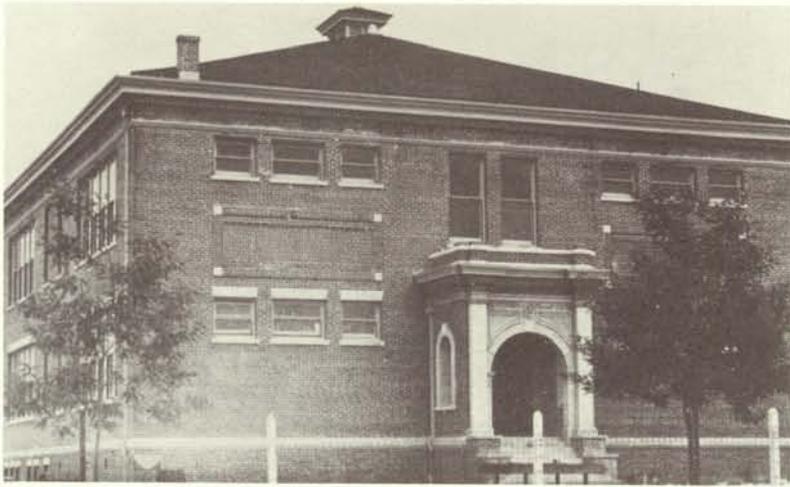
Reedley's first was Smith Ferry School north of town built in 1886 and was burned in 1889. Picture dates from Christmas, 1888.



First School in town was Reedley Grammar, built in 1891. It later became Washington Elementary.



A separate high school was built in 1905-06 on the corner of Reed and Dinuba Avenues.



A separate science building was added to the High School in 1912.



The original Lincoln School was constructed in 1911-12.



The new high school on North Avenue was dedicated in 1923.

General Grant (grades 7 & 8) was completed in 1923 and used until 1952.



The College, started in 1926, used high school facilities until this building was completed for its use in 1936.



Heedley Joint Union High School.



The first high school orchestra (1911) started a tradition of fine musical groups at Reedley schools.



Football Team, 1913.



Reedley High School student body in 1906.



Girls' Basketball.



Students ready for a parade.

RURAL SCHOOLS...

social and cultural centers for the areas surrounding Reedley



Riverside School west of Reedley was built in 1891 (Picture from a later date.)

Windsor School south of Reedley was built in 1892 (Picture circa 1900.)



The second Wahtoke School, a two room brick building, was built in 1912 and destroyed by fire in 1954.

Alta School, southeast of town, was built in 1916.



The beautiful Great Western Union School (1920-1953) north of Reedley.

A consolidation of Riverside and Riverbend Schools in 1921 made possible the construction of this Riverview School on La Jac Avenue.



Early Mail Days



The new Post Office, corner of 11th and G Streets was built in 1900. Picture dates from 1909 when a downed tree was being cut up.



About 1913 the Post Office occupied the old State Bank Building (built 1903) on corner of 10th and G Streets.

Mrs. F. S. Knauer, the first Reedley Postmaster, served for 31 years beginning in 1888 in her home.



James Knight, an early rural mail carrier, about 1900.



Hotels

HOSPITALITY...REEDLEY STYLE



Reedley Hotel built in 1888 or 89 by T. L. Reed. Picture dates from 1893. Burned down in 1902, rebuilt, burned again in 1910, rebuilt as is now.



Pacific Improvement Company built Arlington Hotel (later renamed Hotel Grand) in 1891-92. Top floor lost to fire in late nineteen-twenties.



Third Reedley (Simpson) Hotel. Picture from 1914.



Part of the Winnes (now Burgess) Hotel constructed in 1912 shows on the right of this 1913 street scene.

