

Notable 20th Century Chico Residents (Volume 1)

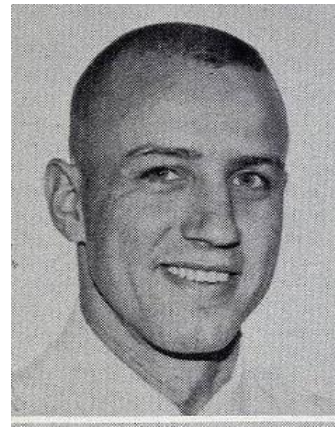
With a feature on



Art Acker



Willie Simmons



George Maderos

Edited By
Don Alger

A Publication from
SONS IN RETIREMENT

Bidwell Branch 110

History Group

Chico, California

April 2025

Researching Chico's History

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SIR Publication Information

SONS IN RETIREMENT (SIR) is a social organization for men. The organization is designed to be a luncheon club composed of men no longer involved in full-time occupations. The purpose of SIR is to promote the well being of men through association of other men interested in increasing their quality of life through developing new friendships, and through activities with physical and mental social involvement.

SIR branches sponsor a variety of activities and the Chico Branch 110 has an active "History Group" which involves exploring topics related to Chico's historic buildings, institutions, businesses and people. Besides enjoying monthly meetings with discussions of topics of interest and some more formal presentations, some members are involved in pursuing original research on topics of historic interest in Chico.

These research projects are driven by individual's curiosity and often result in a significant amount of information which seems worthy of sharing. Besides the desire to share the information, there is often a strong desire/goal of the preservation of this historical information for other interested people.

These desires often lead to consideration of publishing the results of the research. Various options are available but the idea of having a publication crediting the SIR organization with the origin of the efforts leading to publications seemed attractive.

Information on the activities of the SIR History Group and a listing of available publications may be found at the website under "Historical Information".

https://www.branch110.sirinc2.org/sir_branch_110/History%20Club.html

Preface

The origin of this project came from the awareness of previous sources of biographical sketches. The last book like this was published in 1940 and is now out of print. Previous ones were published in 1888 and 1918. However, some of these covered people primarily from the nineteenth century or were in books that are now out of print. These sources included people from all of Butte County and it seemed desirable to focus specifically on Chico residents. There also have been indications that inclusion of biographical sketches in some prior sources was dependent on having to pay for the entry. That did not seem to be an appropriate criterion for this project.

The original list was developed by several people simply thinking of potential people who seemed to be likely candidates as “notable” residents. This was originally interpreted as meaning those that might have had a prominent, distinctive, meritorious, influential, memorable, exceptional or remarkable life in Chico during the 20th Century.

Deciding specific criteria was postponed with the expectation that a list of potential candidates would help inform what criteria might ultimately be applied. The only specific criteria was that the individual be deceased.

There may be people on this current list who are not deceased and some who may not be included in a final analysis for other reasons.

There are surely still people to add to the list.

There were several reasons that made it desirable to proceed with this project. Some are listed below.

1. Providing an easy to use source with the information in one place to eliminate the need for multiple searches for information
2. Preserving historical information in easily available printed form as opposed to on web sites.
3. Identification, honoring (in a small way) and recognizing people that have had a notable life in Chico during the 20th Century.
5. To provide a source for curious people to easily learn about recognizable names such as ones which have a building named after them. Who was Mr. Laxson or Collier?

Acknowledgements

Barbara Alger has not only been a constant supporter and advisor but also generously provided her assistance in editing and proofing the drafts and final copy.

Dave Nopel who is a Board Member and Volunteer for the Chico History Museum and an enthusiast for local history has been available for input throughout the project.

Ron Braziel, who is a member of the SIR History Group and the Webmaster for the SIR organization, provides the opportunity for digital publication of the documents on the local SIR website.

Jim Braziel, who is a member of the SIR History Group, has generously offered to help fund the publishing costs for the publications resulting from these research activities and to pursue distribution of the publication to the community.

Contributors who have volunteered to write a biographical sketch on notable people are gratefully acknowledged. In particular, the volunteers, namely David Little and Dave Nopel, who are not members of the SIR organization but have contributed are especially appreciated. These contributors and potential contributors are indicated on pages 8-9 of this publication.

Introduction

This project initially produced a list of approximately 100 names of potential candidates for biographical sketches from the initial group of people. Eventually, the current list has approximately 140 names and is still slowly growing.

Deciding details of the project has been an evolving process.

A limitation of a bio sketch was set to approximately one to two pages with the expectation that this would lead to a reasonable size book.

The decision was reached to produce the product in volumes instead of a single large book. The reasons for this decision include a desire to publish in a timely fashion and to be able to include suggestions for additional people at later times. Also, it seemed desirable to make marketing more attractive based on varying interest in different volumes.

The decision to include a “feature” contribution in each volume which might include graphics or photos and exceed the general two-page limitation was ultimately made.

It was also decided to have biographical sketches from a variety of backgrounds and possibly with varying reasons of notability in each volume as opposed to have a volume dedicated to just professors or farmers for example.

It is reasonable to expect that the details of the project will continue to evolve.

Notable 20th Century Chico Residents (As of 3-26-25)

A name* means someone has volunteered to investigate that person.

A name*(V1) means that a biographical sketch is in this volume (V1).

It is possible that a name on this list may be eliminated from consideration.

If there is a name you would like to pursue, notify Don Alger at dalger@csuchico.edu.

Examples of completed biographical sketches are on the (SIR) website.

https://www.branch110.sirinc2.org/sir_branch_110/Notable%20Residents.html

If you want to contribute a biographical sketch, send it **as a Word document** to Don Alger. The only definite criterion is that the person is deceased and lived in Chico during the 20th Century.

If you think of other people to add to the list, please notify Don Alger.

