



HISTORY OF FRESNO COUNTY

VOLUME 3

PAUL E. VANDOR

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Volume 3: Biographical (Contd.)

PAUL E. VANDOR

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PREFACE

Dear reader,

we, the publisher, have carefully reviewed and edited this book, whose original edition dates back to the year 1919. Well over a hundred hours of work have passed correcting it, but still it was not possible to eliminate all the mistakes that a 20th century scanner produced. The original scans we had at our disposal were of very poor quality. While it was possible to correct and eliminate special characters or false letters, there is unfortunately sometimes a dot where a comma should be, or a colon where a semicolon belongs, or the odd apostrophe, that a small dot in the scan generated in the text file. While we still corrected and eliminated ten thousands of errors, does not hinder the reading pleasure in any way and still makes this version of this rare book much more valuable than other versions on the market that have not been edited at all. We think it is fair to say that this is not 100% of a perfect book, but a 99% edition that has not been available since the original editions vanished from the shelves. We wish all readers a great time browsing through the history of Fresno County and the hundreds of biographies of the most important personalities.

BIOGRAPHICAL

J. W. BEALL.

A sturdy pioneer and his good wife, whose descent from two signers of the immortal Declaration of Independence gives them a unique association with some of the most interesting chapters of American history, are Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Beall, who reside in Laton and own a fine large ranch near Riverdale. Mr. Beall, who was a bosom friend of M. J. Church, Fresno County's pioneer ditch-builder, has for years been interested in irrigation and conservation, and has won an enviable distinction for his part in some of the greatest projects for the betterment of Central California.

Born in Ripley County, Ind., six miles east of Versailles, on September 14, 1849, Mr. Beall grew up in the days when there was no railway there. His father, John T. Beall, was born on the same farm, and the grandfather, Zephaniah Beall, took up the 160 acres of land from the Government. It was then covered with heavy timber, and he had to do a lot of chopping to get a clearing large enough for his house and yard. Aurora, Ind., was then the main trading-place and the principal steamboat-landing in that locality: and there our subject went as a boy, and saw for the first time a steamboat, long before he ever saw a railroad train. His

mother was Elizabeth Hallowell Hancock, a direct descendant of old John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. His father had married and died, at the age of seventy-four, on the land on which he was born; and there his wife outlived him five years. The parents had eleven children, and nine of them they reared to maturity. J. W. is the third in the order of birth, and second son that gladdened the good folks' hearts.

Educated mostly at the district schools, and then only for three or four months each winter, but later becoming a student at Moore's Hill College, J. W. Beall became a teacher himself, by hard private study, and from his twenty-second year taught school for several seasons. In August, 1874, however, his enterprising spirit had brought him to California, where he first stopped at San Francisco. Then he went for a couple of months to San Joaquin County, and after that for two months to Tulare County. There he took up and preempted 160 acres of land and lived for a couple of years. He saw Fresno for the first time in November of 1874, and returned here to live in 1876.

After a year at Fairview, where he was married, Mr. Beall came, in 1877, to the M. J. Church colony, then known as the Temperance Colony. He immediately identified himself with the most important interests there, and with Judge Munn and M. J. Church served on the Board of Trustees for the district. Later he became a director in the M. J. Church Canal Company, and in that office, as in his school trusteeship, he worked to advance the permanent interests of the community. The school house was early constructed, and in a couple of years the colony had been so enlarged that the school became large, too. Through his progressive participation in irrigation work in Fresno. Mr. Beall formed personal relations not only with Mr. Church, but with the late George S. Manuel, and I. Teilman, the well-known irrigation engineer of Fresno.

Mr. Beall is particularly interested in the Murphy Slough Association, and at one time owned one-third of the stock and was a director in the association, and also owned 680 acres, right where Riverdale now stands. He sold out most of his interest, however, except the water-rights to 280 acres of land, which he owns and which is located six miles from Riverdale. He is now a director in the Conservation District which plans to build the projected Pine Flat Reservoir, which is the largest project of its kind ever undertaken in Fresno County, if not in the state. Mr. Beall is an experienced orchardist and vineyardist, as well as alfalfa -grower; he prefers to grow alfalfa and has put his entire 280 acres into alfalfa.