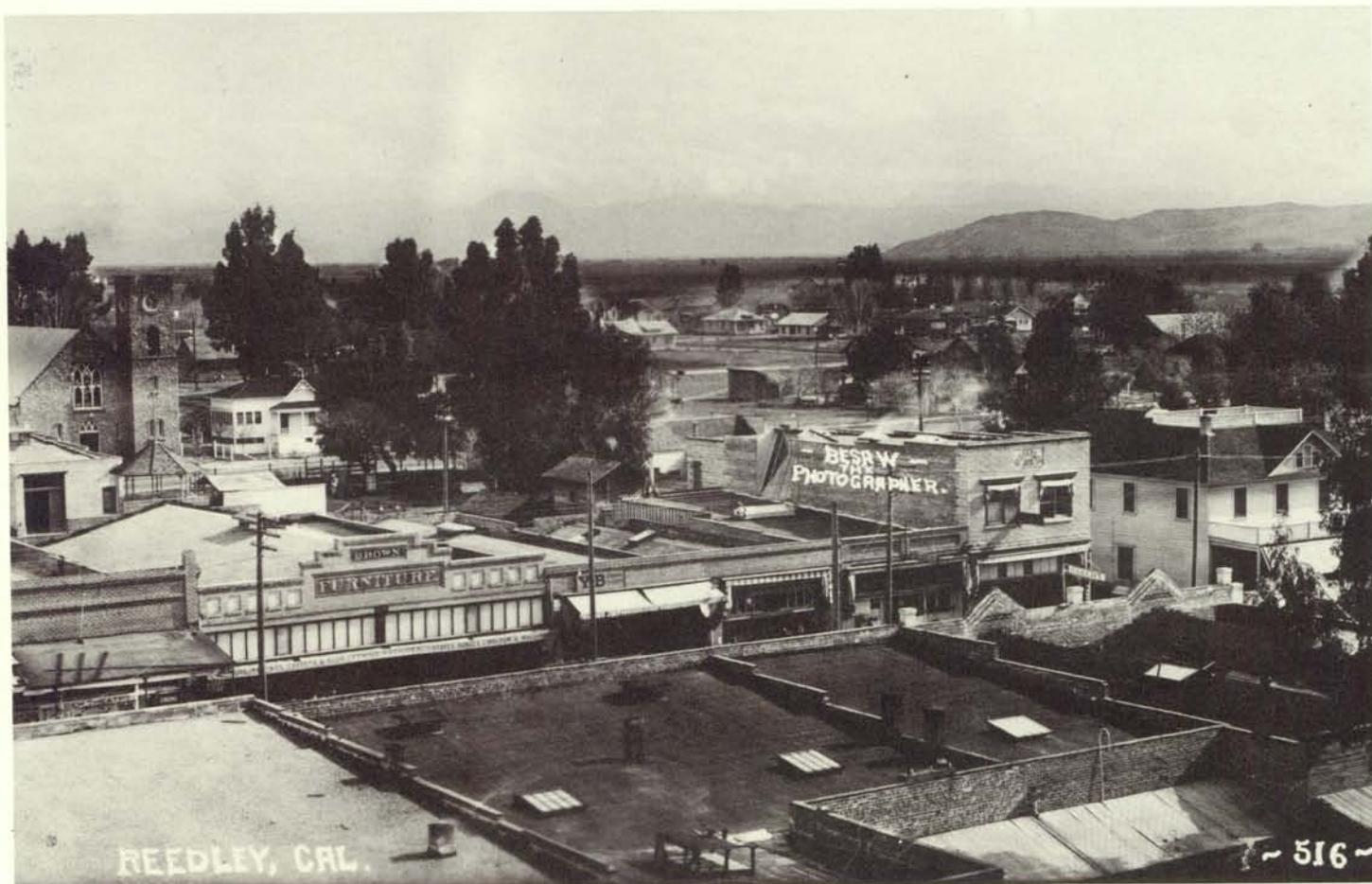


Hotel Superior (top floor) built about 1912.

"Main" Street



Picture taken from balcony of Hotel Grand looking North down Main Street before the big fire of 1902.



Looking down on present G Street between 10th and 11th Streets from the water tower.



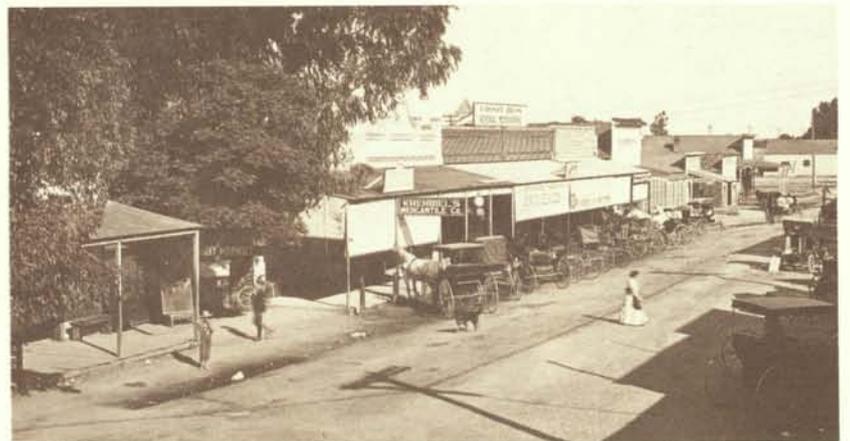
The first movie house on the right foreground.



