

# **Gustine, Gem of the Valley: A Complete History of the Gustine area**

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### Chronological Events from 1833 to 1990

<i>1833</i>	"Spanish Influenza" kills off Yokuts Indians Living in Gustine area.
<i>1845</i>	Romero area named for brothers killed by a renegade band of Chauchela Indians.
<i>1846</i>	Vigilante Committee hanging at the Cottonwoods.
<i>1863</i>	Mustang Settlement founded at the Cottonwoods
<i>1869</i>	Gustine's first school, Cottonwood School, opened with 15 students.
<i>1874</i>	Occidental School founded.
<i>1875</i>	Miller & Lux Canal reached to Cottonwood area.
<i>1877</i>	Cottonwood Cemetery established on Cottonwood Road on land purchased from the trustees of Clay school district.
<i>1879</i>	Sara Alice "Gussie" Miller Tragically killed in riding accident.
<i>1880</i>	Canal School started.
<i>1884</i>	A U.S. Post Office was established at the town of Sturgeon on the southwest corner of Whitworth and Snyder roads.
<i>1887</i>	Enterprise School founded.
<i>1889</i>	Southern Pacific Railroad comes through the West Side.
<i>1890</i>	Gustine is listed on the map for the first time as Henry Miller builds a railroad siding and cattle loading corral alongside of the railroad, using an old box as a depot. Planting a grove of black walnut trees where Henry Miller Park stands today, he promises to one day build a town at that location. A U.S. Post Office is established at Ingomar.
<i>1896</i>	Romero School opens and the new Era Creamery is built on Netherton Road in the Canal School area.
<i>1898</i>	New Era Creamery builds a skimming station at Linora
<i>1901</i>	Judicial Township Six in Gustine area was formed. Eugene McCabe appointed justice of the peace and B. H. Jeffers was appointed constable.
<i>1905</i>	Gustine's first church, Cottonwood Methodist Church, is built on the corner

	of Highway 33 and Cottonwood Road
1906	San Francisco earthquake is felt in Gustine and a wildfire destroys thousands of acres of grain belonging to the farmers in the foothills west of Gustine. The site for the town of Gustine is surveyed and the map is recorded.
1907	First sale of lots is held and James Jensen erects the first building in Gustine, a blacksmith shop
1908	The Enterprise School building is moved from Azevedo Road into town for use as a school. A second room is added.
1909	Miller & Lux building is built, as is the Gustine Hotel. The Gustine Branch of the bank of Los Banos is established and the Part Restaurant and Stationary Store opens. Gustine's first newspaper, The Gustine News, is published.
1910	Due to rapid growth, a second schoolhouse is erected in Clay district of the Cottonwoods. Gustine's second newspaper, the Gustine Standard is published and the Gustine Volunteer Fire Department is formed with Jack Hazelwood serving as chief. Merced County Branch Library opens in the Gustine Stationary Store and the Miller & Lux Pavilion is built in Henry Miller Park. Henry Miller donates a piece of land and \$100 to start the Presbyterian Church. Population of Gustine is now about 350.
1911	A new J. V. Azevedo store is built only to burn down within two weeks. With a loan from Miller & Lux, it reopens in 1912. Gustine holds its first July Fourth celebration as 1500 attend; parade, barbecue, games, races, ball game, fireworks and grand ball. West Side Construction Co. formed with partners Roy Kruger, Austin D. Davenport and John Hollingsworth. They build the Merced County Justice Court/Jail building. 80 children attend Cottonwood School, more than in the new Gustine Grammar School. The new Methodist Episcopal Church building is dedicated and joins the Cottonwood Methodist Church. The Gustine City Band is organized and Jack Hazelwood is appointed constable.
1912	The Odd Fellows building and the Holy Ghost Catholic Church are built. The grand opening of the Gustine Opera House is held, featuring an electric piano and motion picture shows. The Gustine Chamber of Commerce is organized. J. Frank Snyder starts the Sturgeon Telephone Co. and all farmers' line go to the Newman office. Electricity provided by the San Joaquin Power and Light Co. was extended from Los Banos to Gustine and street lights were turned on for the first time. Orestimba High School District attempts to annex Canal School District and spurs Gustine into forming its own high school district. Tragedy strikes as Constable Jake Hazelwood loses his left hand and part of a forearm in a shotgun accident in a duck blind. The Titanic sinks. John D. Jensen's family had tried to book a passage and were unable.
1913	Bank of Gustine building is built to complete the four buildings anchoring the corners of Fifth Street and Fourth Avenue. Wehner's Pharmacy opens and the

	Amabile Hotel is sold, to be renamed the Cosmopolitan Hotel and later the Palace Meat Market. Gustine Union High School classes began in the McLaughlin building, with the bids being awarded for construction of the high school in 1914.
1914	Temperance meeting is held at the Cottonwood Methodist Church as Gustine votes for Prohibition.
1915	Gustine votes to incorporate, 114 to 27 and Merced County gives the city permission to use the Gustine County/Jail for meetings on the condition the city keep it clean and pay for the lights. A bakery opened and for the first time Gustine bread is sold. Previously bread was shipped in from Stockton or Fresno. Complaints are heard about the terrible condition of the streets. Dust is a problem in summer and mud a mess in winter. Stock continues to run loose in town. Magnesite is discovered in the hills west of Gustine and the original Bald Eagle Mine Claim is filed by A.D. Davenport.
1916	Snow falls in Gustine for the first time since 1883. In January, at the age of 88, Henry Miller retires. He passes away in July. Dr. C. E. Stagner replaced Dr. Barnes as City Health Officer and Oliver Carey is new town marshal
1917	Voters approved two bond issues to purchase from Miller & Lux the water works and the sewer system. The Gustine Creamery is completed as is the California Milk Products plant which produces casein. New hall for the Cottonwood Church opens. War is declared on Germany and local men are drafted. The Red Cross is formed and is making Christmas boxes for the boys. Sale of liquor in uniform is prohibited.
1918	Constantine Souza is killed in action. Gustine's first WWI fatality. Wearing of flu masks in public is strictly enforced due to six deaths in one week.
1919	World War I ends and Prohibition begins. Three roads to Newman to be replaced by one road that follows the railroad track. A branch office of the Bank of Newman, founded in 1903, opens in Gustine. Marshal Oliver Carey resigns and is replaced by Fred Pettit.
1920	Because of the flu epidemic, public meetings, shows, churches, lodges, stores, schools, and all public gatherings are PROHIBITED. Everything is closed. Romero Telephone Co. begins. Gustine Union High School PTA formed and the Opera House burns down. Saddle Rock Cafe opens and The Toggery , L. C. Lee and Co. opened for business in Cosentino building. Carnation Plant is built as is the Frates (Victoria) Theatre. Gustine is called a "hick town" with terrible streets and no sidewalk... a disgrace!!! Cottonwood Church installs a moving picture machine.
1922	First agriculture and farm mechanic courses offered at Gustine High. Gustine and Newman join forces to plant trees on both sides of Highway 33 between the two towns. Jennings Tent Show in town for one week.
1923	Central telephone services begins in Gustine, the town having been served by

	farmers' lines since 1911. The Bunker Telephone Line will now come into Gustine. 1924 O. F. Carey reappointed city marshal and store owners continue to be cited for violating liquor laws. Chinese Restaurant burns down.
1925	1,000 people living in Gustine. Dr. A. W. Gustafson replaces Dr. Stagner and is appointed City Health Officer. Snyder Garage and Kerr building are built and cemented, Romero School opens on Highway 33 south of Gustine. American Legion Hall dedicated.
1926	Jack Hazelwood employed as night watchman. Ingomar School closes and students go to Romero School. Gustine completes its new 130-foot water tower and tank which stands beside the old wooden one. Miller & Lux sell the lumber yard to Jack Banchio , transfer their interest in the Bank of Gustine to the Liberty Bank, sell their butcher shop and close the Miller & Lux Store. This ends the business career of Miller & Lux in Gustine. Gustine Gun Club reorganized as Gustine Land and Cattle Company. W. K. McBride acquires 30 acres, east of the railroad track, for a subdivision.
1927	Cottonwood School, located at Cottonwood Road and Highway 33 is sold to M. O. Souza to be used as a private residence. Gustine High School Graduation held at Victoria Theatre with 16 graduates. Liberty Bank becomes Bank of Italy.
1928	10 tons of bootleg liquor taken in Gustine raid. "Jackass Whiskey" still later found at Ingomar. Ingomar School for sale. New game warden, Claud Gourley, nabs many game violators and brings them before Judge Dalton Hales. Amabile murder at Santa Nella results in life in San Quentin for Buck Deluchi and the execution of Antone Negra by hanging.
1929	First talkie, "Hearts and Flowers," to open at Victoria Theatre. Peter J. Giovannoni fights rising water tables due to leaks from Miller & Lux Canal. Boy triplets born to Antone and Rose Cotta... Frank, John and Manuel.
1930	It snows again in Gustine and the Bank of Italy becomes the Bank of America. As prohibition continues, the City wants to cancel the business licenses of two Gustine men for alleged liquor violations.
1931	Oscar Sorenson, the "Danish Ace," buys a parcel of land on Fremont Road (Highway 140) for use as an airport.
1932	Oliver Carey orders the hobos to move from "the jungles." Poultry Procedures comes to town and located in the Miller & Lux Warehouse. After singing over KTA Stockton, Miss Evelyn Silius auditions in SF on NBC-RKO. A. P. Giannini , founder of the Bank of America, pays Gustine a visit and holds a 20 minute telephone conversation with President Hoover.
1933	J. T. Hazelwood replaces Oliver Carey as chief of police. At his request, the City purchases its first police car and even installs a siren and a red light. Western Condensing plant opened.
1934	Talkington murder occurs south of Gustine.

1935	First night football game held in Gustine. Martino's Market opens. Highway 33 became the official name of the West Side Highway. City park officially named "Henry Miller Park."
1936	Official beginning of annual Our Lady of Miracles celebration in Gustine. Gustine and Newman High School Districts form boundaries for proposed Hills Ferry Cemetery District.
1937	Gustine Union High School Auditorium and classroom wing constructed at a cost of \$90,000 with a PWA grant and a \$38,000 bond issue, giving Gustine one of the finest and most modern which school plants in the valley. Occidental School District merges with Gustine Union Elementary and Occidental ceases to exist. Elinor Jenkins Jorgensen serves as the last teacher. Alan Bennison discovers dinosaur fossils in hills west of Gustine. Henry E. "Ted" Newbold hired to teach music at Gustine High.
1938	WPA starts curb and gutter project downtown and an auditorium/gym is built at Gustine Elementary School. West Side Hospital opens with doctors A.M. Roscoe, Paul A. Werthman, E. W. Bulley and J. E. Thompson.
1939	Farmers' Telephone lines to come into Gustine's Central, not Newman's. Helen Borrelli opens beauty shop at Borrelli's corner.
1940	Schornick and Vitorino (later Frank DeGregori ) Blacksmith Shop on Fourth avenue is torn down, having existed from the beginning of Gustine. Draft Board begins registration in Hotel Building and Justice Court.
1941	Aircraft Warning System and Observation Post established on Harry Snyder Ranch. WPA begins to replace 1920s sidewalks. American Portuguese Hall near the airport is purchased and moved to the corner of Sixth Street and Third Avenue to serve as the GPS Hall. The year ends as WWI begins.
1942	1 All men between the ages of 45 and 65 require to register for Selective Service, and air raid practice drills are held, the 20-30 Club sponsors scrap metal drive, classes are held on war gassed, rent ceilings are established and the registry of all horses and mules is requested. Civilian Defense Council and Chief of Police Jack Hazelwood warn that aircraft signs must be removed from city water tower and also from the smoke stack of California Milk Products Company plant. A captured Japanese one-man submarine is on display as rationing begins. Sugar, coffee, butter, cheese, meat, fish, oil, commercially canned, bottled or frozen vegetables, juices, soups and dried fruit are rationed. Tires and gasoline are rationed and an artificial rubber plant, guayule, is grown by Gustine farmers.
1943	First Gustine boys, Corporal Joseph G. Rose, killed in WWII. The war continues as Gustine saves tin cans for the war effort, ships 12 dogs for defense, and follows dimout restrictions. City street lights are painted over for blackout purposes. The Gustine Gun Club and Hill Ranch Observation Posts are in place and Crows Landing Naval Air Stations opens.

1944	Gustine's fifth war Bond Drive is set, having raised more than its quota of \$250,000 on its fourth drive. Bald Eagle mine closes for good. "20-30" club starts Invitational High School Basketball Tournament in Gustine, now the oldest invitational high school tournament in the state. W. E. "Good Roads" Bunker retires after serving 22 years as Merced County supervisor. He was responsible for the building of Highway 140 so Gustine residents did not have to travel through Newman or Los Banos to reach Merced. He was succeeded by Harry Schmidt who served for the next 28 years.
1945	In August the Japanese surrender and all of WWII is over. Office of Police Department is moved to the Justice Court Building on Fourth Street.
1946	Cottonwood School celebrates 75th anniversary. Gustine's Jima " float is judged the top entry in the Merced County Armistice Day Parade, winning grand sweepstakes and first prize for the best entered float.
1947	A merger of three Gustine milk plants occurs; California Milk Products, Avoset Inc., and the Gustine Creamery Limited, to be known as Avoset . Assembly of God Church built on Fifth Street. Rev. John B. Forde, is the new pastor of the Holy Ghost Church.
1948	Dr. Wagers of San Diego was affiliated with Dr. Roscoe and Dr. Kaye. Victoria Theatre is remodeled and renamed Valley Theatre. New Library in park is completed. Dr. Gus is presented the first Community Service Award from the Rotary Club.
1949	City offices and council chambers move from the Gustine Hotel to their new location adjacent to the new Standard office. The entire main floor of the Gustine Hotel is being remodeled to be used by the Gustine Pharmacy.
1950	City accepts municipal airport.
1951	A movie is made of Gustine featuring clubs, businesses and schools. Private Joe A. Coelho is first Gustine boy killed in Korean War, followed a week later by the death of Private Joe Freitas.
1952	Our Lady of Miracles School opens. Dr. A. W. Gustafson passes away and plans are made to place a statue of him at the elementary school.
1953	Gustine Memorial Pool is built and dial telephones come to Gustine. Gustine's first school, Cottonwood, closes. Betty Ordway was the last teacher, where she served lunches and did janitorial duties.
1954	Valley Theatre closed for first time in over 30 years. Dr. Ben R. Leonard comes to Gustine and is associated with doctors Roscoe, Thompson, Kaye and Wagers. Six Gustine people are stricken with polio including Dr. Warren G. Wagers.
1955	Western Condensing is acquired by Foremost. W. L. Chappel retires after 40 years as city clerk. Gustine Elementary School cafeteria is built.
1956	Father Forde becomes Very Reverend Monsignor Forde . West Side Hospital closes to reopen the following year as a community hospital.