For fifteen years Mr. Beall farmed grain in Fresno County. He lived in the Church, or Temperance Colony, and rented land on the outside, putting from 100 to 200 acres each year into wheat and barley. But while yet in the grain growing business, he experimented with raisin vineyards. There was then no market, however, for raisins, which sold at from one to one and a half cents a pound. This made that industry unprofitable at the start. Nevertheless, he remained in the Temperance Colony until the great boom year of 1887. Two years before this, he went to Fresno and bought the Arlington Heights quarter section, and in three years he sold it again. In both places he farmed for several years. He bought the 160 acres in Arlington Heights for \$50 per acre, and sold the land at an advance of \$75 per acre over the purchase price. Since then Mr. Beall has both bought and sold many different pieces of land, and has been very successful in real estate deals. His method has been to buy land in large tracts and to sell in smaller parcels, after it had been improved. He bought, for example, 680 acres where the town of Riverdale now stands, and sold the same again in eighty-acre tracts, the buyers still further subdividing the property and disposing of it in lots. He bought the Mills College Tract of 2,000

acres, put water on it, and sold it to L. A. Nares, or rather the Summit Lake Investment Company, in which he was interested. For a year or over, he maintained a real estate office in Fresno, and bought and sold many tracts of suburban property.

The year 1893 brought him disaster but, happy to relate, no such misfortune that he could not in time recover. During the wide panic, he and many others went to the wall through the great financial crash: and instead of being worth about \$40,000, he was not only worth nothing, but was in debt besides. He started anew, and in time paid off all that he owed, even to one hundred cents on the dollar.

In January, 1877, Mr. Beall was married to Miss Martha A. Hutchings, a native of Iowa who came to California in 1861, having crossed the plains with her parents, traveling by ox team. They settled at Stockton, and there she grew up and attended school. Her parents had a large farm eight miles northeast of Stockton, and from there she came, a young lady, to Fresno County in 1868, settling in Fairview, east of the Temperance Colony. The parents were William and Eliza (Cameron) Hutchings, and among her direct forebears was George Wythe, another signer of the Declaration of Independence. The Camerons were old settlers at Harrisburg, Pa., and Mrs. Beall's grandfather, William Cameron, was an own cousin of Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania. The Hutchings were from Indiana, and Grandmother Hutchings was a Sawtelle, and her mother was a DeMaurice of French origin, and among the early settlers at Old Vicennes, Ind. The Hutchings were of English blood. The Camerons were Scotch, and Grandmother Cameron was a St. John of England, descended from the good King John. Mrs. Beall has no recollections of Iowa, but she does remember the old ox team. These associations of Mr. and Mrs. Beall with the signers of the Declaration of Independence are of

particular interest since John Hancock was the first to sign, as the famous document shows, and George Wythe the last.

Mr. and Mrs. Beall have reared three adopted children, although two others died while little. Mrs. E. P. Blanchard of Laton died in 1911 and left one son, Laurence Eduard Blanchard, whom they are now rearing. Mrs. Beall is very active in the Red Cross work and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and did what she could to promote the liberty loans, as did also Mr. Beall. Both Mr. and Mrs. Beall have been consistent Christians, and they use neither coffee, hog-products, nor liquor; and they are strong advocates of temperance. Mr. Beall is an ardent Seventh Day Adventist, as was his partner, M. J. Church: while Mrs. Beall is a member of the United Brethren Church. She helped to build the church at Laguna. Mr. Beall and Mr. Church were on the building committee, bought the lots upon which their church is located, and deeded the property to that congregation.

JOHN WILLIAM SHARER.