Intersection at 10th Street from the water tower.



Looking south from intersection at 10th Street.



Busy Reedley in 1911.

Business



Before garages we had stables. Marlar's Club Stable was on the main street between 9th and 10th Streets.

The Jim Shipe Livery Stable was located on 11th Street near F Street.



Bicycles also were important. Circa 1901.



The Exponent is still located on the same site.



The Parlier family was in early real estate and insurance.

J. E. Segrue's Transfer Service unloads at Kirsch's Package Store. Circa 1913.





Crosby Brothers, General Merchandise.



Bollin and Matthews Hardware.

Interior of Crosby Store.



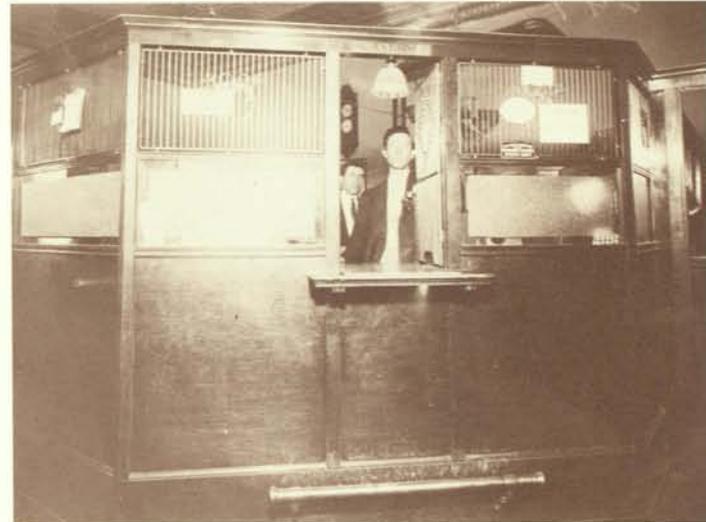
The Ice House, a wonderful new business, was of great importance to the town.



The Reedley Garage.



The Reedley First National Bank building, completed in November of 1907.



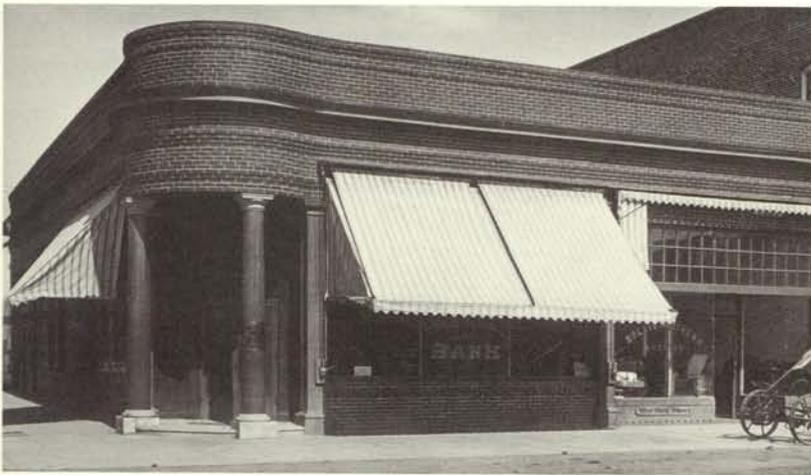
Rudolph Bergthold and William Larson, two early bank employees, 1908.

First National was remodeled in 1919 and consolidated with Valley Bank in November of 1921.



Plush interior of Valley Bank—Reedley Branch.

The Farmers' and Merchants' Bank started here in temporary quarters, October 1907.



Farmers' and Merchants' moved into new quarters (Circa 1908) and changed name to Reedley National Bank in April 1910.

Reedley National built larger facility at 11th and G Streets in 1920, later becoming a branch of Bank of Italy (1927) and finally Bank of America (1930).