Art Acker*(V1)	Dr. Copeland	Aymer J. Hamilton
E. L. Adams	Charles Croissant*(V1)	Henry Bud Hanna*
Harlan Adams	George Crosby	Albert Hibbard
Andy Anderson*(V1)	George Crosette	Fred Hignell II
John Ayres	Barney Cussick*(V1)	Dorothy Hill
Timothy H. Barnard	Fred Davis	Matt Hogan
William Bartlett	William B. Dean	Vesta Holt
Hugh M. Bell*	Gailey L DeGarmo	Benjamin Hudspeth*
Annie Bidwell*(V1)	Robert DeGarmo	W. H. Hutchison*(V1)
Eddie Booth	William B. Dickenson*	Ray E. Johnson
Daniel Breslaur	Dan Drake	George F. Jones
Manuel Breslaur	A. G. Eames	Glenn Kendall
E. L. Brouillard	Newton T. Enloe*(V1)	Guy Kennedy
Paul Byrne	Jim Evans	Thomas Kilpatric*
Mary Canellia	Robert Fortino	Herbert Langdon
Gordon Casamajor	Sam Fortino	Robert Laxson
Etta Chiapella	Helen Sommer Gage	Bill Lee*(V1)
O. L. Clark	Larry Gillick	Wesley Lee
Fred Clough	Mary Compton Goni	F. C. Lusk*(V1)
Charlie Collier	G. W. Graves	Marge Maddux
Wayne Cook	Sankey Hall	George Maderos*(V1)

Notable 20th Century Chico Residents

Gus Manolis	Skip Reager	Alva Stamper
Hank Marsh	Clarence Richardson	Oscar Stansbury
Mac Martin	J. H. Richardson	Walter Stile
Clarence McIntosh	Lee Richardson	Jonathan Studebaker
John McMannus	Eugene Ringel	John Suttoff
Ted Merriam	Ed Ritchie	Alva Taylor
Michael Mery*(V1)	William Robbie	Moriss Taylor
Roy Miller*	Elwin Roney	Mavis Todd
James F. Morehead	George Roney	Warren Todd*(V1)
Jim Morehead	Jack Roney	Charles E. Tovee
John Morehead	Ulrica Roney	Edward W. Tuck
Jean Morony	Frank Roohr	Jefferson Walker
Daniel H. Moulton	Betty Jane Roth	Joan Wallace
Steve Nettleton	Ruth Rowland	Albert E. Warrens
Jerry Noonan	Ella Saap	Marilyn Warrens
John Nopel*	Tony Santos	John S. Waterland
John O'Connell	Al Savitz	Ira Weatherbee
J. M. Ormsby	Al Schlueter	Merle Webb
Moris Oser	John Selvester	Mike Webster*(V1)
Jay Partridge	Leonard C. Shubert	Walter Wentz*(V1)
Hester Patrick	Jane Shurmer	Len Whitegon
F. C. Peterson	Herman Silberstein	Emma Wilson
Grayson Price	Willie Simmons*(V1)	Jack Winning*(V1)
Vern Pullins	Emmit Skinner	
Betty Lou Raker	Carl Sommer	

Art Acker, Willie Simmons and George Maderos Contributed by Don Alger

This may be an atypical feature contribution in that it will cover three people in one biographical entry. However, the intertwined influences and activities of Art Acker, Willie Simmons and George Maderos make for fascinating stories of legendary players and coaches at Chico State.

Arthur "Art" Acker was born in 1892. After graduating from Springfield High School in Springfield, Illinois, he enrolled at James Milliken University in Decatur, Illinois. While at Milliken, he starred in basketball and track. He was placed on the 1912 Olympic Track Team as a runner in the 440-yard dash but an appendicitis operation kept him from competing (Swartz, p. 31).

After graduating from Milliken in 1914, he taught in Jackson, Mississippi. His next coaching position was in Owensboro, Kentucky, where his teams established many records in football, basketball, and track. Art returned home three years later and in 1919, became the Athletic Director for the Springfield YMCA. While working at the YMCA, he married the girl who had lived next door to him during his high school days.

They then moved to the west coast where Art had accepted a job working at Stanford.

In 1920, Governor Stevenson appointed Acker the State Superintendent in charge of all adolescent institutions for California (Swartz, p. 32). He served as director of physical education at the Preston School of Industry in Ione, California from 1920 to 1923 (Best, p. 23). Preston School of Industry, also known as Preston Castle, was formerly one of the oldest and best-known reform schools in the United States.

In 1923, Acker applied for and was accepted to the coaching staff of Chico State College. He served as the football coach, basketball coach, baseball coach, and track coach. He was the sole male coaching staff at that time. Besides his coaching responsibilities, he was charged with the task to create and organize Chico's Department of Physical Education for Men. Previously, there had only been a program for Physical Education for Women.

The 1920's were the days when a student might potentially run into a wildcat in the brush around the Sacramento River. Acker wasn't daunted

by the feral creature and was responsible for having it adopted as a mascot. (After its death, the animal was stuffed and placed on display, but it was lost to a campus fire.)

From 1923-1947, Acker served as the coach of football, basketball, track, baseball, boxing and tennis. While he coached nearly all sports at one time or another, his major efforts were in basketball and football. In addition to his success in athletics, his dedication to education earned him numerous accolades.

There are many stories which could be related to elucidate Acker's philosophy and coaching style. However, one feature is particularly noteworthy. In 1929, when Chico State moved into the Far Western Conference, the competition included UC Davis, University of Nevada (Reno), College of Pacific, and Fresno State. Being very competitive, Acker wanted to compete with these schools that all had larger enrollments than Chico State.

When playing basketball with normal man-to-man defense, the opponent had clear vision and not much pressure so he could make passes that would be received in good scoring positions. Playing a normal 2-3 zone did plug up the key area better but since there was no 35-second clock, the opponent had plenty of time and with clear vision and patience could make the pass that would score.

Thus, Coach Acker came up with the philosophy of causing poor vision of the passer that would result in many steals and turnovers. He developed what became known as the "rubberband" defense. It looked like a 3-2 zone but was a switching man-to-man where there was spirited pressure on the man with the ball with hands in his face. One of John Abell's descriptions was "Plague your man like a crazed gnawing rat! Dominate him!" Meanwhile, the defensive man in the middle (known as the "rubberband man") would always move to be second in line in anticipation of potential passes. At that time-and even years later-when it was used at Chico High School and Butte College, opponents apparently had great difficulty figuring out what defense was being used. It was extremely confusing to players and coaches who wanted to run their offense based on the defense which was being used.