An enterprising and progressive viticulturist, and an authority on the laying out of fine vineyards and kindred lands, and a business man who, having early in life declared himself for the walk of a consistent Christian, has endeavored in his spare time to promote the cause of holiness and has never swerved from his allegiance to the Christian Church, is John William Sharer, who was born near Pittsfield, Pike County, Ill., on January 23, 1869, the son of Peter and Elizabeth (Johnson) Sharer, natives respectively of Pennsylvania and Ohio. His father was a pioneer farmer in Pike County, and after the death of his wife, he retired from active work and spent his last days in

Fresno County, where he died in 1906, at the home of his son, 'M. M. Sharer, and in his eighty-fourth year.

John William Sharer's schooling was limited, as he was compelled to lay aside his books when he was only sixteen years old; and he had both the advantage and the disadvantage of growing up in the country districts until he was eighteen years of age. Having a brother living in Fresno County, Cal., he came west in the "boom" year of 1887, and began to work for Steve Hamilton. In the middle of October he joined the threshing crew on Governor Edmiston's place, and put in there two seasons. He early worked for Charles H. Boucher, and also spent some three years in the employ of other people in and about Clovis: and, at the end of the first three years in Fresno, he made a visit home.

In 1890 or 1891, Mr. Sharer rented one-half of the Tarpey lands, which he farmed to grain. About the same time, he took hold of some ranch acreage in the Red Bank section which he ran for many years; then he secured the Elvira section, which he had for five years, and then he quit farming altogether. During the years 1890 to 1894, when the Enterprise Colony was coming to the fore, he and his brother set out the first piece of vineyard in the Colony, the place he now owns. He also farmed grain land up to 1899. This he did, that while improving his vineyard, he might keep up the running expenses. He found it profitable, besides, in the fall of the year, to haul lumber from the mountains for the building of many of the homes in and around Clovis.

In 1896 Mr. Sharer located on the home place, a tract of twenty acres, then only partly improved, but which his industry has expanded into 100 acres, while he has witnessed the growth of this entire section. He installed a pumping plant, and a first-class water system for irrigating the land. At the time when he came to this section of the county, there was no thought of using the land for any

other purpose than that of grain farming and stock-raising, and for some time thereafter he could tell the name of each family living between Lane's Bridge and Centerville. It was necessary to get the entire Garfield, Jefferson and Red Bank districts in order to have enough people for a Thanksgiving festival dinner. After a while, viticulture demanded a share of attention, and Mr. Sharer is proud of his part in vineyard development.

But as a man endowed with a natural bent for material progress, Mr. Sharer has come to have other interests besides those of the fields. He has invested, for example, in a steam laundry, and, in keeping with his usual standards, has gone in for the most up-to-date service that could be provided; and he has also come to own valuable business and home property, and is a director of the Scandinavian Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Mr. Sharer was also one of the organizers of the Clovis Farmers' Union, and a member of the original board of directors, and at the first meeting was elected president of the board. His company established the large warehouses at Clovis. Mr. Sharer and K. M. Hansen purchased machinery at San Jose, and the warehouse was equipped for both the seeding and packing of raisins: and within three years their efforts resulted in such success that when the California Associated Raisin Company was formed, their equipment was purchased and became Plant. No. 1.

Mr. Sharer was one of the original organizers of the Melvin Grape Growers' Association, formed in 1916, and was a member of the original board of directors, and was secretary from the start — a position he has held ever since, and to which he has given his best efforts and experience. The association built a packing-house at Melvin, 50 x 100 feet in size; in 1917 they added another floor space of 50 x 50 feet, and in 1918 they built two new packing-houses, each of the same dimensions, with

skylights and most modern equipment at Glorietta and Bartels.

The success attained by this association was recognized by other communities, and being intensely interested in cooperative movements, Mr. Sharer as a director lent his aid, visiting different localities and explaining their plan and success, and recommending similar organizations. There are now various associations throughout the valley, all shipping through the California Fruit Exchange. Its growth can be estimated from the fact that the first year's shipment was only 120 cars, while in 1918 some 1,400 cars from these organizations were dispatched through this exchange from this valley, and a conservative estimate for 1919 is over 2,100 cars. The local association at Melvin alone has saved its growers over \$35,000 in packing and selling within three years' time. When the Melvin Grape Growers Association became a member of the California Fruit Exchange, Mr. Sharer was elected the representative from his association, and at the stockholders meeting of the California Fruit Exchange in Sacramento, January, 1917, he was elected a member of the board of directors, and was again reelected, having served acceptably and well.