Fire and Flood



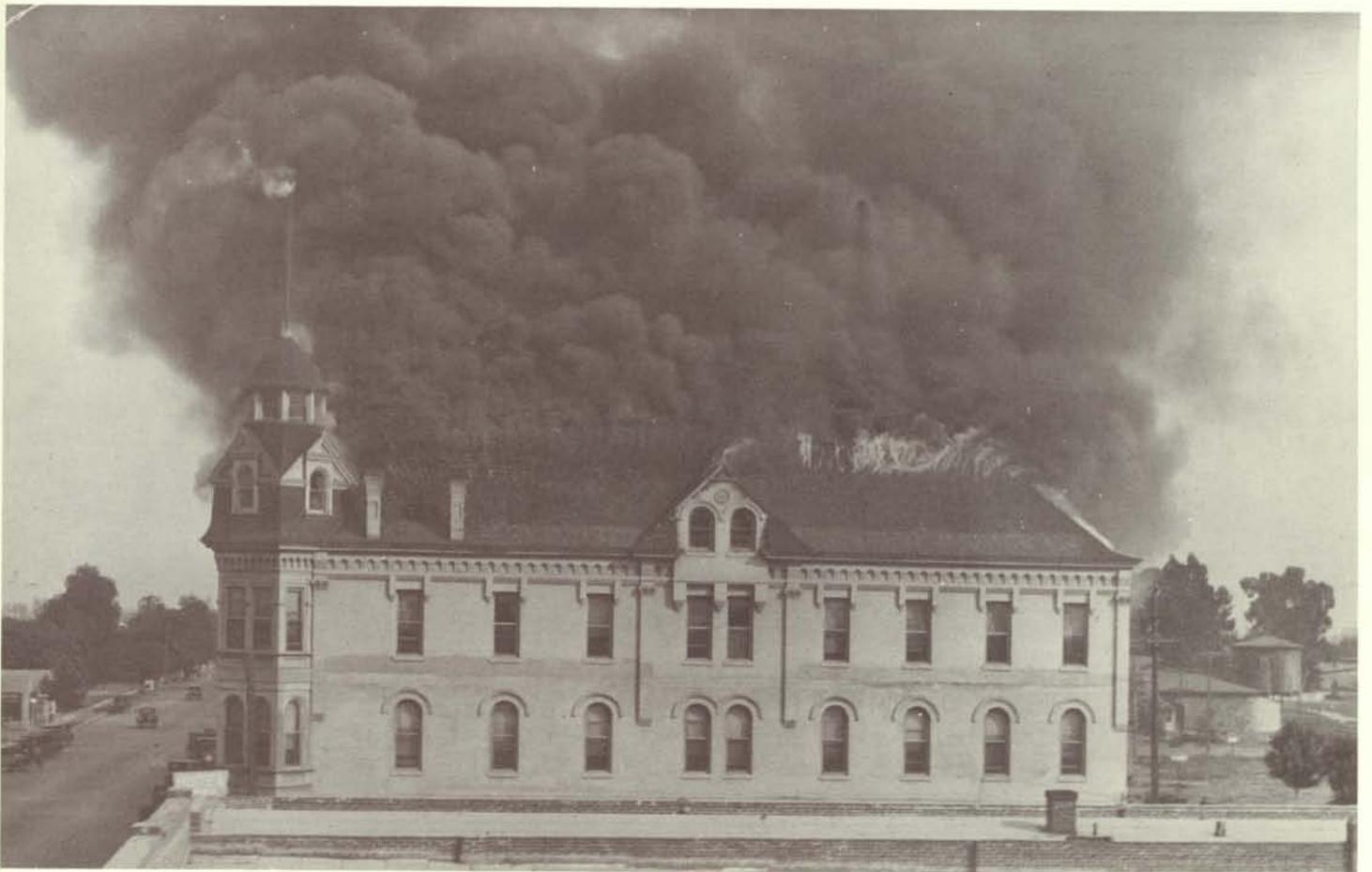
Reedley Hotel, Webb Land Office and Green's Pharmacy completely destroyed by fire August 8, 1910.



Kings River flood of January 26, 1914 demolished lower bridge.