In the 1940-41 season, Acker coached Al Schlueter, who was the "rubberband man", at Chico State. That team won the conference championship. Al Schlueter went on to coach Chico High School to the only Boy's State Championship in history from this area. They used the

rubber band defense and George Maderos was on that team.

After his retirement in 1961 at the age of 69, Acker was a campus legend remembered for bringing a cougar—the original wildcat—to basketball games and leading the hoops team to its first conference championship in 1924 and then again in 1925 and 1926.

Acker Gym was dedicated in his memory in 1973, prompting him to say, “It was hard to believe so many people would be so kind and gracious to an old man who did nothing more than try to help those who were so willing to learn.”



Acker Gym on Chico State Campus

After retirement, Acker was a frequent visitor, kibitzer, coach and mentor to many athletes. He rarely missed a practice or a game at Butte College during the years that John Abell coached there from 1970-90 (John Abell, personal communication). Abell indicated that he often received questions to the effect of why he had that old guy on the bench with him. Acker was of course largely responsible for the successful use of his rubberband defense there.



John Abell and Art Acker circa 1980

Acker also was on the bench at Pleasant Valley High School games when Sam Simmons (Willie Simmons' son) was coaching there in the late 1980's-when Acker was in his late nineties.

Arthur L. Acker died in December 1991 at the age of 99.

Willie Simmons was born in 1918 as the eldest child of Bill and Annie Simmons. Willie spent his formative years in Bristol, Rhode Island, where he participated in every game and sport available. His enlistment in World War II eventually landed him at the Chico Base of the Army Air Corps. At the end of the war, Willie enrolled at Chico State where he earned a B.A. in physical education, lettered in four sports every year for four years, and was student body president. He was an outstanding miler and two miler. He won the Far Western Conference boxing championship at 135 pounds.

While at Chico State, he met Art Acker, who became his mentor and ultimately lifelong friend.

He was very active in city recreation and youth activity while in college, which resulted in his meeting and helping a young athlete named George Maderos. Working his way through college as a supervisor in the Chico Area Recreation District (C.A.R.D.), he was responsible in large part for starting little league baseball teams and forming junior teams in swimming, track, boxing, and basketball. While working at C.A.R.D., Willie made the acquaintance of a young George Maderos.

He married Ruth Hendrix in 1945 and they had a son, Sam, and a daughter, Sara.

His first teaching job was at Chico High School for two years.

He was then hired by Acker to teach and coach at Chico State in 1953 where he coached all sports. After a somewhat rocky beginning in his relationship with Art Acker, their association evolved into what Willie viewed as almost a father-son relationship. Ultimately, they became very close friends. Willie served the Chico Enterprise-Record as a reporter for five years. He earned his Master's Degree from Chico State in 1951 and his Doctor of Education Degree from the University of Oregon in 1963.

He was named a Statewide Distinguished Teacher in 1968. In 1976, he was inducted into the Chico Sports Hall of Fame and in 1986 he was inducted into the Chico State Athletic Hall of Fame.

Besides influencing and guiding George Maderos as a young man and playing a role in getting him to come to Chico State, they also became fast friends after George returned to Chico to coach. They remained as best friends for 68 years. Willie and George remained very close and saw each other on a weekly basis until they both passed away within two months of each other in 2017.

After retiring in 1989, Willie divided his time between the golf course, traveling to see family on the East coast, enjoying his grandchildren and great grandchildren, and **Dixieland dance festivals**,

He was fondly remembered for not only coaching football, boxing, track, and cross country, as well as for his popular class in **ballroom dance**. His love of dancing must have influenced the beginning of his obituary.

"After gracefully moving through several encores, Willie Simmons left the dance floor for the final time on March 9, 2017. He was 98 years old."

George Maderos's amazing life began in Chico. He was born on November 3, 1933, to Anthony and Mary Warner Maderos. Early life wasn't always easy for George, as his father died suddenly when George was eight and his mother struggled with health issues. After his mother's nervous breakdown, George and his siblings were placed in separate foster homes. As a result, George and his two brothers lived in a foster home in Paradise for three years. When George was about 12 or 13 years old, he had a chance encounter with Willie Simmons, the man who would change the course of his life. While shooting baskets on an outside court, when he

was in junior high school, Willie Simmons, noticed him. A lifelong relationship began. Willie got George involved in boxing, and a God given athletic talent was unleashed. George attended Chico High School and played freshman basketball, but ironically did not make the school's freshman football team. He was ultimately recruited to play football at University of California, Berkeley; basketball at Santa Clara; and track at UCLA. Since those schools were not interested in having him play sports other than what he was recruited for, he decided (perhaps, with some help from Willie Simmons) to attend Chico State where he could play different sports. At Chico State, George Maderos won fourteen letters. He was an All-Conference linebacker and All-Coast player for two years. He was an All-Conference player in basketball and the team's scoring leader. Over 70 years later, he still holds a variety of records in basketball at Chico State.

George's many and seemingly endless athletic accomplishments have been well documented. While he was widely viewed as a sports legend, he is even better remembered and treasured for his true character and humble nature.

In 1955, George married Cindy Keim, graduated from Chico State and then played two years for the San Francisco 49ers.

He then came back to his home town to coach, referee, teach and raise his family. George was head football coach at Chico State for ten years. He was also head coach for boxing and track at Chico State. He and Willie Simmons officiated basketball games. George was a charter member of the Chico Sports Hall of Fame in 1973.

George and Cindy had two sons, Matt and Clint, and were together until their divorce in 1977.

On December 6, 1980, George's life started a new chapter when he met Debbie Peloyan at a Christmas party. Their first date was the next day when he invited her to join him for a trip down to the 49er alumni weekend festivities and game. That 'sealed the deal' for Debbie and after a brief time of dating (13 years!) they were married on January 22, 1994. George and Debbie shared a love of sports and spent years enjoying annual golf trips to Palm Springs, Canada, and Maui. They also enjoyed giving back to the Chico community they both love, by supporting cancer charities and Chico State Athletics.