On October 17, 1894, Mr. Sharer was married to Miss Nellie Dawson, who was born near Arena, Wis., the daughter of John A. Dawson, also an early settler. Mr. and Mrs. Sharer have three children: Ralph Vernon, a graduate of the Clovis High School, who superintends his father's ranch, and who served seven months in the United States Naval Reserve; and Alice Gertrude, and Everett Eugene, all of whom are at home. With commendable pride, Mr. Sharer took his family to the World's Fair at St. Louis, in 1904, and while East he had various novel experiences. Someone asked him the question, "How much sugar do you Californians put into your raisins?" and another, "How do you get the sugar into the raisins?" and another question

propounded was, "Can a man start in California without money and expect to pull through?"

When thirteen years of age, Mr. Sharer joined the Methodist Church, and finding no church of that denomination here, he joined the First Presbyterian Church of Clovis, in 1900, and he has since been an active member, and of late an elder, while for ten years he was clerk of the session. In the spring of 1904, he went to Alberta, Canada; and while there the San Joaquin Presbytery elected him delegate to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church held at Dallas, Texas, which he attended, and then took his family east to the St. Louis Exposition and visited relatives in that vicinity. In 1914, on the death of Judge Law in Merced, he was selected director of the San Joaquin Presbytery, and has been reelected each year since. In 1918 he was again elected a delegate from the San Joaquin Presbytery to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church held in May, at Columbus, Ohio, and attended the session. On the same trip he visited his old home in Pike County, Ill., also in Missouri, Nebraska and Colorado, and then returned home, more than ever satisfied that he had cast his lot in the land of sunshine and flowers. As the result of this Christian experience in an everyday world, Mr. Sharer's advice is to be honest among one's fellowmen, and having thus met and disposed of the duty of each day, to leave the future to the God of all time.

Emphatically a man of energy, Mr. Sharer is never idle, and is one of the most enterprising and active of men in Fresno County, giving substantial encouragement to every plan for the promotion of the public welfare, for the upbuilding of its institutions and its development, thus aiding materially in bringing about the prosperity we all enjoy.

W. J. KILBY.

Fortunate in having personally witnessed all of the important discoveries of oil and other developments in Fresno County, Judge W. J. Kilby enjoys the distinction of being one of the best-posted men in Central California, and an authority on the section in which he has so long been active. He was born at Freeport, Maine, of old New England stock descended from the Cromwellian Puritans and including today, among others of note, the well-known writer, Quincy Kilby, also a native of Maine, and the historian of the Boston theater. These ancestors were in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and both grandfathers on his mother's side were not only in the great struggle of 1776, but were with General Washington when he crossed the Delaware. Mr. Kilby's father was Charles S. Kilby, a builder, and his mother was Cynthia Moses before her marriage, and she also was born in Maine.

Having graduated from a high school in Maine, W. J. Kilby in 1885 came west to California and Fresno County and in April of that year arrived at the Pleasant Valley Stock Farm. The railroad then came only as far as Huron, but in 1888 it was extended to Coalinga, which was laid out on paper and sold off in lots. After being employed on the Pleasant Valley Ranch for a while, Mr. Kilby took a homestead preemption and timber claim on Los Gatos Creek, and engaged in stock-raising and farming, in which field he showed his natural ability.

