

HISTORY

The Dinuba area produced grain during the seventies and eighties. At that time the dominant community was Traver, which served as the shipping point for the grain and the residence for laborers. Dinuba did not exist at that time. Early descriptions of Traver indicate that it was typically "wild west," and that it was apparently destined to be one of the major cities of the San Joaquin Valley. The irrigation development which was to be the basis of Traver's further development proved its undoing and created Dinuba.

During the seventies there was a large cattle and grain ranch in southern Fresno County which used the brand "76." In 1882 a group of men, including the owners of the "76" ranch, started an irrigation development called the 76 Ranch & Water Co. According to Frank Adams, this company was successful from the start.⁴ It sold both land and water rights, the latter being made appurtenant to the land, each 40-acre right calling for 40 inches of water. An initial charge of \$200 was made for each 40-acre right and an annual assessment of \$20 covered operation and maintenance. The individual owner had to build adequate laterals when these were necessary to bring the water to his land.

The Alta Irrigation District was formed in 1888, and is one of three original Wright Act irrigation districts that have been continuously active since their formation. In 1890 the district purchased the system built by the "76" company for \$410,000.

The district has been involved in much litigation, and disputes over water rights have in the past resulted in violence. Adams describes some of its problems:

From the early days Alta Irrigation District was involved in litigation respecting its water rights. There was also litigation regarding the legality of certain acts of the board of directors, the first bond issue, out of which the system was purchased, being declared void by the superior court on August 18, 1898, when bonds of this issue in the amount of \$543,000 were outstanding. These were the dark days of the district. For several years most of the district assessments remained unpaid and development was halted, although the canal system was continued in operation and the district organization remained more or less active. In 1901 a compromise with the bondholders was reached. Under this compromise 5-percent refunding bonds in the amount of \$500,000 were issued on February 4, 1902, \$492,000 of these being used to redeem all of the outstanding bonds and the defaulted interest coupons for the years 1898, 1899, and 1900. The basis for exchange was \$0.75 on the dollar. Since this refunding, the district has been in sound financial condition, meeting all interest and principal payments as due, and even retiring bonds in the amount of \$53,500 in advance of maturity out of accumulated surplus.⁵

In 1888 the towns of Reedley and Dinuba were formed. Irrigation of the higher lands around Dinuba flushed alkali to the surface of the soil around Traver, and this, in conjunction with a number of fires, caused the earlier town to be abandoned. Several houses and buildings were moved from Traver to Dinuba, and quite a few of the people of Traver established residence in the new community. With this start, the town grew steadily.

There had been rural schools within the community boundary (as delineated) as early as 1879, but the first Dinuba school was started in 1889. This school grew steadily through the nineties.

⁴ Frank Adams, *Irrigation Districts in California*, Bull. 21, 1929, State of California, Department of Public Works, Sacramento, 1930, p. 214.

⁵ Frank Adams, *ibid.*