One of the memorable events was to have George Maderos and Debbie present for the historic 2014 win when the Wildcats unexpectedly rallied in San Bernardino to win their first West Region title in order to reach the

NCAA Championship Tournament Elite 8 for the first time in Chico State History. This was sixty years after George had played for Chico State and represents his longtime support of Chico State Athletics and the basketball program.

His picture with Coach Greg Clink after the game is shown below.



George passed away peacefully surrounded by family on February 2, 2017, at the age of 83.

Pictured below are Art Acker, Willie Simmons, and George Maderos in their retirement years.



Andy Anderson

Founder of Anderson's Blacksmith Shop

Contributed by Ray Wilson

Andy Anderson was born in Kerteminde, Denmark, on October 21, 1886. Reportedly, Andy only had a sixth-grade education¹; however, he served his apprenticeship in Denmark and was taught the science and the practice of ironworking. He obtained his credentials as a master workman, and a journeyman craftsman.²

The mass immigration from Europe to the United States had been going on for over sixty years. Andy made the decision in 1905 to migrate to America when he was just eighteen years old.

He arrived in Chico in 1907, and his first job was at Diamond Match Company. Andy worked there only one year before going to work for George Jeffery Sr., a well-known blacksmith whose shop was located in the area of Chico known as The Junction.

Andy had only been working for Mr. Jeffery a short time when he met Georgia Rose Smith, who was born in Chico in 1890. They were married in Redding on May 9, 1910. They had two sons, Nels L. Anderson and Leslie Francis Anderson, and a daughter, Dorothy C. Anderson.

He had been working for George Jeffery for eleven years when, in 1919, he went into business for himself, and eventually, he acquired the blacksmith shop on the corner of West Ninth and Broadway Streets.³

In 1929, he purchased half a block facing West Eighth Street between Broadway and Salem Streets in the area of Chico known as The Junction. The property was improved with the Chico Brewery, built in 1874, and a two-story brick building, built in 1905, located on the corner of West Eighth and Salem Streets. That building later became his blacksmith shop, and both buildings are still standing today.

Over the next several years, Mr. Anderson added new buildings and used parts of the land for various other purposes. Eventually, he moved his blacksmith shop to the building on the corner of West Eighth and Salem Streets.

As reported in the Enterprise Record in 1961,³ "With his knowledge of ironwork and honesty, he built a business known throughout the length and breadth of the Sacramento Valley."

He was one of the area's first welders.

Mr. Anderson faced several challenges during his tenure. The first challenge occurred six months after he purchased the property when the Stock Market Crashed. The economy suffered for months and months afterward. He also faced the challenge of new technology and the shift from shoeing horses and repairing buggies to working on automobiles. Andy continued to develop and improve the property over the next thirty-two years until he died in 1961.

Andy Anderson retired in 1943-44, and his son Nels Anderson continued the practice for many years. Nels became a welding instructor and taught welding at Chico High School and in Eureka, California.

Andy Anderson died at his home on East Ninth Street on December 5, 1961.³ He was seventy-five years old. His heirs still own the entire half-block.

¹1940 United States Federal Census

²Chico Enterprise, Saturday, August 6, 1932, Page 12

³Enterprise-Record (Chico, CA) Wednesday, December 6, 1961



Current view of Anderson's Blacksmith Shop at 8th and Salem

Annie Bidwell

Contributed by Don Alger

Since there is a full biography for Annie Bidwell¹, this will be an abbreviated sketch of some of her accomplishments.

Annie Ellicott Kennedy was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania, on June 30, 1839. When Annie Kennedy was ten years old, her family moved from Pennsylvania to Washington D.C. There she entered Mme. Breshaw Burr's School. From the time she was a child until she completed her education she spoke French. She treasured her French books and refreshed her French with them into her declining years. Her work among the less fortunate began at the early age of fifteen when she taught in a mission in an abandoned part of Washington D.C. Her religious tendencies also were early developed, as she became a member of the Presbyterian Church when she was fifteen and was active in its ranks until the time of her death.

Miss Kennedy met General Bidwell at her home when he was a member of the Thirty-ninth Congress, from 1865 to 1867. She married John Bidwell on April 16, 1868, in Washington, D.C. Their wedding guests included Elizabeth Cady Stanton, President Andrew Johnson, and future President Ulysses S. Grant. After the ceremony, the General and Mrs. Bidwell spent some days in New York before sailing for California via Panama. The trip to San Francisco was made in twenty-one days; from that port they came via boat and rail to the home that was her residence the remainder of her days. The Bidwell Mansion had been built by the General to receive his bride.

Mrs. Bidwell entered enthusiastically into the life of California and was involved in many activities and assisted her husband in numerous ways. Her notable 20th Century accomplishments in Chico were accomplished after John Bidwell's death in 1900.

After her husband's death, Annie Bidwell continued to live in Chico.

Perhaps closest to her heart of all her many interests was the cause of the Prohibition Party. She was a member of the National, State and local W.C.T.U.; a member of the Prohibition State Central Committee of California, and a presidential elector of the Prohibition Party in 1912.

Another cause for which she labored was equal suffrage for women. She was a life member of the National Woman Suffrage Association, and

held an honorary office in this organization. She was also a charter member and the first Vice-President of the California Equal Suffrage Association.

Her varied activities extended to: State Superintendent of Evangelistic work after 1913; honorary member of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, for which the organization named its Chico parlor in her honor; honorary member of the Ladies of the Maccabees; member of the Geographical Society; member of the Academy for the Advancement of Society; charter member of the Woman's Auxiliary Society of California Pioneers; charter member of the Daughters of the American Revolution in California; and member of the Women's Relief Corps.

Mrs. Bidwell gave very liberally. In fact, a large part of the Bidwell estate was deeded away. Parks, driveways, playgrounds, church and school sites, and gifts of other lands and moneys were lavished by this noble woman upon her fellows, and the City of Chico was perhaps the chief beneficiary.