In the early nineties Mr. Kilby was induced to run for the office of justice of the peace; and his peculiar fitness for that responsibility having been recognized, he was elected. Soon thereafter he moved into Coalinga, and about the same time was appointed postmaster. The post office and

the court room of the justice were in the same building on Front Street, and this fact recalls an amusing anecdote told of the Judge. A constable brought in an Irishman who had committed some offence, and as the officer was in a hurry and wished to take him away on the train, there was nothing left for him to do but to bring him before the Justice, who was then very busy making up the out-going mail. The Judge heard the case, the offender pleaded guilty, and the postmaster-justice pronounced sentence of sixty days without stopping his postal duties; whereupon the Irishman, seeing the funny side of the incident, remarked that he had had all kinds of packages handed him through the post office, but never before had he been parceled out sixty days. Judge Kilby was reelected, and served two terms, and never was there a more efficient, more just and popular jurist on the justice's bench.

Judge Kilby still owns his old ranch and several other ranches in the county, for he has also engaged in real estate, handling for the most part his own property, and because of his judgment, honesty and good nature, giving satisfaction to all concerned, and so succeeding with each transaction. He has erected a number of residence and business buildings in Coalinga, including the Kilby Block on E Street, and he has also been in demand for insurance and as a notary public. Long a prominent Republican, Judge Kilby is still an influential man.

He was married at Freeport, Maine, on April 18, 1884, to Miss Helen Murtagh, of Boston, and they have had five children: Mollie is Mrs. G. M. Hughes of Coalinga; Ben W. is a merchant at Helm; Beatrice is Mrs. C. N. Ayres of Coalinga; Colon is a graduate of the Coalinga High School and is now at Redlands University, where he holds the quarter-mile record as a foot-racer of the Pacific Coast; and Neta is studying to be a nurse, in San Diego. Thus all the children of this distinguished citizen have been heard from.

ANDREW ABBOTT.

A perfect type of the attractive American, sturdy of body and a giant in intellect, and with little wonder, when one learns of his relation by blood to the family of Rowells, so eminently connected with the development and history of Fresno County, is Andrew Abbott, who owns a finely-improved ranch of eighty acres, on Adams Avenue, two and a half miles south of Del Rey. He came to California on January 18, 1879, and landed at Fresno with just eighteen dollars and twenty-five cents in his pocket. Since then he has faced such hard times, together with thousands of others caught in the vortex, that he was compelled to part with his farm-lands; but by a brilliant stroke he was successful in buying the property back, and in making of it what no one in the beginning thought it would ever prove to be.

He was born in the White Oak country, seven miles northwest of Bloomington, Ill., on his father's farm, for he was the son of Milo J. Abbott, who descended from English stock that traces its ancestry back to the Mayflower, and came from New Hampshire. He is a cousin of the late A. A. Rowell and also Dr. Rowell, whose lives are sketched elsewhere in this work, and a second cousin of Chester H. Rowell, the distinguished journalist and scholar. Having first seen the light on January 12, 1854, he was educated in the public schools of McLean County, Ill., and at the business college in Bloomington; and then he worked at home on the farm until he was twenty-one. Frank Rowell, his cousin, at that time offered him work on his farm; and he accepted, and he continued five years.

California made its irresistible appeal about that period, and on the sixth of January, 1879, he took the train for the far West. Twelve days later he walked about Fresno, or

what there was of it then, for the town had scarcely begun to grow. He lost no time in finding something to do; and again he entered the service of a relative. His cousin, George B. Rowell, wanted him in the sheep business; and to sheep-raising he turned, getting more than a start, for, as was customary with him in all that he did, he learned the business thoroughly.

In 1883, Mr. Abbott was married to Miss Addie Barnes, a native of Chico, and a daughter of G. W. Barnes, and after the ceremony, he went with his bride to the Washington Colony, where he had acquired, the year before, a twenty-acre tract of land. It was at best a humble home: but assisted by his good wife, he planted it to vines and trees, and made there a domicile in which they were happy.

After a while, however, he sold that place and then bought the forty acres where he makes his present home, afterwards adding forty acres immediately adjoining on the west. All of this choice land he long since leveled and otherwise improved, and planted; and there he built, in 1908, a beautiful one-story cement bungalow, 33 by 60 feet in size. He is a member of the California Associated Raisin Company, and cooperates enthusiastically in its work for the advancement of California vineyarding.