1957	Mount Arbor Nursery and A. J. Moffet and Sons ship three million roses from their Gustine warehouse filling 100 railroad box cars.
1958	Jack Hazelwood seeks funds to erect a statue of Henry Miller in Henry Miller Park. Cottonwood School buildings abandoned and Canal School District consolidates with Gustine Union Elementary. San Joaquin Valley Bowl opens in the Theatre Building.
1959	Proposed West Side schools merger between Patterson, Newman, and Gustine is defeated. Canal Center officially opens. H. E. "Ted" Newbold becomes Merced County Superintendent of Schools.
1960	Gustine population reaches 2,775.
1961	San Luis Dam project begins.
1962	Gustine phone numbers change from prefix UL4 to 854 and it snows in Gustine for the first time in 32 years. Francis R. Cunha becomes the first Gustine person to join the Peace Corps and at the age of 73, the oldest active member of the Peace Corps in the nation. She established four schools in BOM Jesus, Brazil. Original Gustine Union High School torn down. President John F. Kennedy dedicates the San Luis Water project and the San Luis Dam.
1963	President Kennedy is assassinated. Groundbreaking ceremonies are held for the California Aqueduct. Gustine gets zip code 95322. Third Romero School is built on Centinella Road. The home building boom continues as Sherwood Estates subdivision opens, followed in 1964 by park Estates and Fairview Manor.
1964	Gustine's second park, Sherwood Park opens. Gustine's new city/county building is dedicated.
1965	First Gustine boy, Private Larry Lussier, killed in Vietnam. Green Acres Mobile Manor opens and Borrelli's corner is annexed. Newman-Gustine Joint Unified School District is formed, composed of six school districts in two counties. No more "Owl" train through Gustine as the Southern Pacific changes the Owl to the east side of the valley. Miller & Lux dissolves after operating here for over 100 years. Gustine celebrates its 50th anniversary as an incorporated city.
1966	Linda Foreman becomes California Dairy Princess. Opening ceremonies are held for West Side Freeway (Interstate 5). New Holy Ghost Church opens on Linden Ave. Casey the Eagle, trademark of Case Implement Co., is removed from atop Azevedo Hardware Store where he had been since 1931.
1967	Following fund-raising activities, the beautification of Gustine start with the planting of Japanese privet trees, to be followed by the construction and planting of intersectional planters. Avoset to celebrate 50th anniversary.
1968	San Luis Dam is completed.
1969	M. M. Lopes Post 240 American Legion observes 50th anniversary.
1970	Gustine population reaches 2,793 and becomes the first city in California to

	have the emergency number 911. Elizabeth Bettencourt becomes first woman elected to city council.
1971	The Newman-Gustine Joint Unified School District is de-unified following six years of controversy. The Gustine Hotel closes after 62 years of service.
1972	Al Goman is elected Merced County supervisor.
1973	Schmidt Park is built and named in honor of former supervisor, Harry Schmidt. Pioneer Park opens near Farview Manor.
1974	Mission Tesoro opens at Santa Nella.
1975	Knudsen (Borden's) will close.
1976	Elizabeth Bettencourt elected first woman mayor of Gustine, her father, George Steele, having served as mayor in Gustine's early years. Gustine celebrates the United States Bicentennial.
1977	Gustine Post Office honors it's 70th year in Gustine.
1978	Aileen H. Snyder Chosen Grand Marshall of the Merced County Fair parade. Monsignor John B. Forde passes away, having been in Gustine since 1947. Gustine Justice Court system cut back to being open one day a week. This is the first time it has not been open daily since first opening in 1911
1979	Our Lady of Miracles School reopens having been closed for 11 years.
1980	Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge contamination revealed. Gustine population reaches 3,142. Police Department moves from the Justice Court/Jail in city/county building, leaving the old building unoccupied for the first time in 69 years.
1981	City Council annexes 36 acre Bonta property
1982	Plan proposed by Elizabeth Bettencourt to turn the Justice Court/Jail into a museum operated by a historical society.
1983	Carnation Can plant closes with the operations going to Stockton. Pioneer Continuation High School opens in Linville Building.
1984	Gustine crime rate among lowest in state (451 out of 453). Foremost plant closes.
1985	The Presbyterian Church and the Gustine Standard celebrate their 75th anniversaries in Gustine. Gustine PRESS begins publishing in Gustine.
1986	Ground Breaking is held for new wastewater treatment plant. Our Lady of Miracles Society celebrates its 50th anniversary.
1987	United Technology withdraws its application to build a rocket plant on the Quinto Ranch. City water fails to meet state water quality standards.
1988	Gustine passes an immediate, temporary building moratorium due to wastewater treatment plant's inability to handle wastewater volume. 1989 Gustine's population exceeds 4,000 as the community prepares to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. Committees are formed and various fund-raisers are held. Ann Gilbert Getty donates \$10,000 to turn the old Merced County Justice

Court/Jail into the Gustine Museum.

1990 Gustine celebrates her Diamond Jubilee, 75 years since incorporation in 1915, but actually 83 years since founding in 1907. Sally Nickel Mein, great granddaughter of Henry Miller, serves as parade grand Marshall. The Gustine Museum, located in the Justice Court/Jail building, is dedicated during the Diamond Jubilee celebration.

## Yokuts Indians

As described by Frank Latta in his book *Handbook of Yokuts Indians*, the Indians living in the Gustine area “were a tall, well-built people of open outlook: frank, upstanding, casual and unceremonious, optimistic and friendly, fond of laughter, not given to cares of property or too much worry about tomorrow; and they lived in direct relation to their land and world, to its animal spirits, and gods, and to one another.”

Their number before the coming of the Spaniards was over 25,000 on the floor of the San Joaquin Valley. In our area they lived on the Orestimba, Garzas and Quinto creeks.

Near Salt Slough, east of Gustine, there are abandoned village sites with saucer-shaped depressions over which stood structures. Grinding holes, still seen today along the creek beds west of Gustine, provide evidence of Indian life.

The Yokuts lived in a paradise brimming with wildlife. Without a horse or gun, they hunted and fished with a bow and arrow, dart, spear, blind, snare, trap and poison weeds. They hunted tule elk, prong horned antelope, deer and grizzly bear. In the fall of the year the sky was blackened with flight of ducks and geese, providing another food source. Ground squirrels, seeds, roots and acorns all formed a large part of their diet. Coyotes and jackrabbits were everywhere.

Due to the abundance of tules, they were used for clothing, housing, boots, in making weapons and even diapers.

Many California highways of today follow the old Indian trading trails. Pacheco Pass and Highway 680 across the Altamont Pass are on old Indian trails. Interstate 5 follows the historic trail used by the Yokuts and later the Spaniards along the foothills on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley.

Since about 1790, there have been no Yokuts Indians along the West Side plains and foothills. Indians along the West Side plains and foothills. They had been forcibly removed from the area and taken by the Spanish to the missions on the coast, by the way of the “Trail of Tears.”

Those who were brave enough to remain along the west bank of the San Joaquin River perished

from the dreaded “Spanish Influenza” which swept the area in 1833. The pestilence, brought in by the Hudson Bay traders, killed the Indians so rapidly that few were left to bury the dead. The ones that were still alive were too weak or were dying themselves. Contrary to their normal ceremonial rites, the bodies were either cremated or buried in mass.

Several grave sites are situated south of Gustine, on the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge. One mound contains over 200 remains and is counted as the largest common burial site in the state.

Frank Latta described the Yokuts as the most tolerant, most unresentful, most forbearing, patient people the world had known. “From the smallest child to the most ancient tribesman, all have been proud to be called Indian.”

### Spanish Influence in Gustine

The first recorded Spanish expedition into the West Side was that led by Gabriel Moraga in 1806. Moraga had pursued a band of Indians which had run off horses from Mission San Juan Bautista. While here, he looked for sites for missions and presidios, but none were ever built.

From the Spanish, we have numerous place names, four large Mexican land grants and several ancient adobe buildings.

All four Gustine Creeks bear Spanish names: El Arroyo de Romero (named after a Spaniard who was killed there by Indians), El Arroyo Seco de Las Garzas (dry creek of the herons), Mustang (wild horse) and El Arroyo de Quinto (fifth creek).

Some historians say the Quinto Creek was the fifth watering hole north of Ortigalita Creek in the Los Banos area. However, Bill Jorgensen reports a different version of the naming as related to him by Frank Latta. “The Spanish did not have title by land grant to the Quinto region. There was good feed in that area so people negotiated with the Mexican government for permission to graze cattle. The name Quinto came from the word ‘cinco’ meaning five. It was the price for allowing a herd of cattle to graze on the land, one-fifth of the herd.”

Today, the ranches which had their origin as Mexican land grants, are located partly or wholly in western Merced County. The Santa Rita Grant was the first and was made in 1841 by Juan B. Alvarado. It later came to belong to Miller & Lux. The San Luis Gonzaga Grant was filed in 1843 by Juan Perez Pacheco, son of Don Francisco Pacheco for whom Pacheco Pass is named. The Orestimba y Las Garzas Grant was made by Sebastian Nunez and the Rancho Panoche de San Juan y Los Carrisalitos Grant was filed in 1853.

Numerous adobe dwellings were built in the Gustine area. The walls were made of large sun-dried bricks, made of adobe soil, mixed with straw, measuring 18 inches square and three inches in thickness. They were cemented and plastered with mud and whitewashed when finished.

One adobe, probably built before 1840, stood on the plains among the cottonwoods of Quinto Creek as late as 1925. Another was built on Garzas Creek, at Wehe Gate, west of Gustine. Only a mound remains of it today.

As late as the 1850s there were two small tuleroofed adobes on the west bank of Salt Slough, directly east of Gustine, which were then occupied by Mexican families. Both looked as if they had been built many years before.

Rancho Centinela (Santa Nella) was originally a part of the San Luis Gonzaga land grant. It is thought that it was occupied in 1810 or earlier, when the father of Tiburicio Vasquez, the bandit, brought the first horses into this region. A one-story adobe stood at Centinela for many years, but it is not known if it was built by Vasquez. A two-story adobe was erected by Basque sheep-herders, who occupied the rancho during the 1860s and the 1870s. This adobe, which had walls four feet thick, was torn down in 1890 and a frame structure was erected in its place by Miller & Lux.

One adobe remains in Gustine today, as an occupied dwelling. It is located on the Linora Ranch, three miles south of Gustine, on Hunt Road. The walls are three feet thick and the building is about 20x56 feet. The walls are now covered with boards.

### How the Romero Area Received Its Name

About 1845, two Spanish brothers from San Juan Bautista, named Romero, ran cattle in the foothills of this area. One of them, Antonio, was killed at the head of Romero Creek, at his summit cow camp, by a band of renegade Indians from Chowchilla. The Chauchela Indians were the fiercest of the Yokuts tribes. They filled him so full of arrows that the arrows held his body off the ground. Spanish soldiers cut the arrows off and carried Romero's body to Mission San Jose, where he was buried. The creek surrounding this area bears his name today.

### Centinela Gold

Santa Nella was originally named Rancho Centinela (sentinal). Located on Highway 33, at the crossing of San Luis Creek, it is one of several places in California where legends of buried treasure still persist. Basque sheep-herders occupied the rancho during the 1860s and 1870s.

Rumor had it that one of the Basque had gone insane after receiving a large sum of money in payment for some of his sheep. It was said that he had buried this wealth only to forget the spot where he had placed it. This led many treasure-hunters to dig up the entire yard and portions of the fields nearby in a vain search for the gold.

Possibly there never was any gold buried at Centinela, or perhaps it still remains there waiting for discovery.

## Mustang Horses

The Name “mustang” comes from the Spanish word “mestengo” which means unbranded wild horse. These horses roamed the hills and plains of the Gustine area by the thousands and were attracted to Mustang Canyon by the water at Mustang Springs.

These horses were small and wiry and did not weigh over 700 pounds. Although nervous and high strung, they were tough and durable. In their wild state they would kick, bite and strike with their fore feet when caught or approached by man. But, when broken to the saddle or harness and not abused, they became very gentle animals. They made excellent work horses and as saddle animals for the Spanish vaquero, they were indispensable.

The horses were rounded up regularly by the Spanish and driven into Mexico. Early settlers also captured the wild mustangs. During the time Joaquin Murrieta operated his horse gangs, the West Side pioneers often participated with him in capturing the horses.

The last of the mustangs, in the hills west of Gustine, were captured in the late 1880s.