Before her death, she donated to the City of Chico on July 10, 1905, some 2,238 acres (almost ten square miles) of land, along with a Children's Park in downtown. Since then the land has remained in the public trust and is now known as Bidwell Park.

She died on March 9, 1918, in Chico, California, and is buried in the Chico Cemetery.

¹ *Annie Kennedy Bidwell: An Intimate History* by Lois Halliday McDonald. 2004, Stansbury Publishing, Chico, California. ISBN 0-9708922-7-6

Charles Phillip Croissant

Founder of the Chico Brewery

Contributed by Ray Wilson¹

Charles was born in Alsace-Lorraine, Germany, a small town near the French border, on October 18, 1835.² His father died when he was twenty months old, and he was the youngest of nine siblings.

Social and economic turmoil in Germany could have influenced his decision to migrate to America in 1851 at the age of fifteen. At the time of his birth, the Mass Migration to the United States and Canada was underway.

Charles was twelve when the California Gold Rush started, which likely sparked his desire to head west. He arrived in Butte County, California, in 1855, and stayed there for the rest of his life.

His desire to find gold led him to partner with three other men to placer mine for gold. Their claim was called the Union Gravel Mine.³

One of his partners, William Schneider (1831 – 1893), had also migrated from Germany. He was four years older than Charles and, he too, had migrated to America when he was a teenager.

After searching for gold, Charles formed another partnership with William Schneider, who had just purchased a saloon in Oroville, and the two began selling and brewing beer.

In 1866, a brewery that John Bidwell built in Chico became available, so Charles dissolved his partnership with Mr. Schneider and purchased the building. It was located at the corner of West 8th and Broadway Streets in the area of Chico known as The Junction. In 1874, he razed the building and built a brewery to his specifications. He named it the Chico Brewery, and the building still stands today. In 1882, he introduced steam power to run the feed mill and grainery he had built behind the brewery.

Charles faced many challenges. Perhaps the biggest of all was the competition from numerous saloons in Butte County that advertised as also being a brewery. However, Charles quickly recognized that the quality of the beer being sold was, in his opinion, substandard.

His challenge was not only facing numerous competitors. He recognized that most other saloons/breweries were owned by men in partnership like his and William's, and most ended in foreclosures or bankruptcy and were

quickly dissolved. Later in his life, he also faced pressure from the Temperance Movement.

Charles' long-term influence on the City of Chico's history can be attributed not only to the brewery he built, but also to his willingness to serve several terms on the Town Council and to helping to organize the Chico Voluntary Fire Department.

He had strong feelings about what it meant to be an American, and he became a U.S. Citizen on August 20, 1860, just before the start of the Civil War. On July 6, 1864, just before the end of the Civil War, he took the Oath of Allegiance.

Charles was twenty-six when he met Bertha Ehrhardt, who was from Yuba County. They were married on September 2, 1865, at the end of the Civil War. Their marriage lasted 54 years until Charles' death in 1919. Charles and Bertha had two boys and three girls.

The strength of their marriage was tested several times, starting when his wife Bertha became so ill that in 1896, she went to live with their eldest daughter in Oakland. Two years later, their daughter Bertha died as a result of injuries she received from a bicycle accident. She was only twenty-one years old.

Tragedy struck their family again in 1901 when, just three years after their daughter died, their eldest son, George, died unexpectedly. He was just thirty-four years old. Bertha was so ill and feeble that she was unable to travel to her son's funeral.

Charles had become despondent because of ill health and feebleness. He missed the companionship of his wife of 53 years when he took his own life at the home of his son Otto H. Croissant in Chapmantown on June 15, 1919.

¹ The Brewer and the Blacksmith, Published by Charles Ray Wilson, October 2024, ISBN: 979889090518.

² Obituary, Chico Record Newspaper, Number 143, June 17, 1919.

³ Mining Claims, (Butte County, Recorder's Office) Book A, Page 191.

Barney Cussick

Contributed by Don Alger

Bernard Cussick was born in Livingston County, New York, on January 27, 1848. "Barney" Cussick, as he was called by his intimate friends and business associates, was, a son of Bernard Cussick. He was reared on a farm until he was eighteen, meantime attending the public schools of his native county. He went to Michigan and, at Midland City, some twenty miles north of Saginaw, went to work at lumbering under John Haley, one of the best lumbermen of that area. He remained there for five years, in the meantime learning about all there was to know of the business, for he worked in every department.

At age 28 he moved to Eureka, California, to work in lumbering and a year later he moved to Butte County to work for the Sierra Lumber Company.

In 1879, in Saginaw, Michigan, Mr. Cussick was united in marriage to Miss Margaret Keeley. In 1879, she came to California with Barney, where she resided until death. Three children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Cussick, only one of whom lived to adulthood.

Barney Cussick became widely known in the lumber business around Chico and the Humboldt Wagon Road. He acted as an ambassador showing visitors around and always keeping the press informed of lumbering activities. When the new Arcade Mill opened, in about 1881, Barney not only had the log contract but he also supervised the construction and operation of this new mill in Chico Meadows.

Barney Cussick was the first to start using stationary steam-powered hoisting equipment in this region in the first part of the decade. He was also the first to use Dolbeer donkey engines and steam-hoisting equipment for logging in the Sierra.

By 1885, Barney Cussick became the Sierra Lumber Company, Chico Division, mountain manager.

Barney resigned from Sierra Lumber in the summer of 1895 due to poor health and purchased 200 acres of orchard land in Chico and eventually became a prominent citizen and highly successful businessman in Chico.

He was possibly best known during this time for subdividing a large part of John Bidwell's landholdings and developing the Chico orchard

district. Bernard Cussick laid out and sold several tracts of John Bidwell's Rancho Chico, Chico, Butte County, California. He began playing an integral role in real-estate development for the Diamond Match Company and other real estate activities.

Cussick began picking up the acreage and by November 1902, The Chico Investment Company was established and incorporated to deal in real estate, mines, power sites and the like. By 1912, he was the Vice President of Butte County Savings Bank.