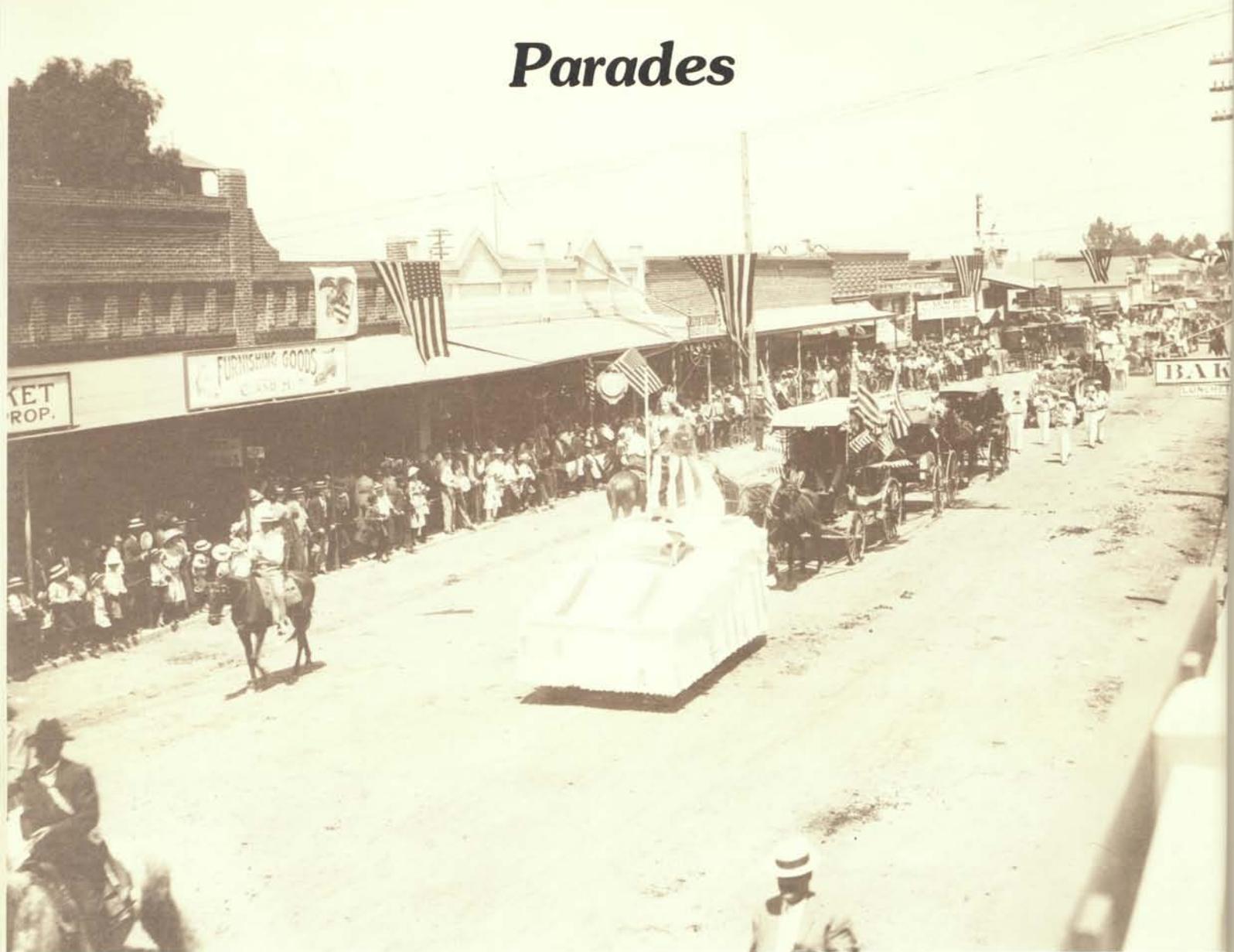


Kings River runs over upper bridge at Manning Avenue.



Fire destroys roof and third floor of Hotel Grand in 1928.

Parades



July 4, 1910—moving south down Main Street.

C. F. Mueller and
Company entry.





July 4, 1911—
a first place winner.



Ladies' horse group
leads off.



The circus comes to
Reedley, 1910.



A picnic at Wahtoke Lake.



A successful morning goose hunt, 1911.

A Potpourri of Memories

(gone but not forgotten)



Olga Wasgatt with "King" and Fanny Miller with "Peanuts."



Our first fire truck.



A Finnish gathering at their Hall built in 1911.

Reedley Beach in the twenties.





City Baseball Team.



First City Hall dates from 1917.



A tradition of winners—a display of our best products in 1907.



The Reedley Brass Band. Circa 1909.



Parade float in front of Janzen Opera House.



Production of "Queen Esther" in the Opera House.



Interior of Reedley's first theater.



American Legion Hall built in 1922.

A Christmas of the Past.