## Henry Miller

Gustine’s founder was born Heinrich Alfred Kreiser in Brackenheim, Germany on July 21, 1827. There he spent seven years as an apprentice butcher.

In a dream he saw seas of grain and herds of cattle with the HH brand, he never forgot this dream.

In 1847, at the age of 19, he landed in New York City with only \$5 in his pocket. A friend in New York, named Henry Miller, had purchased a ticket for passage from New York to San Francisco and the ticket was marked “Not Transferable.” When the friends decided not to go, Henry bought the ticket and thus took the name. Later, in 1858, he had the Legislature of the State of California legally change his name to Henry Miller.

In 1850 he arrived in San Francisco via the Isthmus of Panama with \$6 in hand. His first job was as a dishwasher and then again as a butcher. Soon he had his own shop and earned a reputation for selling good meat.

Originally, he dealt with the wild, skinny, long horned Mexican cattle. Then turning his attention to the production of a better breed of cattle, he purchased 300 prime American cows. It was said to be the first band of American cattle ever driven into San Francisco.

He bred Devon and Hereford bulls with Durham cows to produce an animal with red color and white face. Anyone could tell Miller & Lux stock without looking at the brand.

One day while sorting hides, he saw the HH brand on a hide from the San Joaquin Valley. He decided to visit this vast 50-mile-wide, 200-mile-long valley. As he came across from the Santa

Clara valley, he stopped at “The Baths” on Los Banos Creek. Traveling on closer to the San Joaquin River, he saw the HH brand.

The Hildreth brothers, who owned the brand, were from Minnesota, where they had engaged in floating logs down rivers. They were using the same brand on their cattle as they had used to mark their logs. Miller then bought from the Hildreth brothers 8,835 acres of the Mexican Land Grant named the Santa Rita, together with the “Double H” brand. Henry Miller now had the beginning of his empire.

In 1858, he formed a partnership with Charles Lux, his chief competitor, under the name of Miller & Lux. This gave him a man to attend to the city business, where he had the market cornered, while he was in the country tending to the actual operation of the ranches.

For the next 30 years there was a veritable orgy of land and cattle buying. “Wise men buy land, fools sell it.”

Dressed in black or dark clothes, his dusty figure on horseback became a familiar sight for miles around. Guiding the cattle drives to market, moving supplies, getting water, building canals, buying hay and employing men was a continuous process. The “Double H” brand was seen in every valley, on every plain and in every ravine.

When Charles Lux died in 1887, he gave half his property to his wife and the other half to relatives in Alsace, the “German Heirs.” The estate was in the courts for 20 years.

In 1907, when lots were first sold in Gustine, it was in compliance with a court order to sell off his land holdings in a gradual orderly fashion. This was a result of a suit filed by the “German Heirs.”

Henry Miller said, “I have made three fortunes; one for myself, one for my partner and one for my lawyers.”

When, after many years of litigation, he finally purchased all the interests of the Lux heirs, his empire was complete. Over a million acres of land, fully stocked in California, Oregon and Nevada was owned by Henry Miller. It was the largest private piece of real estate in the United States.

Henry Miller was instrumental in getting the railroad to come through the West Side in 1888. Formerly he had to drive his cattle across the Pacheco Pass. Now he could ship his cattle by train.

When he retired in January of 1916, he was 88 years old. Passing away Oct. 14, 1916, he left a legacy of colonies and towns, thousands of miles of canals, banks, stores and lumber yards. His introduction of alfalfa, rice and cotton were now big industries in the state.



Henry Miller left many monuments to his memory in various parts of the state. However, the city of Gustine, named for his beloved daughter, Sarah Alice "Gussie", stands today as living testimony to one of the most powerful and picturesque figures of the old west.

## Gussie

Sarah Alice Miller was born in 1871 and delighted her father by dressing frilly dresses. He nicknamed her "Gussie" which was the term for dressing or "gussying up."

Very much like Henry Miller himself, she always wanted to be out among the cattle. Her one delight was to ride horseback. Henry Miller idolized her. Gussie was Henry Miller all over again.

On June 13, 1879, Gussie, age 8, and her older sister Nellie were riding horseback near their Bloomfield ranch near Gilroy. Her galloping horse suddenly broke his stride as a foreleg sank in a gopher hole. She was pitched headfirst to the ground and instantly killed.

After the tragedy Henry Miller's mind was constantly on his little girl. Blaming himself, he would stand in the road where the tragedy occurred and curse at the top of his voice. Finally, he suffered a nervous breakdown, which necessitated a complete rest. This was obtained by a trip to Europe, back home to the land of his birth.

All the rest of his life, wherever he went, he carried with him a picture of Gussie. Once Henry Miller was held up and robbed. He had a fine engraved watch that contained Gussie's picture. Miller told the robber, "Just let me take that picture out." The robber let Miller remove the picture. Miller told him he could have the watch and his money and "I'll never bother you."

He also had a small portrait framed and glassed and kept on his bureau. Before going to bed, he would kiss the photo good night. From time to time, his housekeepers were said to have to wash tear stains from the glass. Henry Miller had lost forever his greatest treasure.

The mortal remains of Sarah Alice Miller, beloved daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Miller, were conveyed here on Saturday last by train for interment in a private cemetery at the home farm. The day after the late lamentable accident which deprived this blooming and affectionate girl of life, her body was sent to San Francisco and placed in the family vault at Laurel Hill cemetery. The dismal precincts of the cemetery however seemed to be no place for the repose of her young form and this beautiful rural spot on the Bloomfield ranch where she had gambled and spent many happy hours in play, seemed to her fond parent to be the most appropriate place for their buried love to rest.

The afflicted parents and members of the family in mournful sadness, with hundreds of sympathizing citizens in carriages followed the hearse bearing the cherished form that only a few days before bloomed in youth and beauty, and moved in gaiety and smiles in the presence of those who are now heartbroken over her early and sudden death.



The funeral procession finally reached the grave where the solemn Christian services were conducted by Reverends J. L. Drum and T. M. Oviatt, of the Presbyterian Church. Friends gathered round with flowers, “emblems of the beauty and purity of the deceased and the crown of glory which she has received in heaven.” The scene was impressive as the beauties of nature were strewn about the grave in the presence of uncovered heads while the plaintive hope-inspiring words of the song “The Sweet By and By” echoed on the hillsides. The crowd left the melancholy scene touched with sympathy over the sad event.

*Gilroy Advocate June 28, 1879*

### Bull’s Head Draft

This Miller & Lux draft was a familiar sight and was made distinctive by the “Bull’s Head” drafts that all bills for the materials were discharged. Money itself was often scarce in small communities, banks were far distant, and coveted “Bull’s Head” drafts. They were cashed over every bar, accepted in every store, and passed at every hotel.

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### Dirty Plate Route

Many hobos found their way into the San Joaquin Valley to spend their winters on the Miller & Lux ranches.

As told by Edward Treadwell in his book, *The Cattle King*, Henry Miller established a policy relating to tramp early in his career. He said, “Don’t let the tramps sleep in the hay stacks. Let them know that they can always have one night’s lodging in the barn. If they fall asleep in the hay stack they may stay there several days, break it down, probably go to smoking and set it on fire. If you give them a bed in the barn they will appreciate it, stay just one night, won’t use any matches and then be on their way.

When told to feed all hobos a meal, the Chinese cook complained about washing dishes for them. Henry Miller said, “All right, we’ll have the plates. They will clean them for you. “The cook thought this was a good joke and did not press his point further, so these became the rules for the hobo hotels on the Henry Miller ranches.

Never refuse a tramp a meal, but never give him more than one meal. A tramp should be a tramp and keep on tramping.

Never refuse a tramp a night’s lodging. Warn him not to use any matches, and let him sleep in the barn, but never let him stay more than one night.

Never make a tramp work for his meal. He won’t thank you, if you do. Anyhow he is too weak to work before a meal and too lazy to work after a meal.

Never let the tramps eat with the men. Let them wait until the men are through, and then make them eat from the same plates. The cook should not be made to do extra work for tramps.

Under these humanitarian rules, which soon came to be well understood, the Miller ranches

became a Mecca for the tramps and thus was born the “Dirty Plate Route”.

## Henry Miller Letters

A prolific letter writer to his superintendents and foremen, Henry Miller directed the operation of his ranches in minute detail. The following excerpts, taken from Treadwell’s book, *The Cattle King*, illustrate his philosophy.

Unbranded calves on the ranges is bad business, as it might induce some of our neighbors to be dishonest.

A friendly neighbor is a great asset.

There is always hope for a drunkard, but more for a lazy, slovenly man.

A man can’t do justice to his employer on an empty stomach.

The best way to hold good men on a farm is to keep their sleeping quarters clean. Some men are worth a great deal more than others. Some men go around but don not want to see things. They are indolent; do not care, and when they cut a hide they cut it all to pieces and make it worthless, or when they bring it home they do not take care of it.

If a man is sensible he will not run his horse to death to get back a calf that runs away, but will let it come back of its own accord.

In opening stacks of hay, open them on the south end.

Please go and see how those people are fixed, and if you think they are worthy of assistance, give them what they need most. I am sending you a letter from a Mexican woman. Please buy something for her so as to make her comfortable during the winter. I hope you patronize all the merchants and bought such presents as will give their best satisfaction.

Do not let the men ride colts which they are breaking, into town, under any condition. If the horses have sore or blistered backs, I want their backs taken care of and I do not want them ridden. From time to time you will examine the men’s saddles and blankets. See that the men have good saddles and blankets.

I note what you say about the man attending the hogs and that he proved himself very capable in attending to the cattle that were choked up by the beets. We will give him a nice suit of clothes for Christmas.

Potatoes should be boiled with their skins on.

Four bulls to one hundred cows is ample on level ground. In the mountains, in broken or in wooded country these should be more.

Do not allow the rabbits to eat the bark off of the trees. On Sundays the men on the ranch can be given a gun to go out and shoot rabbits. A man will do it for the asking.

Don't try to develop poor land for alfalfa. It is better to native grasses. Put in a \$35 a month man to take care of it. When you develop land, develop good land.

Don't hurry the cattle when you make a drive. The fat on the cattle is worth more than the wages of a few men who are driving them.

Don't keep fancy stallions that have to be kept in the stable all the time. Let them run with in the mares. It saves a lot of work for the men and will get 85 percent of colts.

Don't let the men go around the barns with loose matches in their pockets. They are likely to set fire to the hay. Give every man a little metal match box and make him carry it.

Always burn the stubble off, if you can't feed it. If you plow the stubble in, you make a lot of chimneys for the moisture to come out of the ground.

### Gustine's Santa Fe Grade

In the late 1800s there was a series of dry years, resulting in a tremendous loss of cattle all over the state. Henry Miller survived because he had a large reserve of feed and pasture.

However, when the drought was over, his book, *The Cattle King*, that in order for Henry Miller to build up his herd, he required large sums of money and more than his own bank could advance in justice to its obligation to its other customers.

Henry Miller approached his own countryman, Clause Spreckels, for financial assistance and explains the situation. Spreckels said, "Yes, Mr. Spreckels said, "Yes, Mr. Miller, I have the money. What security are you willing to give?" He said, "Mr. Spreckels, I've been in business in California for 40 years and my word has always been good enough security." Spreckels said, "I don't do business that way and my lawyers will have to be satisfied that I am thoroughly protected." Henry Miller said, "This drought has been a great public calamity. It has set back the livestock business for years. I have got to build up the herds of the state and the city must be supplied with meat. You know I will not give security. I've never asked you for help before. I need it now and you are in a position to give it to me. I have a right to ask it. I consider that you have insulted me. Good Morning."

Henry Miller never forgot and never forgave. Years later his real opportunity came to even scores with Spreckels. Taking advantage of the growing hostility to the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, Spreckels completed a railroad through the San Joaquin Valley. He prevailed upon many people to grant right of way free of charge to the new company, and prevailed upon the cities to grant all kinds of Favorable franchises to it. Looking over the map of the west side of

the San Joaquin Valley, he found that he would have to go through the Miller & Lux land for about 100 miles. He wanted to go down the west side because the Southern Pacific already had a road down the east side. So he sent his right-of-way man to Henry Miller.

Henry Miller said certainly he would give a right of way. In fact he seemed to be in a hurry to grant this favor.

The contract was drawn, and in the contract he inserted two innocent provisions; one, that if the railroad was not built and operated within a certain length of time, the right of way would revert to him, and, second, that the railroad grade must be commenced within a certain length of time, and that he would be afforded all necessary crossing for his water and be entitled to remain the grade case the railroad was not completed or was abandoned.

This right of way was located through the low and overflow land of Miller & Lux, and Henry Miller did not tell Spreckel's man that for years he had been endeavoring to get the Southern Pacific to put a railroad down the Westside further to the west and on the higher land where there was much more settlement and where the land was better developed by irrigation. The railroad grade was hastily thrown up to comply with the terms of the contract. But in the meantime the Southern Pacific had quietly been obtaining a right of way through the very heart of the country and suddenly put on its crew and built a railroad in a location that practically killed the Spreckels road.

Spreckels was forced to move to the east side of the valley, abandoning the right of way and 100 miles of grade, which reverted to Henry Miller and became a highway through his low land and a levee for irrigating some hundred thousand acres of land. This was the cheapest irrigation in the United States. All he had to do was to put a few gates in the grade and the water could be flooded over the land or drained off at his will. So without even an ill word, Henry Miller had his revenge.

## Mustang Settlement

About 1863 a group of farmers began to homestead on Mustang Creek in the hills west of Gustine. The land was rich for farming and there was someone living on just about every flat plot of land. The settlers raised stock and grew grain. After the grain was harvested the land was rented out to sheep herders.