Bernard "Barney" Cussick died suddenly on January 14, 1917, and was buried in the Chico Cemetery with Masonic honors in the Masonic row, having been a Knight Templar Mason. He was an Elk and an Odd Fellow and lived up to the precepts of these orders. His wife Margaret Keeley Cussick, and their daughter, Clara Cussick Young, are also buried in the Chico Cemetery in the family plot.

Although Barney was instrumental in the business development of Butte County, there is only a street named in Chico, to honor him now. By 1960, Cussick Avenue had been established. Cussick Avenue is on the north side of Chico and links Holly Avenue with Bay. The area bordered by Cussick/Holly Avenues, Henshaw Avenue, Nord Avenue and Lindo Channel is sometimes referred to as "The Cussick Neighborhood".

So Barney Cussick's name lives on as a street name and a neighborhood.

Newton Thomas Enloe, M.D.

Contributed by Charles Ray Wilson

Newton T. Enloe was born on February 23, 1872, in Barton, Lamar County, Missouri. Raised on his father's farm in Russellville, Missouri, he was the second oldest of nine children. He came from a family of doctors, starting with his uncle, Captain James Enloe, M.D., who was a distinguished surgeon during the Civil War.

Dr. Enloe's education began at a rural school in Russellville. He graduated from the Hooper Institute in Clarksburg and spent a year at Louisville Medical College before earning his M.D. degree from Missouri Medical College in St. Louis in 1895. His first experience as a doctor came while working with his uncles in private practice in Jefferson City.


In 1901, Dr. Enloe responded to a request from the Sierra Lumber Company to serve as the resident physician at their West Branch Mill, located east of Chico, California. He is believed to have been the first resident physician in a lumber camp.

Due to his popularity with the lumbermen and their families, Dr. Enloe agreed to offer a comprehensive medical care plan, which included coverage for births and hospitalizations, for just \$1.00 per month. This plan is thought to be the first prepaid medical plan in California. Recognizing the need for medical care in the camp, he built his first hospital, which is also believed to be the first facility of its kind in a lumber camp. When Diamond Match Company purchased the Sierra Lumber Company, Dr. Enloe quickly became their Chief Surgeon.

In 1913, Dr. Enloe opened his first hospital on Flume Street in Chico and later constructed a home for nurses adjacent to it. In 1937, he established the Enloe Medical Center, which is now recognized as one of the finest medical facilities in northern California.

Dr. Enloe achieved many notable accomplishments throughout his career. He served as both a member and President of the Butte County Medical Society and as Vice President of the State Medical Society. In addition, he was a Mason affiliated with Chico Lodge No. 111 and was part of both the Chapter and Commandery in Chico, as well as the Islam Temple, A.A.O.N.A.M.S. in San Francisco. Furthermore, he was a member of the Odd Fellows and the Elks Lodge in Chico.

Dr. Enloe passed away on December 21, 1954, in the hospital he built, succumbing to a heart attack after a prolonged illness. He was eighty-two years old.



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Phones 111, 112 and 1005 **Chico, California**

CHICO CITY DIRECTORY (1939)

W. H. Hutchinson (Old Hutch)

Contributed by Don Alger

William Henry ("Old Hutch") Hutchinson was born on August 13, 1911, in Denver, Colorado. He attended school in Oxford, Mississippi; Newark, New Jersey; Denver, Colorado; and Redondo Beach, California. He earned his master's degree from Chico State College in 1961. He worked at various times as a horse wrangler, a cowboy, a boiler fireman, and a mucker in mines. During the Depression, Hutchinson worked as Chief Purser on passenger vessels. He served as lieutenant commander in the U.S. Maritime Service in WWII and saw duty in the South Pacific, North Atlantic, and Mediterranean.

After the war, Hutchinson moved to Butte County and became a freelance writer. He sold more than 150 fact and fiction articles to a variety of popular magazines. He also wrote, narrated, and produced several historical pageants on California, and had his own weekly radio and television shows.

Hutchinson authored 15 books, one of which, *Oil, Land and Politics: The California Career of Thomas R. Bard*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. He also worked as a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle and frequently contributed to the Chico Enterprise-Record. Hutchinson taught part-time at Chico State College, Sonoma State College, and San Francisco State between 1953 and 1964.

Old Hutch served as a full-time faculty member at Chico from Fall 1964 until his retirement in 1978. During his tenure at Chico State, he was awarded the Chico State Distinguished Teacher Award in 1968, and Outstanding Professor for the California State University System in 1977.

He was beloved by students and better known on campus as "Old Hutch". Hutchinson enjoyed the campus atmosphere and often could be found sitting on a bench in the courtyard that now bears his name.

The courtyard between Trinity Hall and Kendall Hall (Old Hutch's Plaza) was dedicated on June 11, 1979, in his honor as history Professor William H. Hutchinson, an expert on California and Western United States history—and one of the best historians in the history of Chico State.

Hutchinson died of a heart attack in Chico on March 11, 1990.

In 2010, he was posthumously inducted into the University's Emeritus and Retired Faculty/Staff Association Hall of Honor.

Bill Lee

Contributed by David Little

For several decades, it could fairly be argued, Bill Lee was the most powerful man in Chico.

He served as editor of the Chico Enterprise-Record from 1950 to 1983, a time when newspapers were at the height of their influence because nearly every household had a subscription. Lee wrote sharp, insightful and often critical editorials on a daily basis that helped shape the city.

Lee was small in stature but fearless, never one to back down, and local leaders feared getting on the wrong side of him. Despite his strident reputation and unabashed conservative viewpoints in the newspaper, in reality he was a gentle soul who liked to listen more than talk and had good friends of all political stripes.

He was born Willis Norman Lee on July 12, 1918, in Omaha, Nebraska. He graduated from Creighton University and worked at several newspapers in Nebraska, including the Omaha World-Herald, before World War II derailed his career. Lee served four years as a gunner on the USS Frazier in the Aleutian Islands and South Pacific.