Mrs. Abbott passed away on September 8, 1917, at the age of fifty-three, and to the sorrow of many. She left a daughter, Georgia, who is the wife of Anderson R. Miner, and lives in Fowler with her five children — George A., James H., Eleanor, Anderson R., Jr., and Mary. Mr. Abbott attends the First Presbyterian Church at Fowler, and for twenty years he has been a Knight of Pythias — first at Fowler, then at Selma. He still endeavors to practice the Golden Rule; and perhaps this is why Fate has so happily smiled upon him that the ranch he lost in the early nineties, and was enabled a few months afterward to buy back, he has been asked to part with for almost \$100,000.

FRANK L. COOPER.

A pioneer and a native son, who was always a hard-worker and for years held responsible positions, is Frank L. Cooper, a man having the steady ambition to lead a useful life and so coming through unscathed, though surrounded by the temptations of the bar and the gaming table. Now, well-preserved, he is a strong advocate of temperance and all that makes for decent living. He resides a mile northwest of the Laton Creamery, maintains a first-class dairy, and is one of the representative farmers and stockmen of Central California.

Born near Santa Rosa, in Sonoma County, on August 17, 1867, he is the son of B. F. Cooper, who came to California from New York State when he was eighteen years old, in 1859, traveling by way of the Isthmus. The same year he settled in Sonoma County, and there married Miss Mary Schultz, who died when Frank was only nine, leaving four children. These included two sisters, who died of scarlet fever when seven years old, and a brother, Fred D. Cooper, who is a farmer near Stratford, in Kings County. The father is now about seventy-six, and lives on California Avenue south of Rolinda and about ten miles out of Fresno. He resides with his third wife, but he had children only by Frank's mother. When he came from Sonoma County he settled in Alameda County, then went to Contra Costa County, and after that to San Luis Obispo County. Then he moved to Fresno, and then to Stanislaus County, where they lived seven years; and finally the family came back to Fresno County.

Frank Cooper came to the Laguna de Tache in the fall of 1890, and he helped James Downing move over from Kings City, Monterey County. Mr. Downing bought land at Burrel, then known as Elkhorn, and he also bought a forty-acre

vineyard near Fresno. Frank thus rode over all of the Burrel ranch in the early romantic days, when the tules were thick and tall. They were so thick and tall, in fact, that a rider on horseback could not see about or ahead of him, and when the cattle strayed off and got lost, the only way for the cow-boy to do was to ride into the tules, make all the noise that he could, and thus scare the cows into coming out on higher ground.

In the summer of 1905 Mr. Cooper bought his present place, at first investing in forty acres, then thirteen and a half, then twenty. Like his father, he has farmed grain extensively at what is now Riverdale, and there he has had a chance to display his ability in the driving of horses. He has driven thirty-two horses with a combined harvester, and once he drove forty horses over the rough hills of San Luis Obispo County. He is a true native son, and has been out of the State only once in his life when he made a trip to Reno, Nev.

It was in September, 1890, that Mr. Cooper came to Fresno County, soon after beginning his three years' work for Cuthbert Burrel on his 2,000-acre ranch at Visalia. Mr. Burrel also owned the Burrel Ranch of 18,000 acres, another ranch, of 2,000 acres, at Visalia with a section at Riverdale, and the lumber yard at Visalia. He did a good deal of heavy hauling for Mr. Burrel. He drove eight horses and superintended the work of the other drivers, hauling lumber for the ranch houses, which were being built in the vicinity of Burrel and Riverdale. He also hauled the lumber for the barn where H. M. Hancock now lives. During these years Mr. Cooper became a very trusted employer of Mr. Burrel, and almost assumed the relation of a son to him. Certainly "he formed a strong attachment for the rancher, and will always recall him as one of the noblest of the old pioneers of the San Joaquin Valley.

Mr. Cooper has always been a stockman and is, therefore, thoroughly familiar with the problems of stock-raising and