The Bithers lived at the lower end of the canyon and the John Allen family lived at the head of the canyon at Mustang Spring. There was a large grove of trees not native to this area that had been brought in by the Chinese called Ailanthus or Trees of Heaven. It was at this location the Bradley family settled. Also homesteading there were the Rhea, Taylor and Schilling families.

The children of these early Gustine pioneers all attended Occidental School when it opened in 1874.

## Sturgeon

Sturgeon was the first Gustine community to appear on the map. Ed Sturgeon was a pioneer who came to the area in 1868 where he farmed a 320-acre ranch in the Cottonwood area. The ranch surrounded the intersection of Snyder and Whitworth roads, southwest of Gustine and was notable for having been the first ranch entirely fenced on the West Side.

The town called Sturgeon was located at the intersection. It had its own post office, real estate office, general store and doctor's office. The post office was established in the grocery store on Jan. 2, 1884 and closed six years later on Oct. 28, 1890 to be replaced by the Ingomar office. The doctor, Doc Smith, was the first physician to practice medicine on the West Side. Originally Doc Smith had been located on the Garzas Creek but at Sturgeon he located his practice in the post office building.

This intersection was also the original location for Cottonwood School in 1869.

Mr. Sturgeon served as Merced County supervisor, school trustee and as director and stockholder in the Ingomar Warehouse Company. He was also the last person to be buried in the Cottonwood Cemetery.

## Enterprise Settlement

At the east end of Taglio and Gun Club roads was the being known as Enterprise. This rich area is at the sinks of Garzas Creek and was occupied by the first settlers in that entire area. This settlement was made around what later was known as the Gun Club.

Gustine's fifth school, the one room Enterprise School, was opened in 1887. It was on the Michael DeGregori property on Azevedo Road.

Frank Latta related that some of the very early settlers "were very religious and held church in the schoolhouse." Others, not so religious, called the entire area Gospel Swamp. It was known by that name long after the schoolhouse was moved into Gustine. The Peterman, Worthy, Tinnin and Bollinger families were early residents of the area.

## Ingomar

The Ingomar area first became a community when the one room Ingomar School was built in 1884. It was surveyed and appeared on the map in 1889 when the Southern Pacific railroad came through. When the Sturgeon post office closed in 18990, it was replaced by a post office in Ingomar.

By 1891, the Ingomar Warehouse Company had been formed, with the warehouse being a frame building 80×100 feet. The board of directors were: J. Q. Drummond, president; E. L. Sturgeon, treasurer; R. Gracey, secretary; and Directors W.A. Dunning and Henry Whitworth.

The town of Ingomar was located one fourth of a mile north of the schoolhouse and it faced to

the east. It was laid out and subdivided into lots on Oct. 7, 1895 by the Pacific Improvement Company.

By 1910 the population has reached 75 and by 1911 Merced County had located a branch library in the area. Fifty library books were deposited at the home of Mrs. L.H. Pfitzer.

Howard Snyder remembers when Joe Jeffers was the postmaster. He would hitch the horse up to a covered buckboard he had built to protect the mail from the rain. A small trunk projected out the back of the buckboard and that's where packages were kept. Mr. Jeffers had a large route to cover as he delivered mail not only to Ingomar families, but west to the foothills to all of the Cottonwood residents.

Where the tamarisk trees stand today, there were several houses where the Southern Pacific section gang lived. An all Mexican crew, they worked on and repaired the railroad tracks. With a combination post office and store, hotel, blacksmith shop, Methodist church, saloon and several warehouses and creameries, the prospect for thriving, growing community seemed bright.

However, all of the Ingomar lands were under the first Miller & Lux Canal and when the second (upper) canal came through in the early 1900s, the land became extremely alkali below the first canal at Ingomar. It took almost 20 years for the water to go bad, but when it did Ingomar became the ghost town it is today.

In 1912, Western Creameries had closed its Ingomar station moving everything into Gustine.

Arriving in 1918, Clarise Bonner Miller lived at Ingomar with her mother's family, the Thompson brothers, who had purchased the town. Her aunt, Blanche Thompson, was appointed post mistress and ran the post office which was in one corner of the store.

Getting to high school in Gustine was not easy. Gustine ran no buses as far as Ingomar. Sometimes Clarise caught the "Owl" at 6 a.m. and rode the train into town. She waited at Holst's Ice Cream store for school to open. After school her family would come get her. Sometimes she would ride the horse from Ingomar to Harold Parnell's ranch and then catch the bus to Gustine. After school she would ride the horse home. The following year, the Gustine High School District paid for Clarise to board in town and attend high school.

In 1921, the post office at Ingomar closed and the rural route operating out of the station was transferred into Gustine. The change was mainly due to the resignation of the postmaster, Thompson. This was due to his selling of the store, which was run in connection with the post office. The new store owner, Mr. Cordelia, did not wish to handle the mail.

Ingomar School closed in 1926 and the students were transferred to Romero School. The schoolhouse was put up for sale in 1928.

Today all that remains of Ingomar are the foundations of the section gang houses among the



tamarisk trees, the palm trees, and old windmill and the memories.

### Post Note To Ingomar

The following letter was received in 1932 by the secretary of the Gustine Chamber of Commerce. The Gustine Standard published it “in hopes that possibly the low-down scoundrel who perpetrated such an outrage, may chance to read it and then slink away into the dark to hide his face in shame, if he has such a thing as a conscience.”

Burbank , Feb. 12, 1932

Chamber of Commerce

Ingomar , Calif.

In making a property trade I have bought a lot in Ingomar. I wish you would send me a few papers from there. And tell me about the size of the town, the price of lots or property. I am a widow.

Philinda Boyd

430 N. Cedar, Burbank, Calif.

The Gustine Standard continued, “The letter was written in the shaky hand of a feeble old woman. Pitiful, isn’t it, when one realizes that a that a lot in Ingomar isn’t worth as much as a Chinman’s life in Shanghai. Our only hope is that in some way or another the old lady got the best of the deal.”

### The Cottonwoods

In the 1850s, there was not a tree on the West Side plains except for a few cottonwoods on Los Banos Creek, the large stand of cottonwoods on the Quinto Creek in Gustine and the sycamore trees on Orestimba Creek in Newman, which extended out into the valley a mile or so from the foothills. Located on the present Dick Santos Ranch at Cottonwood and Whitworth Roads, these trees, which had sprung up in the bed of the Quinto Creek, were such a conspicuous landmark that they naturally gave the Cottonwood region its name.

The entire area became known as Cottonwood and included the present site of Gustine. When the railroad became through, the switch in Gustine was as the Cottonwood Switch. The 1902 Register of Voters of Merced County refers to the entire Gustine area as “Cottonwood” even though all Gustine voters had mailed addresses listed as Newman, Ingomar or Volta. At one time six different roads in the area bore the name Cottonwood.

With wide open, unbroken grain fields, no fences, houses scattered miles apart on the big grain ranches, the cottonwood trees were striking sight.

On land nor owned by Miller & Lux the Cottonwood community began with the coming of the sky farmers in the late 1960s.

## Cottonwood Vigilante Hanging

Thomas Wesley Bradley was a California pioneer and early resident of Gustine. He helped pull the rope that raised the Bear flag in Sonoma and assisted in the rescue of the Donner party.

On a trip through the uninhabited San Joaquin Valley in 1846, he camped with a party of men, only 21 years of age, by members of the Vigilante Committee. He had been accused of being a horse thief. The boy begged for his life and declared he was not guilty. When Mr. Bradley suggested to the enraged mob that the boy should be turned over to the law, the mob then threatened Mr. Bradley. Powerless to do anything by himself, he watched the vigilantes hang the young man.

Mr. Bradley died of the age of 83 and never forgot the horror of that death. He could not tell of it without tears coming to his eyes.

## Cottonwood School

Gustine's first school was named for the Cottonwood trees in its back yard. Although called Cottonwood School, it was the sole school in the Clay School district.

In 1869, at the town of Sturgeon, (Known in later years as Ede's Corner) at the intersection of Whitworth and Snyder roads, the school began in a 20-foot square building. Miss Lilian Ashe, just 17 years of age, was hired as the first teacher. Each student was to provide himself with a complete outfit; seat, books and everything including the necessary slate, as the district had not yet drawn any school money.

When class was called to order the first morning, the roll was found to consist of members from two Ewing families, Ballards, Tinnins, Whitworth, Bloyds, Eachus, Grahams, Hales and a few others.

Mrs. Harmonia Campbell Latta, mother of John, Frank and Tom Latta taught two years at the school, beginning in 1873, in its original location at Sturgeon. She was the niece of the founder of the town, E.L. Sturgeon.

About 1875, Cottonwood School was built a mile south of Sturgeon on the southwest corner of Cottonwood and Whitworth roads. The money for the one room schoolhouse was raised in the community by popular subscription.

In 1895, on Arbor Day, Miss Minnie Bunker and her scholars planted trees in the barren school yard, whose only water supply was a pump in the middle of the yard. Each class planted a tree. This resulted in the growth of a huge black walnut tree which was located on the east black walnut tree which was located on the east side of the original building, still remember today by former students.

Cottonwood school existed for over 85 years and for over 60 years it was the largest community



center in Gustine. It was the “meeting place” for social and civic functions. It was the polling place during elections and the scene of weddings. The Cottonwood cemetery was established in 1877 and due to the absence of a city, town or village in the community, the school district legally served as a medium of ownership and control of the cemetery. The building was also used by the Good Templars Lodge, Cottonwood Club, Ladies Aid Society, Acorn Camp of Woodmen, Women of Woodcraft and the setting for the Cottonwood Sunday School. Church services and Sunday and Sunday School was held on Sundays. The teacher was expected to do the janitorial work left by the meetings.

Margaret Sparks Miller, an early Cottonwood teacher, recalled the rush in moving all the desks back in order, sweeping, dusting and cleaning before the students came in on Monday morning. She not only served as the public school teacher, but also as the Sunday school teacher.

Mrs. Miller recalled those early days. In 1900, “I had classes in all grades in school and it kept me busy all day hearing the lessons recited. I had to watch the school grounds at recess. Sometime I would go out to watch the games. Nearly all the children came with horses, some rode and some came in carts. On rainy and cold days the horses would be lively and I breathed easier when they were all safely on their way. The large boys would help the girls and small boys hitch or saddle their horses.

The Quinto creek ran by the schoolhouse. Sometimes the water came down in the winter. The children liked to play in the creek or on its banks as it was sandy. The boys made forts and the girl made playhouses. A rainy day was hard on the teacher as the children hard to play inside and were noisy and unruly and the floor would be dirty. They would miss the fresh air and the exercise of other days. So would teacher.”

In 1909, plans and specifications for a second school house were filed with the Merced County Superintendent of School, Mrs. Belle Smythe Gribi. The area was growing rapidly and more school facilities were badly needed. The old building was to be used for the primary classes and the new building was to contain two rooms for use by the intermediate and upper grades. The wall dividing the two rooms could be pushed up into the ceiling to make the large room as needed for programs and social gathering.

The three teacher school continued in operation for many years. In 1948, an election was held in the Clay and Romero School Districts to determine if the two schools would become one union elementary school district. Voters in Romero defeated the consolidation when they turned down the issue, 25 to 20. Clay voters approved it almost unanimously, 62 to 2.

The Cottonwood Social Club was organized Feb. 17, 1949 for the purpose of uniting the residents of the area for social and recreational purposes and to raise funds for purchasing extra equipment in the classrooms and school playgrounds. Elsie Castro was elected president, George Foster, vice president and Evelyn Pometta secretary-treasurer.

Gustine Elementary School District annexed the Clay District and the school was abandoned in 1953. Betty Ordway was the last teacher at the school, where in addition to her teaching duties, she served lunch and performed janitorial duties.

With the school closed, the Cottonwood Social Club disbanded in 1955. That same year, a final effort was made by Gustine Elementary trustees and Cottonwood graduates, George Butts and Frank Azevedo, to have someone preserve the original building as a historical landmark, Gustine's first schoolhouse, but the effort failed.

The school was torn down and an orchard stands on the site today. Not only is Cottonwood School gone, but so are all the original Cottonwood trees.

### Cottonwood Cemetery

The Cottonwood Cemetery is located one-half mile west of Whitworth Road on the south side of Cottonwood Road. It is the only cemetery in Gustine and was in use for many years. Approximately 175 burial lots are listed for the cemetery. Contrary to popular belief, most of the people buried at the cemetery remain there today.

In 1887, the trustees of Clay School District sold to Charles S. Johnson for \$1 gold coin, an acre of land to be used exclusively as a "Public Burying Ground" and for no other purpose. The transaction was witnessed by John DeHart. The cemetery was operated and controlled by Clay School District until 1883 when the Cottonwood Cemetery Association was incorporated.

In 1897 J.W. Warren served as president and W.A. Dunning served as secretary of the Cottonwood Cemetery Association.

The last funeral at the cemetery was held in the early part of 1920. It was Ed Sturgeon, founder of the community of Sturgeon.

Over the years the cemetery fell into a neglected and dilapidated condition. The fence surrounding the cemetery had been knocked down by cattle and as they wandered through the cemetery, they knocked over the head stones. The headstones were then replaced, often on the wrong gravesides. The cemetery records were kept in private home and were destroyed by fire.

The Merced County road and easement now is laid over 30 feet of the north side of the cemetery, covering 22 gravesides. Much damage had been committed over the years by vandals. Covered with weeds, it was described as "an insult to the dead and an eyesore to the community."