After the war, one of his old bosses in Nebraska, Al Weibel, recruited Bill to join him in another kind of war. Weibel was the editor at the Chico Enterprise and was looking for good reporters. Chico had two dailies, the Enterprise and the Record, competing for readers. The Enterprise won the war and eventually became the Enterprise-Record, in 1948. Lee was promoted to editor in 1950 after Weibel died.

Lee was known for many things – a messy desk with newspapers piled so high that you could never tell if he was in his office, a stylish red hat he wore for 20 years that was given to him by the Chico State women's basketball team because he never missed a home game, his motorcycle that gave way to a bicycle when he turned 90, the fact that he lovingly raised four daughters as a single father ... but most of all he was known for the way he ran a newspaper.

He believed newspapers had an obligation to keep citizens informed, to be nosy, to attend every public meeting, examine all arrest records, chase every fire truck, report every birth and death ... and then share that news with people. He never registered with a political party and didn't even vote because he felt it was a conflict of interest.

Lee worked for the Enterprise and Enterprise-Record for 37 years. He retired on his 65th birthday in 1983. He stayed in Chico upon retirement and often called his successors, Jack Winning and then David Little, with encouraging words, usually punctuated with: "You have a tough job and you're doing it well. Don't let the bastards grind you down."

Lee died at the age of 96 on October 18, 2014. A few months later, family, friends and former co-workers filled the CARD Community Center in Chico to do something Bill would have appreciated – tell stories – even though he would have despised the attention.



The Enterprise-Record occupied this building on the southwest corner of West Seventh Street and Broadway from the time two newspapers' unified in 1948 until the E-R moved to its East Park Avenue facility in 1987. After a couple of years of vacancy, the Salvation Army opened a thrift shop and some offices at the 700 Broadway site. (Ed Booth/Enterprise-Record)
[Enterprise Record, November 12, 2023, p. 1 & 6]

Franklin Crawford Lusk

Contributed by Ron Braziel

Franklin Crawford Lusk was born July 9, 1850 in Minden, New York. He was the son of an Episcopal minister and Mary Jane Crawford Lusk. He was self-educated and gained admission to the bar by study outside of any law school.

While Mr. Lusk's attitude toward the general public was apparently that of a man who cared only for the cold facts of law and business and such as would indicate that he had no time for the sentimentalities of life, there was beneath the surface a heart and mind that throbbed with affection and entertained most kindly thoughts for those about him!

In 1871 he went to Chico for the purpose of starting a law practice in the west, and there, at the age of 23, he formed a partnership with A. J. Gifford, the law firm being known as Gifford and Lusk.

When General Bidwell died, it was the job of Mr. Lusk, who had been the General's attorney, to outline a policy for the management of the estate that would result in the widow being freed from debt that encumbered the rancho.

For a number of years immediately prior to his death he was president of the Butte County National Bank, taking that position upon the death of X. I. Rideout. He was also the principal stockholder in the same institution. He was the managing director and the largest stockholder in the Butte County Savings Bank. He was also president and a large stockholder of the Chico Water Supply Company.

He was at the front in the battle to secure the State Normal School for Chico and during the greater part of the first twenty-four years it has been in existence, he served capably as one of its board of trustees and much of the time as the chairman.

He was never married, but left two adopted children, Marion and Stanley Sproul, children of the late Joseph Sproul, his close friend and associate.

Superior Judge John C. Gray at the time of Mr. Lusk's death stated that Franklin Lusk was undoubtedly one of the best attorneys in the State.

The Lusk Building, where the Madison Bear Garden currently resides, at the corner of Second and Salem Streets, was constructed in 1883 as Mr. Lusk's home.



A modern view of the Madison Bear Garden which was Lusk's 1883 home

Franklin Crawford Lusk died February 18, 1913, at his then home at Second and Salem Streets. He left besides his adopted children, Stanley and Marian Sprout, a half-brother, James Lusk of St. Paul, and a half-sister Mrs. John Devor of Rexburg, Wisconsin.

Michael Lawrence Mery Sr.

Contributed by Charles Ray Wilson

Michael L. Mery was born in Baden-Baden, Germany, on April 4, 1851, as the youngest of eight siblings. His father, Jacob Mery, was a farmer who immigrated to the United States with his family in 1854. Sadly, just three months after settling in Toledo, Ohio, both of Michael's parents passed away within the same week. At only three years old, he was raised in Ohio and Michigan. Michael chose not to pursue a formal education and instead focused on learning a trade by working as an apprentice machinist.

In January 1869, at the age of seventeen, Mr. Mery left home and spent the next three years traveling through Kentucky, Indiana, Louisiana, and Texas, where he found work as a machinist. In 1872, he moved to California to work at the Marysville Foundry. The following year, he traveled to Lake Tahoe and became an engineer on the steamer Emerald. On January 10, 1875, he arrived in Chico and, along with his brother-in-law J. O. Rusby, started the Chico Iron Works.

Mr. Mery rose to prominence in November 1875 when he created castings and melted the first iron in the county. He also produced castings for General Bidwell and the Sierra Lumber Company. An inventor and builder, he developed a well-known gas engine called the Mery double-acting gas engine, for which he won first prize at the California State Fair.

However, Mr. Mery faced significant challenges during his career. Just three years after buying out his brother-in-law, his entire establishment was destroyed by fire, with little insurance compensation. He quickly rebuilt, and incorporated the latest machinery, most of which he designed himself.

His legacy is rooted in the unparalleled quality of his work. He constructed a boring mill, a trip hammer, and a drop hammer of exceptional craftsmanship, dominating this sector in Northern California. Mr. Mery's influence extended beyond his own projects; he played a key role in the construction of the I.O.O.F. Building and the Elks Hall, leaving a lasting imprint on the local landscape.

On March 14, 1874, he married Sarah Ann Seaward (1851-1928), and together they had six children. Mr. Mery passed away on December 6, 1927, at the age of 76¹, and his wife, Sarah, died the following year.