1935 marked the end of the 50-year incorporation of the cemetery district. In order to wind up the affairs of the corporation and make a final disposition of the bodies and properties, a court order was issued in 1939 appointing W.E. Bunker, William Pfitzer, A.W. Kniebes, J.F. Snyder,

J.T. Allen and P.P. Hansen as directors of the cemetery association. The cemetery existed in a state of neglect and disuse and because there was no money or means of securing money to repair the cemetery or to remove the bodies, attempts were made over the next 10 to 15 years to identify the burial sites and obtain permission to remove the bodies.

In 1947, after many years of legal red tape, even resulting in amendment of state law (California Senate Bill 205), the Cottonwood Cemetery Association deeded the abandoned property to the Hills Ferry Public Cemetery District, with all human remains to be removed.

The legal work continued. Concern had been expressed because the Clay School District had in the beginning operated the cemetery until it had been incorporated. 1949 letter from the title insurance company to C.R. Perrier, Gustine attorney, stated, "As to the Clay School District, I would ignore it, for the deed required that the land be used only to bury the dead, under school district laws the teaching of the living was the only lawful business and the school district could not legally bury dead humans."

It had been the plan of the Hills Ferry District to get clear title to the property, declare it an abandoned cemetery, remove any and all bodies remaining there and intern the remains in Hills Ferry Cemetery. Then the district could sell the old Cottonwood Cemetery property.

However, due to the lack of records as to the location of specific gravesides and the opposition of relatives to the removal of bodies from the cemetery, no bodies were removed. In 1953, the sole surviving trustees, J. Frank Snyder, William Pfitzer and J.F. Allen signed off the final papers for the Cottonwood Cemetery Association.

Today, two large eucalyptus trees shade the cemetery, in its place at the base of the rolling foothills. Surrounded by the sounds of cattle, tractors and farming, it still seems a peaceful and fitting resting place for those early Gustine pioneers.

## The Grain Farmers

Beginning in 1868, the sky farmers, or those who depended on rain for irrigation, flocked onto the government land on the West Side and began to plow up virgin soil. There was an unlimited market for California wheat and a boom in growing grain occurred.

The land on the West Side was the richest in the state. Large teams plowed in all directions, attached to huge gang plows, turning over hundreds of acres of soil daily. Extraordinary yields were produced on what was only a short time ago, wilderness.

During a good wet year, a farmer could harvest 3330 to 50 bushels of wheat to the acre. During dry years the farmers made nothing.

The wide-open town of Hills Ferry was the nearest shipping point for Gustine farmers. Hills

Ferry outranked all other streamer landings on the San Joaquin River for quantity of grain handled and shipped each season. It was the head of navigation and often there would be from four to six river streamers, with barges, waiting to load grain. The transportation of wheat was enormous, worth over a million tons being shipped downstream in a single season.

Gustine farmers hauled their grain to warehouses on the river, which could only be navigated during the melting snow period from April until July. Consequently, the July crop was stored until the following year. Barges carried the wheat from Hills Ferry to Port Costa near Benicia, to be transported to the markets of the world.

When the railroad came through in 1889, then Gustine farmers hauled their grain a much shorter distance to warehouses on the railroad, at Linora and Ingomar, for shipping by train.

After the railroad and irrigation came in, then farming gradually moved toward specialty crops and the growth of the dairy industry. The coming of the railroad is perhaps the one event which best stands as the marker between the old West Side and the new.

As Margaret Sparks Miller wrote, “There were no fences, canals, irrigation system, railroads or other communications. It was plains of range are, dry in summer and dependent on scanty winter rains to grow grain and feed. Yes, in 1869, it took men and women of courage, strength of character and willpower to cope with the hardships. They were splendid people.”

In Gustine today live quite a number of descendants of those early grain growers. Many of them still live on the original ranch locations.

### **Hatfield, The Rainmaker**

Charles M. Hatfield piled his mysterious trade of delivering rain-on-order, on the hills west of Gustine from 1905 to as late as 1914. Famous from the Mexican border to the Klondike, he was hired by the grain farmers in the area from Volta to Westley.

He would contract with the farmers to draw from the clouds a certain amount of rain, enough showers to insure a crop. In 1907 he contracted to produce 12 inches of rain between Nov. 15 and April 15 of the following year. If he produced that number of inches of rain he was to receive \$ 3,000. If he failed to bring the stated amount he received not a cent. It was a bargain in which the West Side dry land farmers could not possibly lose a dime.

Hatfield’s method of operating to produce rain was based on the use of certain chemicals, which he kept secret. These chemicals were contained in large vats, elevated on several 35 foot towers and were evaporated by heating system. Supposedly, their evaporation and escape into the atmosphere created the influences which attracted the air’s stored-up moisture to that particular locality and enough condensation to produce rain.

Supporters hailed him as “weather wizard” and “God of Plenty” and detractors would angrily run him out of town midst cries of “con man” or “Devil’s Discipline.”

Regardless, he was successful enough to be hired for eight consecutive years on the West Side.

## Historic Grain Fire

One of the most devastating grain and pasture fires in the history of the West Side was that of July 7, 1906. It broke out late Saturday night, and before it burned itself out, it destroyed over 2,500 acres of standing wheat and barley, 20,000 acres of pasture land, together with stacks of hay, farming implements and ranch buildings. Hundreds of men with gang plows, water wagons, wet stacks, and by backfiring, tried to stop flames, but the fire ran before the wind and they were powerless. It burned from the Romero Creek in Merced County to the Orestimba Creek in Stanislaus County. It burned for nearly 10 days and the smoke was seen from the house tops and high lands around Modesto.

C.P. Eachus, George Sparks, and H.P. Peterson, each lost 160 acres of wheat. W.A. Dunning, Allen Brothers and Frank Snyder each lost 200 acres of wheat, 4,000 new sacks, farming implements and ranch building. The Newman Company, Howard estate and Taft Brothers, the Middletons, Jasper Parnell and Peter Miller lost thousands of acres of good pasture land.

Frank Snyder recalled having his crop insured for seven sacks an acre, but when he started harvesting it he was getting 17 sacks an acre. It was one of the biggest crops he had ever raised. When the fire came down from the hills it sounded like thunder as it hit the wheat field. That night, after the fire, about 3 a.m., the family heard a mountain lion screaming behind the barn. Tracks were found the next day, as the fire had chased the big cat down out of the hills.

Perhaps the most vivid recollection of the fire was the diary entry of Margaret Sparks Miller. "That summer we had the largest crop of wheat we had raised in years. One-day smoke behind Christian Hill worried us and came closer and blacker. It was Sunday. We were all alarmed and kept watching until we could see blazes. Uncle major (Eachus) came and tried to unhitch his horses and was so excited he couldn't do it and May (Sparks) went out and did it for him. The fire was coming in all directions. Our house was quite new and our big barn and other buildings were in fine condition and we had worked so many years to acquire them.

Neighbors came from all directions. They did some backfiring. George (Sparks) and Harry Eachus tried to save our 160 acres of wheat but it could not be done and burned in less than five minutes. Then we all made an effort to save the buildings. We took some of our precious possessions out to the summer fallow. We put water up the sides of the house as high as the hose would permit. George, Virgo, Noble March and Lou Pfitzer fought hard with wet sacks. Mama took water and pureed it over the boys' heads to keep them from being overheated. Then they would go on fighting. We were all carrying water and doing all we could.

I remember hitching a horse to the cart and filling it with barrels of water and took wet sacks and going up the hill to help the men save the fields and boy I was sick that day and it was a terrible experience and my efforts told on me for some time. Even the fence posts burned and that night

we went out with water and put out the fire to save the posts as well as we could.

The grain fields burned so quickly that the grain was only scorched and lay on the ground. We were raising hogs and later turned them on the burned ground and they fattened and made splendid pork. We tried to get more hogs to put there, but there were none in the country.

The fire spread in all directions for miles and miles. All the buildings at the Leak Ranch one fourth of a mile from us were burned. The buildings at the Allen Ranch by Uncle major's ranch burned. The buildings on the ranches where there was no one to protect them were burned.

That night after the fire, the boys who fought so gallantly all stretched out on our living room floor and slept. They were too exhausted to eat or undress. That was one of the most awful days of my life and followed so soon after the earthquake."

Margaret Sparks Miller further relates that the contractor, who had built her house, was up on the Romero Canyon with his bees. He had a man working for him and the man was smoking the bees so as to rob the honey. The blaze started to spread and the man tried to stop it, but it got away from him and that was the source of the fire that burned the entire West Side hills.

### Snyder Harvester Accident

About 1895, West Side dry land farmer J. Frank Snyder was testing harvesters for Benjamin Holt Manufacturing Company in Stockton. Holt was trying to develop a side hill machine and Snyder would try out various machines for him. A harvester must be level in order to separate the separator as it worked its way around the hill.

A rack gear broke on the harvester and it tipped over downhill. Mr. Snyder was standing by the header, fell onto the draper and his leg went into cylinder, doubled back. The leg was lacerated to the bone from his knee to his hip. The big rubber heel on his shoe stopped the machine.

The harvester crew grabbed the sweaty, dirt filled scarf's from their necks and stuffed them in the bone deep holes in the leg to stop the bleeding. They then laid him in the shade of the harvester as one of them went for the doctor in Newman.

It took several hours for the doctor to come out and when he arrived he said, "He'll never make it." So he went up to the "dog house" where the sack sewer was, got a needle and sack twine and sewed up the leg, dirt, barley and all.

As there were no hospital around at that time, the men took him back to the ranch to die. His wife, Jean Niddrie Snyder, immediately had the hired man hitch up the spring wagon and taking him and her four small children, George, Harry, Ruby and baby Hazel, she went into Newman. There they all caught the train to Stockton to Dameron Hospital. Dr. Dameron operated on him immediately. Mr. Snyder was in the hospital about eight weeks.



While he was there he was often visited by Ben Holt. During the long hospitalization, Frank Snyder had a lot of time to think. That was when he came up with his idea on how to build a side hill harvester that would level. He related his idea to Mr. Hold, and Holt then used that principle on all his side hill machines. Not only was Frank Snyder not paid for his idea, but he had to sue Holt Manufacturing to collect for his medical expenses.

Although Frank Snyder carried the scars the rest of his life, he did not die. He continued farming and he and his wife Jean had five more children, twins Helen and Helena, Nellie, Howard and Genevieve.

J.F. Snyder went on to help build the first dairy barn used for a commercial dairy business on the West Side, that of Giovannoni and Crow. He was founder and president of the Sturgeon Telephone Company, president of the Gustine Gun Club, Occidental School trustee for 25 years, Gustine Union High School trustee for 10 years and also served as president of the Cottonwood Cemetery.

When Mr. Snyder died at the age of 93, he was remembered as one of Gustine's most respected, civic minded pioneers.

### **Ann Bladt's Diary**

We went to the English Picnic May 9 down on the river and the Danish Picnic May 16, 1896.  
My doll is 5 years old. I got it Dec. 25 1892. I started my music lesson May 12.  
Our school (Occidental) stopped April 10, 1896.  
The old lady died Feb. 12, 1896. Her name was Mary Madison.  
My canary bird is 4 months old. I got it from Aunt Fanny.  
Tina Krogh's birthday is Sept. 22.  
I started Sunday School on Nov. 17, 1895  
My bird is 2 years in July.  
My sister was born Saturday at 9:20 o'clock.  
We went to Capitola July 29 and returned Aug. 10, 1897.  
I got my new earrings Sept. 13 when school started.  
Papa went to Stockton Sept. 7 and came home Sept. 13.  
Miss Cora Bradley and Will Brown were married Sept. 22, 1897. Miss Eda Werner was married to Peter Hansen on Wednesday, March 9, 1898.  
Mr. Charlie Treft's baby died Aug. 20, 1898. It drowned.  
Georgia Allen Snyder died March 3, 1899. Age 9 years, 10 months and 12 days.  
H.T. Smith's birthday is June 21. Carrie Petersen's is June 20.  
First set of birds came out May 15, 1899. Second lot came out June 9, 10, and 11, 1899.

## Beginning of Gustine

When the Southern Pacific railroad came through in 1889, Gustine was given its name by the railroad company. The switch was known as the Cottonwood Switch. It was used for shipping Miller & Lux cattle and for unloading supplies for Miller & Lux farms.

Frank Latta wrote that for a number of years, two passenger trains, one northbound and the other southbound, met about noon at the switch. The first one to arrive took the siding and the other rolled on through. On Sundays, ranchers often met the trains the switch to purchase peanuts, candy and newspapers from both San Francisco and Fresno.

The New Era Creamery on Netherton Road was off the railroad and had to haul their cream to Newman for shipping. Rudolph Bambauer was the chairman of a committee to choose a new creamery building site on the railroad at the Cottonwood Switch (Gustine). He wrote to Henry Miller asking if the New Era Creamery could buy an acre of ground in Gustine, adjacent to the railroad so they could move in their creamery. In conversations with Henry Miller and his engineer, Wm. L. Wiley, it was suggested by members of the New Era Creamery and Mr. Wiley, that a settlement would naturally grow up there and that the land should be surveyed.

The surveying was done by F.P. McCray. On Nov. 13, 1906, the New Era Creamery accepted from Henry Miller the donation of lots for the new creamery and a day later the map of Gustine was recorded in Merced.

This all occurred at a time when Henry Miller was under court to sell off his land holding in a gradual orderly fashion to satisfy the “German heirs” of Charles Lux.

Thus the need for Henry Miller to sell some of his holdings and the New Era Creamery’s wish for a facility on the railroad at the “Cottonwood Switch” proved to be the final incentive for Henry Miller to start the town of Gustine.

## Gustine’s First Building

Jim Jensen came to Gustine for the purpose of establishing a blacksmith shop. He attended the sale of lots on Feb.4, 1907, when Gustine was an alfalfa field full of ditched and levees. The city park was a full grove of black walnut trees and used for the fattening of hogs. Miller & Lux ran sheep in the area to keep the alfalfa down.

Over 80 lots were sold on the first day. The site as plotted covered a quarter section, but only the part west of the railroad tracks was offered for sale. The four corners, one block from the depot site, were reserved by Miller & Lux and it was understood that they would put in a general store, a hotel and probably a bank on those corners, which were expected to be the business center of the new town.

Mr. Jensen fitted up a place to sleep and do his own cooking in the shop he was constructing. For 10 nights he was the only inhabitant of the town. Others engaged in construction work returned



to Newman each night, as there were no accommodations as yet available in Gustine.

According to Mr. Jensen's ledger, opening day for his blacksmith shop was March 8, 1907. His first customer was George Bambauer, who had a plow sharpened for 25 cents. Later that day, John DeMont, Chris Christensen and T. Hill each received new shoes for their horses. The price was two shoes for 75 cents.

Gustine's first building stands today on its original site on Sixth Street. It is now occupied by the Welding Works.

### Gustine in 1909

The Gustine News, first newspaper published in Gustine, describes the 2-year-old town in November of 1909. "From Ingomar to Newman is to be found some of the best land in the state. The principle industry is dairying and alfalfa but nearly anything will grow in this land. The irrigation system is not perfect yet, but there is considerable talk of putting through another canal back of Gustine and Newman, which will open up several thousand acres of land.

The town of Gustine is now represented by more than 20 business houses. There are three good grocery stores and the Miller & Lux Department Store. There is a good up-to-date plumbing shop and two first class blacksmith shops, all busy.

There is a good first class restaurant now and a Chinese restaurant will open the first of December and a hotel is underway. This hotel will be the finest hotel in this valley, between Oakland and Fresno. The town has a good painter and from the number of buildings that are being built, there must be 50 carpenters in town.

The real estate men are doing a good business and the town is strictly on the boom. The town has a water supply, a healthy location. A fine new livery stable has recently been erected here. The businessmen are all progressive and up-to-date and what better could you want."

### Gustine 1907-1908

The first year population of Gustine reached 23. There were two grocery stores, Hales Pioneer Store and J.V. Azevedo Grocery, one saloon, two blacksmith shops, one residence, a paint shop and the New Era Creamery.

Jim Jensen recalls that in the beginning all the water had to be hauled from neighboring wells in milk cans, bucked on spring wagons. Later in 1907, Miller & Lux bored a well on the present site of the city water works. They set up a wooden water tower and laid water mains and sewer lines.

The Southern Pacific built the depot in 1908 and for a whole year the businessmen handled the freight without an agent.

“There were a few that liked to treat our town like a wild west town,” related Jim Jensen.

“They delighted in riding through on a cart and Whoop and yell down the street, brandishing in each hand a six-shooter, yelling in true Texas cowboy style. They would go into the saloons and shoot out the coal oil lamps and shoot up through the ceiling. These were jolly fellows and with a slap on the back, would go up to the bar for candlelight service, always paying the bill and damages before returning home.”

A.D. Davenport mentions that the blacksmith shops and saloons did a thriving business in those early years.

### 1910 Trip to Merced

James Jensen, Gustine pioneer, recalled his first trip to Merced, in 1910, to get a marriage license.

“In order to make it in one day I hired an automobile, as it took two days by train. The train left at noon, going via Tracy, switching to Lathrop and then to Merced.

I was warned no to go alone in an automobile, so I took two extra men and a driver. After five miles it broke down and we had to hitch it up to a horse until we got another car. The extra men had to help push the auto over the sand spots on the east side of the river. Whenever we would get stuck in the sand the extra men would get stuck in the sand the extra men would get out and lean against the car and push it out, about 200 feet, until we got onto a hard spot.

That happened three times on the way over. There were no highways, just wheel tacks. In some of the worst places they would lay in straw.

When we got to Merced we looked like we were dragged through I don't know what. But the people were used to travelers in those days. We did make the trip in one day and I was happy about that. A few years later the roads were improved enough to make it in three hours.

### The Pavillion

In 1910, the citizens of Gustine constructed a pavilion in the present Henry Miller Park in the midst of the grove of black walnut trees Henry Miller had planted in 1890. Now it was unnecessary for the citizens of Gustine to go away in order to have a good time. Gustine had a building to be used for community gatherings.

Jim Jensen recalls that the pavilion was built by public subscription, the money being raised in half a day, going about with horse and buggy. A.D. Davenport was in charge of construction, with each carpenter donating labor.

The Romero Lodge, No. 413, IOOF was in charge of the Dedication Ball, held on April 26,

1910. Floor director was R.W. Nagle, aided by J. Perry, W. Gilbert, G. Cox, H.A. Lesh, T. Stamper, W. Bertelson, J.V. Lynn and J.T. Hazelwood. Music was furnished by the Patton-Springer Orchestra.

After less than one year from construction, Miller & Lux wanted the money due on the pavilion. The title to the park and pavilion would be given to the citizens if the community were to secure the balance due. Miller & Lux would then deed it in such a way that it would eventually become the property of the town.

There was a reorganization of the Park Association with the new officers being O. Truitt, president; A.D. Davenport, vice president; and G.C. McDonald, secretary and treasurer. The directors of the association would hold the park in trust, until the town was incorporated.

Plans were made to clear the debt of \$200 and as a result, Gustine celebrated its first Fourth of July. But that's another story. The park and pavilion were now town property!

Commonly called the "nut house" because of the black walnut trees surrounding it, this large pavilion served as the community dance hall and was the site for vaudeville shows and other festivities. Many a child was put to bed on one of the benches lining walls, while their parents danced into the early hours.

Lena Nunes Ouse remembers that the pavilion windows had no glass and were like wooden barn windows that were propped open by sticks to let in the cool summer air. In wintertime the board windows would remain shut. Mrs. Ouse recalls that when World War I was over, there was a celebration dance at the pavilion and all the veterans attended. She and Manuel Silva led grand march of veterans around the hall.

The Valentine Dance of 1915 was described as "a scene of grace and beauty in motion which would cheer the heart of the worst grouch that ever lived. Beautiful ladies clothed in becoming and appropriate gowns, bright eyes and jewels flashing, were a contrast to the black garb of the partners moving gracefully to the music, all in perfect time and all in harmony with the surroundings. There was not a harsh to break the charm and it was certainly without a flaw. A light supper was served just before midnight, with no tables being set."

### **Gustine's First Fourth of July Celebration**

In order to pay off the debt owed Miller & Lux on the park pavilion, the new community of Gustine decided, in 1911, to hold a Fourth of July Celebration. It was the biggest day yet in the life of the 4-year-old town of 350 and was to be attended by 1,500 people.

The parade was scheduled for 10:30 a.m. and began at the new Methodist Church. There were a number of floats for the school children, a procession of decorated automobiles and the Gustine City Band played. George C. McDonald won a lap robe, the prize for the best decorated machine.

At 11 a.m. the patriotic address was given by Rev. Arthur Hicks of Oakland at the grammar school building. The crowd stood with bared heads as the flag was drawn slowly up the new flap pole, while the band played "The Star Spangled Banner."

At noon the barbecue and picnic was held at the park under the supervision of Louis Redman. Two whole beef were consumed, together with a proportionate amount of bread. The meat was furnished by Miller & Lux.

The afternoon started with games and races for amusements of the children. The list included a tug of war, a three-legged race, an egg race, a sack race and other races.

The 3 p.m. baseball game between Gustine and Newman ended in a tie, 14 to 14.

A \$75 fireworks display began at 8 p.m. and fully met the expectations of all.

The Grand Ball, however, proved the surprise of the day, as the Gustine Band and the Gustine Orchestra, both new organizations, surprised the crowd with the quality of their performance. As 2 a.m. drew near, the dancers, reluctant to depart, clamored for encore after encore. The musicians were greatly pleased at the reception accorded them.

This celebration in 1911 proved that Gustine could have as big a time as any town on the West Side. The tradition continues today.

### Miller & Lux in Gustine

Although he did not own the Cottonwood southwest of Gustine, Henry Miller did control most of the area east of Gustine and the present site of Gustine. Many of his farms covered the area.

Frank Latta writes that almost directly south of Gustine, Henry Miller planted large orchards. Adjoining Gun Club Road on the north was an extensive vineyard of table and raisin grapes. Next to the vineyard on the east and also bordering Gun Club Road on north, were peach and apricot trees. North from this orchard and vineyard were fields of nut trees; black walnuts, chestnuts and pecans. Hay stacks dotted the east side.

Henry Miller started his operation in the Gustine area just south of where the town was finally laid out. One farm was located on Hunt Road. He named the place the "Grove Farm." Al Bizzini remembers that the 300 men who worked the farms were Italian. They were fed in one long building by an Italian cook. The foreman and his wife lived in the front of the house and the rest of the building was one long dining room.

There was a slaughterhouse on the ranch where they killed all the meat for the farms. Fencemen did the butchering. When Gustine started, Mr. Bizzini recalls them killing the animals on the ranch and hauling the meat into the Miller & Lux butcher shop in Gustine.

When the railroad came through in 1889, Miller & Lux built a railroad siding and cattle coral at the site of present Gustine, north of where Highway 140 crosses the tracks. An old boxcar was used as a depot. It was at that time, that he also planted a grove of black walnut trees at the site of the present Henry Miller Park. He remarked that one day he would want a park of shade trees.

By 1910 Miller and Lux was well entrenched in business in Gustine. There was the Miller & Lux Grove Farm and the Miller & Lux Store. Miller & Lux also owned a cold storage plant, the water works, sewer system, the Gustine Hotel, the Miller & Lux Meat Co.

As the years passed, Miller & Lux sold off more and more of their holdings. Thousands of acres of land was sold to various gun clubs for \$25 an acre. Alfalfa and diversified farming lands with ample irrigation were for sale. Ranging from a few acres to several thousand, the price ran from \$100 to \$300 an acre. More than a half million acres were offered for sale. It was said that the time had come when land and livestock operations on the gigantic scale previously practiced were no longer practicable.

By December 1926, Miller & Lux were through in Gustine. The Miller & Lux Store closed its doors and merchandise left in the building was packed and shipped to Los Banos and other points for final disposal.

Closing the store ended the business career of Miller & Lux in Gustine, the bank, lumberyard and butcher shop having already been sold.

## Main Street

Frank Kerr was among the first businessmen in Gustine and the man responsible for the width of our main street, Fifth Street. He was appointed local agent for the Wells Fargo Express Company and early in 1907 he erected one of the first buildings, where he conducted his express and insurance business.

Shortly after the construction of its own building, a two story building was started directly across the street by Chettro and Marchessi. Mr. Kerr, after considerable effort, persuaded these men that additional reduction in insurance rates were available if building's were 100 feet apart.

Subsequently, all builders of business blocks along Fifth Street were induced to set their buildings back 12 feet from the property line. The result is the beautiful wide main street of today.

## 1915 Incorporation

The cost of lighting the streets of the growing town of Gustine was one of the principal reasons the community voted to incorporate. The \$45 per month the lights had cost proved to be more of a burden than those 12 people who originally agreed to pay, wished to continue. San Joaquin Light and Power Co. was threatening to turn off the power. Local merchants Miller & Lux, Chappel and Reutter, M.M. Silva, Anderson and others, had volunteered to pay the cost of the

lights operating near their places of business.

There also developed at that time a serious problem with one operation of the sewer system and the pending threat that the Merced County health officer would take action to declare the whole town a nuisance. Miller & Lux, owners of the “nuisance,” were going to close the sewer, so it would be up to each individual to dispose of his own sewage.

The petition to incorporate was not without opposition. Opponents argued that the town would have to buy the waterworks and sewer system and the streets would have to be paved and that would make taxes too high. The saloons would make taxes too high. The saloons would open again and we don’t want saloons.

An editorial in the Gustine Standard stated, “We must have sewers and light and we must have organizations in order to get them so that the burden shall not fall on a few. Those who choose to live like savages have no business here. Let them go out to the hills where the rain can wash away the sewage and where they may go to bed with the sundown, but civilized people want the things which will make the town pleasant.”

On Nov. 2, 1915, Gustine voted to incorporate as a sixth-class city, by the wide margin of 114 to 27. Trustees (city council) of the new city were D.T. Haley, J.R. Jensen, Peter Bladt. Sr., George M. Currier, W.W. Wehner and W.L. Bowles.

W.L. Chappel was the new town clerk and C.W. Hawks was named treasurer. Hawks resigned a week later and was replaced by Charles A. Miller, publisher of the Gustine Standard. Nis Detlefsen was appointed marshal.

The City of Gustine was official.

## Early Gustine Streets

“Dust in the summer and mud in the winter,” was the complaint heard in Gustine year around. When the city incorporated in 1915, the lament grew louder.

The sprinkling wagon, used to keep the dust down on the main street, often broke down. Dust was everywhere. When it was working, the children would run behind the wagon on hot summer days. After the streets were sprinkled they were muddy and, with the summer heat, the mud quickly changed again to dust.

The winter of 1915 found the teachers and students at Gustine High wading through mud over the tops of their shoes. Dresses were wet and dirty. Vehicles were frequently stuck in the mud. The unpaved streets and roads were described as having the consistency ranging from that of thick soup to something like mush.

There were no paved streets and no sidewalks in Gustine. Planks were laid from store to store and



also across the main street if there were buildings directly opposite each other. Teams of horses and wagons were driven over those planks, as well as very early automobiles. Many a child or adult remembers with regret accidentally stepping off the plank into the mud.