¹ Obituary, Chico Record Newspaper, Number 143, June 17, 1919

Warren B. Todd

Contributed by Joe and Maggie Navarro

Warren B. Todd was born May 28, 1860, in Kingston, New York. As the fourth child of seven, he was brought up on a farm and attended public schools. In 1880 he began railroading, working as a fireman for the first six months and then became an engineer. He followed that occupation for fifteen years. He ultimately resigned and went to Milford, Delaware, where he bought some land and engaged in farming for ten years. At the end of that time, he sold his holdings and moved to Seattle, Washington, and was a proprietor of a hotel.

In the fall of 1906, Mr. Todd came to California and in the spring of 1907 located in Chico. He bought the corner lot on Nord Avenue and Chico Creek and started his grocery store in a small cabin. He had three hundred and eighty-five dollars left after paying for his land, and went to Sacramento and bought his grocery stock for three hundred dollars. When it arrived, he hauled it to his little store in a wheelbarrow. For a time he delivered by this same means. Later, as the business grew, he bought a horse and buggy. The business grew rapidly, and Mr. Todd found it would be necessary to have larger quarters. He built a new store himself in his spare time (Todd's Grocery Store) located at 305 Nord Avenue (the former location of Pizon's Pizza). He wheeled gravel up from Big Chico Creek, mixed the concrete and molded the blocks. He wheeled the blocks and plaster and put them in place and did the carpenter work and finished the two-story structure. He also built a large adjoining garage and erected two residences on his two acres of property.

Warren Todd was the first grocery man to deliver goods by automobile in Chico and was an example of what a man can accomplish by perseverance and determination.

He died suddenly at his home on May 26, 1933, at age 72. He is buried in the Chico Cemetery.

Obituary: The Chico Enterprise, Chico, CA, May 26, 1933, page 1.

Michael Joseph Webster

Contributed by Don Alger

Mike Webster was born in Oakland, California, on November 13, 1943. He grew up in Reno, Nevada, where his parents owned and operated the landmark dinner house "the Big Hat". The family sought a new beginning in a small town with a bucolic setting. With the cultural dynamism of a university combined with the charms of a small town and its magnificent city park, Chico struck a chord with the family. Michael Webster originally came to Chico in 1962 with his parents Elnora Elizabeth Delancy and Joseph Vincent Webster.

Mike and Eddies was the beginning of several successful enterprises owned by Michael and his wife Donna. After the death of his parents, Michael remodeled the establishment and created a new concept called Delancy's.

Throughout the 70's, 80's and early 90's several other restaurants were created by Michael including the "Oak's Bar & Grill" , "La Fonda", "Canal Street", "R Fish & Company", and "Chico's".

In addition to his pursuits in the restaurant business, Michael served on the Board of Directors of Butte Savings and Loan and the Concours D'Elegance.

Beyond his business pursuits and community activities, Michael was an accomplished instrument rated pilot.

In 2003, Michael and his wife relocated to the coast of Brookings, Oregon. In 2021, due to health reasons they moved to Waco, Texas to be near family.

Michael Joseph Webster passed away on January 17, 2024, in Waco, Texas, after a long struggle with Alzheimer's.

Walter Fulton Wentz

Contributed by Ron Braziel

Walter Fulton Wentz was born September 5, 1902, in Lamont, Oklahoma, to Charles and Luvada Wentz.

After graduating from high school in 1919, he went to California where he attended Heald Brothers Business College in Sacramento.

In 1924, he married Juel Marie Cantrell and they moved to Chico in 1934. They moved to Red bluff in 1939 and then returned to Chico in 1948.

Walter founded Wentz's Markets in 1939 when he purchased his first store in Red Bluff. He purchased his first store in Chico in 1947 at West Third Street and Normal Avenue and eventually expanded to 19 stores in Northern California and Southern Oregon. In October of 1963, he was elected as a director of the California Grocers Association.

Walter sold out in 1972 and in November of 1982 he returned to the grocery business with his acquisition of Behr's Market at 598 East Eighth Street. He said that he was getting back into the grocery field to initiate two of his grandchildren, Walter Gallentine and April Birtcil, both of Chico, into the business.

Walter founded Gold Hill Golf Course in Redding in 1978 and was a founder and board member of the Butte Creek Country Club and Chico Savings and Loan. He was also a member of the Chico Lions Club, Leland Stanford Lodge, and Ben Ali Shriners's band.

Walter Fulton Wentz died April 18, 1990, and was survived by three daughters, a brother, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Jack Winning

Contributed by David Little

Jack Winning guided a vital Chico institution – the daily newspaper – through some of its most tumultuous times while helping shape the community and the entire Mid-Valley Area with a news reporting team of more than 40 employees, a newsgathering brigade the size of which we'll likely never see again here in any medium.

Winning was hired as the Enterprise-Record editor in 1983, replacing longtime editor Bill Lee, who retired. At the same time, the E-R was transitioning from being locally owned to operated by a national chain.

Winning served as editor until he retired in 1999. During his tenure, the E-R went from a six-day-a-week newspaper to seven days a week and shifted from afternoon to morning publication. The newspaper was sold twice, first to Donrey Media Group (based in Arkansas) then to MediaNews Group (based in Denver). The newspaper moved from downtown on Seventh and Broadway to a new plant on East Park Avenue, complete with new presses and new capabilities.

Among other changes, he oversaw three computer system conversions and outlasted six publishers.

Through all the chaos, the newsroom followed Winning's example. He was a rock who simply showed up and did an important job amid all the tumult. He managed the large staff in Chico and bureaus in Oroville, Paradise, Gridley, Orland, Willows and Sacramento. He wrote a weekly column on the opinion page, helped form the newspaper's editorial page stances and also had a hand in the newspaper's production, designing pages and writing headlines.

Winning was born November 24, 1930, in Freeport, Illinois. His 46-year newspaper career included stints as managing editor of the Rockford (Illinois) Register Star, assistant news editor at the Buffalo Evening News and managing editor at the Contra Costa Times in Walnut Creek before coming to Chico.

Winning died of melanoma at the age of 71 on September 23, 2002, at his home in Paradise.

Remembering Bidwell Mansion



Photo courtesy of Jim Brazier