In the spring of 1917, The Standard reported that, "It is time to clear the sidewalks of weeds and foxtails and clean up the streets. It looks like a bum in need of a shave."

By 1920, the city was being forced to proceed with a plan to provide paved streets, sidewalks and curbs. It could not quiet the angry citizens.

An August article stated that Gustine was just "a hick town where sidewalks are unknown, where streets are a series of chuckholes and where the dust is ruinous to goods in stores and market places, ruinous to clothes and shoes, destructive to tempers and morals and generally cussed all around. A town with streets such as we have, can never get ahead."

In December of 1920, a visitor to Gustine remarked, "It does no good to make improvements for dirty people. Your streets are the dirtiest that I have ever seen in California and your sidewalks are a disgrace to every resident of the town." The Standard editor stated, "There is no excuses for boxes, tubs, tanks and every other conceivable article to litter and obstruct the streets and sidewalks.

Finally, in 1921, the main street of Gustine was paved, even though the entrance and side streets were still a mess. The gravel laid in 1914 was torn up for the new street. At M.M. Silva's corner, a cut of 17 inches was made and Silva's store, which used to be on a level with the street, was now to be elevated.

Gustine was to have "beautiful, lovely, wide, smooth streets," the headlines proclaimed. "When we get all fixed up, then we will invite the world and his wife, or rather the world and her husband, to come and give us the once over at least. We're going to be some town, believe me."

Gustine had a main street to be proud of and citizens were reminded that although the smooth wide street was a great temptation to race, the speed limit was 15 mph.

## Prohibition

When prohibition began in 1919, no distilled liquor, beer or wine could be manufactured and no saloon in America could legally operate. Gustine had voted for prohibition 89 to 85 in 1914 and the majority of citizens were happy when it was official nationwide.

In 1916, the city passed an ordinance regulating saloons. It stated, "no woman or children shall be allowed on the premises described in the permit and no intoxication liquor shall be sold by the holder of said permit, or his agent, to any woman or child.

Gustine however wouldn't stay dry. There were at least a dozen saloons and restaurants in

business in Gustine and nearly all were serving beer, wine or “jackass whiskey.” Saloon keepers had drop placed behind the bar where bootleg whiskey was hid. There were dummy panels, sliding walls and trap doors. The “backroom” was full of hiding places.

“Jackass whiskey” was available to all. It earned its name for two reasons; first, it had the kick of a jackass and secondly, no one except “a natural born darned fool jackass would drink any such stuff.”

Howard Snyder recalls one three day Fourth of July celebration during prohibition when the Amabile Hotel brought in a 55 gallon oak barrel of whiskey. Drinks were sold at a dollar a shot. When the three-day celebration was over the barrel was empty and the hotel had made a nice profit.

Many successful raids were made in Gustine by the deputy sheriffs and federal enforcement officers. Many a businessman was charged with “possessing, selling and maintaining a public nuisance.” But of equal interest were the many “close calls.” Local bootleg circles often reported having a scare thrown into them when the men from the sheriff’s office would drop into town. It was said that the raids were tipped off in advance and that every place was on the lookout for the officers. Consequently, no illicit liquor could be found by the raiders, who would then proceed on south of Los Banos, hoping for better luck.

While liquor was sold freely in town, it was in the countryside surrounding Gustine where it was manufactured. Where hidden under the hay stacks or buried underground, the federal agents would often stage successful raids. Sugar gave away the bootleggers. Agents would check on the sale of large amounts of sugar, track the sugar to the farm and find the still.

The biggest raid in Gustine occurred in 1928 and resulted in one of the biggest seizures of bootleg whiskey in the history of Merced County. Ten tons of illegal liquor were taken and resulted in the breakup of one end of an enormous bootleg ring that had been supplying the valley and some of the coast country for a long time.

On the old Daly Ranch, six miles south of Gustine, officers found dozens of kegs of liquor in a room of the ranch house. Returning the next morning, the raiding squad discovered a large vat containing about 600 gallons of 180 proof raw alcohol, buried in the ground behind the barn. When the search was finished, there were enough kegs to make three large truckloads, with a total weight of nearly 10 tons. The three truckloads of liquor created quite a sensation when they went through Gustine that afternoon in route to Merced. Two barrels were kept for evidence and the balance dumped in the sewer.

Several days later, following clues picked up during the raid, men from the sheriff’s office in Merced and Constable Oliver F. Carey, of Gustine, found the still and a dozen or more huge vats, at a point in the swamps near Ingomar. Several thousand gallons of mash were found with the



outfit. The still was removed to Merced at night, under heavy police escort and it was hoped the raid would at least temporarily stop the operations of the bootleg ring.

## Gustine, the Melting Pot

Gustine's earliest settlers were the Danish, German and English peoples of northern Europe. They settled at Ingomar, Cottonwood and on the Quinto, Mustang and Garzas Creeks and in the area between Gustine and Newman. The Merced County roads surrounding Gustine bear the names of these early pioneers: Husman, Whitworth, Butts, Bunker, Snyder, Jorgensen, Elholm, Hunt, Hulen, Newson, Sparks, Haley, Pfitzer, Fentem, Andersen, Kniebes, Schmidt, Bambauer, Jensen, Worthington, Netherton and Preston. Their proud descendants live in Gustine today.

The first Italian family in Gustine was that of Michael DeGregori. Originally from Naples, he settled four miles southeast of Gustine in 1887. Later arrivals from Italy often lived with his family to work and learn English.

But it was San Sosti, a tiny mountain town in southern Italy from which virtually all of Gustine's Italian families came. San Sosti gave Gustine the proud names of Borrelli, Nervino, Calonico, Cozzitorto, Ranuio, Martino, Guaglianone, Sproviero, Tucci, DiCiano, Tortorelli, DiGiorno, Bloise, Cauteruci, Bosco, Rimola, Spinelli and Cosentino.

While Gustine's Italians came from San Sosti, Italy, its Swiss population principally came from one county in Switzerland, Canton Ticino. This southern section of Switzerland borders Italy. There was a large Swiss colony in Salinas and many of these families settled first in Salinas before coming to Gustine. These early settlers were the families of Giovannoni, Bizzini, Borsini, Zanini, Pometta, Brughelli, Bonta, Beffa, Boradori, Salmina and Taglio.

Gustine's earliest Portuguese settlers generally came by way of the Watsonville area or Marin County. While J.V. Azevedo and M.M. Silva were businessmen, most of the Portuguese became involved with the dairy industry.

Gustine's earliest Portuguese family was probably that of John V. and Frances Nunes. Born on the Azore island of St. Jorge, Mr. Nunes settled on Hunt Road in 1892.

Before 1915, the following families had settled in Gustine: Nunes, Cardoza, Gomes, Sousa, Mattos, Crianca, Silva, Cunha, Azevedo, Reis, Pimentel, Lopes, Bello, Brazil, Coelho, Oliveira, Souza, Fantazia, Lawrence and Vierra.

By the 1940's, over half the population of Gustine was Portuguese. That has changed today as the 1980s was the decade of enormous Hispanic growth. Today, in 1990, almost half the population of the community bears Spanish surnames, with the largest segment being Mexican, most of which come from a little town called Moyahua in the state of Zacatecas in central Mexico.

As Gustine grows and its ethnic makeup continues to change, it is the "melting pot" that is truly

America.

## Gustine Schools

1869 – Cottonwood School  
1874 – Occidental School  
1880 – Canal School  
1884 – Ingomar School  
1887 – Enterprise School  
1896 – Romero School  
1911 – Gustine Grammar School  
1913 – Gustine High School

## Gustine's Present Schools

1952 – Our Lady of Miracles  
1962 – Gustine High School  
1965 – Unification of School Districts combining two counties and six school districts:  
Gustine Union High School  
Gustine Elementary School  
Romero School District  
Orestimba Union High School  
Newman Grammar School  
Bonita Elementary School  
1972 – Voters de-unify schools into two districts:  
Gustine Unified and Newman-Crows Landing Unified.  
1974 – Gustine Elementary-Junior High  
1983 – Pioneer High School  
1985 – West Side Christian School

## Occidental School

Gustine's second school, Occidental, opened in 1874 at the west end of Taglio Road between the Snyder and Petersen ranches. Occidental, meaning western, served the west side of Gustine at the base of the foothills between the Mustang and Garza creeks.

Labor and lumber had been donated and the small one room cabin-schoolhouse was opened and had been enlarged once or twice by 1900. Frank Latta related that the settlers had tried in vain to bore a water well at the site. Consequently, the horses had to go without water during the day and it was necessary for the teacher and the students to carry their own drinking water to school in canteens and jugs.

Teaching at Occidental School in 1879 was Sarah Hale, followed by May Crittenden, Vine Phillips, Laura and Hattie Collier, B.J. Bither, E.P. Unaugst and Miss Sturgeon.

For the first 39 years it was in existence, Occidental School had a large attendance, drawing many

students from the Mustang Settlement. But, as irrigation came in, the area changed, until the land around the location became sparsely settled, while the area east, toward the town of Gustine became thickly populated. Many old settlers and their descendants either left the country or located below the canals.

Some of the families of the district were the following: Bradley, Rhea, Allen, Wiggs, Smith, Graham, True, Bither, Miller, Leaks, Latta, Bladt, Peterson, Snyder, Elholm, Hansen, Schmidt, Hooper, Eachus, Sparks and Jorgensen. Aileen Heacox Snyder, an early Occidental teacher, writes that in about “1908 or 1909 the school was moved from its location near the foothills farther down in the valley onto the north east corner of Orchard and Rose Garden roads.

The teacher boarded with one of the families in the district, usually a trustee family. Quite often, if the teacher was young and passably good looking, she would marry a local man and become a permanent resident of the neighborhood. Some of these were Edith Hollingsworth (Ms. George Sparks), May Hamilton (Mrs. George Smith), Aileen Heacox (Mrs. Harry Snyder) and Elinor Jenkins (Mrs. William Jorgensen).”

In 1937 Occidental School consolidated with Gustine Elementary School District and ceased to exist. The children and the last teacher at Occidental, Elinor Jenkins Jorgensen, moved to the town school.

The building was sold and used for many years as a residence before it was razed.

## Canal School

Opened in 1880, Canal School was Gustine’s third school and served the “New Era” area north of Gustine.

The original one room school house was located on two acres of land on the north side of Andersen Road at the corner of Andersen and Hunt roads.

On Sept.12, 1896, the site was sold by trustees F.M. Preston, R.B. Fentem and Wm. Brough to R.H. Bambauer. The building was moved to its present location on the south side of Netherton Road at Canal School Road. A second room was added as the area grew, a third room was built in 1909.

An attempt by Newman trustees to annex the Canal School District, in 1912, led to Gustine’s successful petition to establish a high school in Gustine.

Sally Fentem Hansen recalls the time a bull entered the school house. On a warm November day in 1915, Jim Rhea was taking the animal past the school when the bull became frightened and broke away. During the chase that followed, the bull spotted the school’s open door and in he went.

As the children scattered out the windows and other doors, a dividing door was opened and he made his way into the next classroom. One schoolmate who was on crutches and couldn't run, sought safety on top of the piano. The bull caused a quite a bit of damage before exiting the building. Back on the road, he continued his trip, again under the guidance of the muchly disturbed driver.

Canal School joined Gustine Elementary School District in 1957 and students began attending classes in town. By 1958 all students were attending school in Gustine.

A year later, the building was turned over to the Merced County Recreation Commission and reopened as Canal Center, a club house for Gustine community organizations. At that time, it received its familiar red paint with white trim. The project began with the Community Club and was joined by the Legion, VFW, WWI Barracks, Rotary, Lions, Native Sons, Native Daughters, New Era Grange, Soroptimists and the Cottonwood Farm Center.

Canal Center closed in 1980 and in 1985-86 an effort was made by Dr. John Simas, Superintendent, Gustine Unified Schools, to save the building. The cost involved to bring the building up to code and perhaps to move it into town was prohibitive. Due to being moved from its original site and its three stages of building, it did not meet the guidelines for historical status. The school district was also not eligible for state grants, so plans were abandoned to save Canal School, the oldest standing school building in Merced County.

It is a private residence today.

## Ingomar School

Long before the town of Ingomar developed, Ingomar School was in operation. It opened in December 1884 and was Gustine's fourth school. This one room school served the children of the farm families in the area between Gustine and Los Banos.

According to Al Bizzini and Hazel Jeffers Daniels, the school was originally located on the west side of Ingomar Road, one-fifth of a mile south of Husman Road. The old wire gate is still visible in two spots on the fence.

Sometime after 1910, the building was moved to a spot one-fourth of a mile south of the town of Ingomar. Old fence posts mark the spot today, on Ingomar Road, between the end of Bunker Road and the railroad tracks.

Early trustees were D.J. Reeves, W.J. Virgo, Wm. McBride, L.H. Pfitzer, L.A. Hulen, Albert Wehe and Frank Katen.

As Ingomar's water went bad, farmers moved from the area and enrollment declined. In 1922, John M. Barcellas was hauling water to the school.

In May of that year a petition was filed with the Merced County Superintendent of Schools to

form a Romero-Ingomar Union School District. The election was set for May 19, 1922, but the notices of the election, to be sent by registered mail, were delayed, so the election went by default. The school closed in June 1926, the students then being split up between Volta, Romero and Cottonwood schools.

In August 1928, the little one room schoolhouse was for sale and its final location is unknown.

### Enterprise School

In 1887, Enterprise School was established on the east side of Azevedo Road on the Michael DeGregori ranch. This was the fifth school in the Gustine area. This one room schoolhouse served the “Gospel Swamps” area east of Hunt Road and south of Gun Club Road.

In 1904, the district boundaries were changed to include present day Gustine. In Gustine’s second year, 1908, the school was moved into town by John Allen and Elisha Hales on the only moving trucks available, those owned by Henry Miller. Although the use of them was free, Frank Latta related that Allen and Hales had to pool their forces and drive a truck wagon and team to Central Point near Los Banos, haul the moving trucks to the Enterprise School site, move the building to Gustine and then return the trucks to Los Banos. For this community service neither Allen nor Hales accepted pay.

The one room school house was placed on the site of the present Gustine Elementary School with the 15 or 20 students being taught by Mrs. Kate Potter Clark. Jim Jensen remembers that some people did not think kindly of the new little town of Gustine and remarked that “this schoolhouse will be large enough until the end of time.”

However, Gustine grew so rapidly that a second room was added the following year and by 1910, the building had been outgrown.

A new school was built in 1911 and by the end of the year, the old Enterprise Schoolhouse, shed and two outhouses were for sale.

Purchased by M. Sawyer, the two room building was moved up town, where it stands today as the office of Charles A. Kerr Realtors. Constructed with square nails and spikes, the old school may well be the oldest building in Gustine.

### Romero School

Gustine’s sixth school, Romero School, had a most unusual beginning. The area had to wait until there were enough children to warrant a school. It is believed that it was the Pearce and Menzel families that finally had enough children to start a school. It was for a time held in a “bunk house,” an old wagon affair on wheels, that had been used for someone to stay with the sheep and cattle out in the fields.

The school district was formed in March of 1896. The first trustees were appointed by the Merced County Supt. of Schools. They were J.L. Pearce, J.E. Menzel and Eugene McCabe. The first meeting was held March 23, 1896, they met to call an election to establish a tax of \$1,100 to buy a school site, build the schoolhouse, furnish it, fence it and bore the well. There was a low bid of \$757 to build the school and it was awarded to E.L. Gaynor. The first teacher was Lou Wood and she was paid \$50 a month.

Completed in December of 1897, on property purchased from Henry Kuns, for \$25 in gold coin, the first location was due west of the cement second Romero School, at the corner of Romero Road and Highway 33. When the upper or outside canal went through, the school was moved 300 yards west on property owned by John Allen. It was used there until 1925 when the second school was completed. The building is still standing today on Husman Road where it served as the home of Tom and Elma Latta for many years.

In 1913 the Romero School District was one of the six area elementary school districts voting to begin a high school in Gustine.

The second Romero school was completed in January 1925. It stands today as the cement structure on Highway 33 and is a private residence. It was built for \$1,700 by Roy Kruger. Those trustees were L.H. Menzel, Manual A. Marshall and Soren Husman. It was used until the 1960s.

An influx of students, due to the building of the San Luis project, necessitated the building of a new school. This third Romero School was built on Centinella Road on property donated by the Wolfsen family. The first building was completed in 1963 and the second building was completed in 1965. Trustees were Glen Menzel, Matthew Fantazia and Frank Cardoza Jr.

Unification was fought to the bitter end by the citizens of the Romero area, but in 1965 the Romero School District ceased to exist and became part of the Newman-Gustine Joint Unified School District. Matthew Fantazia was the trustee from the Romero area. When the district deunified in 1971, Romero remained, as it is today, a vital part of the Gustine Unified School District.

### **Gustine Elementary School**

In 1910, when the need for a new school in Gustine was evident, an election was held to vote on a bond measure. The December vote was unanimous, 60 for the bond issue and none against.

George Steele, with horses and plows, dug the large basement for the four room building. When the school opened in 1911, it became Gustine's seventh school.

Effie Chappell McCluskey was the teaching principal. The other two teachers were the Hoyt sisters, Leslie and Blanche (Hollingsworth). By September 1911, 87 children were enrolled.

The school continued to be known as Enterprise School, at least through 1916. Then it became



known as Gustine Grammar School. It was added to over the years. A cafeteria-multipurpose room was constructed. The historic gymnasium was built in 1938 by the WPA and continues in use as a gym and auditorium.

By the 1970s the old original mission style building had been declared unsafe. It was torn down and replaced by more modern buildings in 1974. A separate junior high building was also constructed at that time.

Gustine Elementary-Junior High School is continuing its proud tradition of providing quality education to its multi-ethnic students.

### Gustine Union High School

In 1912, the Gustine Chamber of Commerce quickly circulated a petition to establish a high school in Gustine, after it learned that plans were being made in Newman to annex the Canal School District.

The nearest high school in Merced County was the West Side Union High School in Los Banos. The distance was far too great for Gustine students to attend. The nearest high school was Orestimba in Newman, but you had to pay tuition to attend the Stanislaus County school and usually had to board with a Newman family, again because of distance.

Gustine residents did not feel that they should pay taxes to the Los Banos district and then pay tuition to attend Orestimba, even though it was much more convenient from the standpoint of distance to be traveled.

Debate was held on the proposal. The Orestimba principal made some strong objections against a Gustine High School, "now or any time."

By a large majority, the residents in the elementary districts of Cottonwood, Occidental, Canal, Ingomar, Enterprise (Gustine) and Romero, voted on July 26, 1913, to form a union high school district. The only two areas which did not favor the step were the Canal School District, located adjacent to the Stanislaus-Merced County line, whose boys and girls had been attending Orestimba and the Romero School District which bordered the Los Banos district.

In September of 1913, Louis Redman was elected president of the board of trustees, J.E. Hollingsworth, secretary, along with W.E. Bunker, W.H. Wiley and William Pfitzer.

C.R. Perrier was selected principal at a yearly salary of \$1,600 and Genevieve Hoey (Perrier), vice principal, at \$1,100. Nellie Galbreath was selected janitor for \$20 a month.

The school opened on Sept. 8, 1913 in the McLaughlin Building Formerly occupied by the Gustine Standard at 280 fifth Street. At the first trustee meeting following the opening of the



school, the board instructor the secretary to purchase a flag, have a flag pole erected, purchase a typewriter, secure two stoves, have a coal bin built, purchase a ton a coal and provide the students with two basketballs.

With the purchase of basketballs, sports had arrived at Gustine High. The first basketball was organized on Oct. 24, 1913. The student body selected red and white as the school colors and they practice in the pavilion. The first practice game was against the grade school with the high school winning, eight to four. The first name was lost to Newman 26 to 6 and saw the birth of the rivalry between Gustine and Newman.

On March 14, 1914, voters passed a bond to obtain \$36,000 to build and equip a new high school. The site picked was on the Howard Tract facing the north end of Fifth Street, comprising five acres of land. The beautiful mission style building was built by Trewhitt and Shields of Fresno.

The first two graduates were Rosalie Bizzini Taglio and Rose Williams Inman, class of 1916.

A gym was also built in 1916, with much of the work being done by manual training classes under the direction of teacher-student, Frank Latta, who also designed the building.

In the 1930s the school was called the "Reds." That was also during the time when the color red was linked to the communities. Johnny J. Azevedo, student and writer for the Gustine Standard, changed the name to the "Redskins" in fall of 1935. This was at the time of the dedication of the high school athletic field lights and Gustine's first night football game. They have been known as the "Redskins" ever since.

It might be noted that in March of 1944, the Gustine Rotary Club sponsored an invitational basketball tournament which is still held today. It is the oldest high school invitational tournament in the state of California.

The auditorium and classroom unit was built in 1937 and a new gym was erected in 1953.

1959 saw a movement to form a high school merger between Gustine, Orestimba and Patterson to be known as West Side Joint Union High School District. It would have involved students from Rising Sun School in Vernalis to Romero School south of Gustine, a 50-mile-long district. The proposal was defeated 1816 to 454.

Following that, Gustine voters approved a bond to replace the original building. The old mission style school was torn down in 1962 to be replaced by more modern buildings. C.R. Perrier, first principal at Gustine High, was accorded the honor of turning the first spade of earth at the ground breaking ceremonies for the new building program.

## Our Lady of Miracles School

Our Lady of Miracles parochial school opened Sept. 3, 1952 under the leadership of Monsignor John B. Forde. The \$95,000 needed for construction of the buildings was raised entirely by contributions from the parish.

The first staff of the school were members of the Order of Servants of Immaculate Heart of Mary, from Michigan. Sister Michaeline was the first Mother Superior at the school, as well as being a teacher at that time were Sister Mary Bede, firsts-second grades. Sister Loella was the school's nurse.

The original school consisted of four classrooms, an administration building with four rooms and a home for the sisters.

Mounting costs of school operations forced the closing of the school in 1968. It reopened in 1979 under the guidance of Father John Harguindeguy, where it continues today to make important contributions to the community.

## The Dairy Center

When the Miller & Lux Canal came through in 1878, it brought water for irrigation, the planting of alfalfa and the development of the dairy industry. The coming of the railroad in 1889 spurred on the growth of the new industry because now the cream could be shipped by express to San Francisco and to the numerous cream buyers who opened up shops in every town along the railroad.

Gustine developed into dairy center of the West Side and one of the leading ones in the state. Tons of milk was hauled into milk processing plants and great quantities of milk products were shipped out.

Conrad Lehfeltdt recalls that as a student at UC Davis in 1937, butter was tested from all the creameries in the valley and north coast. It was tested for color, bacteria, purity, solids, quality and taste. Gustine's butter always tested near or at the top.

The first Gustine milk plant was the New Era Creamery built in 1896. By 1917 three plants were in operation in Gustine: New Era Creamery (Dairy Delivery), Gustine Creamery and California Milk Products. The Carnation plant opened in 1920 followed by Western Condensing in 1933. Early 1947 found five large milk plants in Gustine: Bordens, Carnation Gustine Creamery, California Milk Products and Western Condensing. That was the same year the Gustine Creamery, California Milk Products and Avoset merged to become Avoset Company.

Although the ships whistles from Carnation and Foremost are no longer heard, Gustine's dairy

industry remains strong today with three plants: Avoset, Carnation and Beatrice Cheese.

## New Era Creamery

On Aug. 6, 1896, the New Era Creamery was instituted. It was the first creamery in Gustine and among the first in the San Joaquin Valley. It was built on the north side of Netherton Road between Gustine and Newman. The first certificate was issued on Sept. 17, 1896 for \$100 a share.

The first directors were A.J. Worthington, Wm. Brough, F.M. Preston, M.L. Hunt, R.B. Fentem and J.M. Lathrop. Mr. Worthington was president, Mr. Brough was vice president and Mr. Lathrop secretary.

G.E. Peoples was the first buttermaker and also plant manager. He had trouble in convincing people that butter made from alfalfa-fed cows was really fit to eat. But in the spring of 1897 he sent a 60-pound sample to a big dairy show in Minnesota and competing with 14 California exhibitors, scored the highest of all from this state. The next year the victory was repeated at a Kansas show, again out-testing all California competitors. That put an end to the anti-alfalfa talk.

Milk was delivered each morning by the dairymen who had purchased shares in the company. By 1898 the New Era Creamery had built a milk skimming station on the Southern Pacific railroad tracks at Linora.

On May 26, 1906, a committee was appointed by the board of directors to choose a new creamery building site on the railroad at the "Gustine Switch." The board of directors consisted of: Chairman Rudolph Bambauer, R.B. Fentem, Hans Andersen, C.R. Stalman and W.E. Netherton.

On Nov. 13, 1906, the creamery voted to accept from Henry Miller the donation of lots in the proposed town of Gustine. The new plant was constructed by C.J. Stanley at a cost of \$6,000 and was completed in 1907. Thus the New Era Creamery's wish for a facility on the railroad at the "Gustine Switch" proved to be the final incentive for Henry Miller to start the town of Gustine. In 1908, the new plant was leased to Dairy Delivery Company as a supply plant for sweet cream and butter.

It was not long before the company sent out pick-up milk wagons to the dairies and patrons could order butter to be delivered the following day.

John D. Haley, in 1916, drove the first motorized cream truck that the Dairy Delivery Company put into service in the Gustine area.

In 1931 the Dairy Delivery Company became Bordens and then in 1970 it ceased to exist when purchased by Knudsen Corporation. In 1978 it became Alum Rock Cheese and is still in operation today as Beatrice Cheese.

## Gustine Creamery/Avoset

The Gustine Creamery began its operations on June 25, 1917. Over 100 dairymen met to organize a creamery to handle the West Side milk product. Among those name as leaders of the project were Frank Silva, Peter J. Taglio, M.T. Cunha and John Crianca. The plant was built by Roy Kruger on land purchased from Miller & Lux adjoining the south end of the lumber yard, where Avoset is located today.

In 1929 the Gustine Creamery was purchased by California Milk Products. In 1941 it marketed Avoset cream. Then in 1947 the Gustine Creamery, California Milk Products and Avoset merged to form Avoset Company. When the company diversified into other milk and cream products, the name was changed to Avoset Food Corporation.

The Gustine facility is Avoset's only manufacturing plant. Here the company produces whipping cream, half and half, pressurized dairy and non-dairy toppings, orange and pineapple juices and salad dressings for a number of companies.

It remains today as one of Gustine's largest and most important industries.

## California Milk Products

In 1917 California Milk Products built a milk sugar (casein) plant in Gustine. It was built by Roy Kruger at First Avenue and Fourth Street opposite the Miller & Lux warehouse. It faced Highway 33 and a spur track was built from the railroad to the plant. This was to be the first such plant built in the United States. Old timers will remember it as the northern-most part of the old Foremost complex.

California Milk Products was purchased that same year by Smith, Kline and French, wholesale druggists of Philadelphia, who used great quantities of sugar and milk in preparing infant foods and bakery foods. They also used the lactose in their drug operations.

In 1929, it purchased the Gustine Creamery. In 1947, the Gustine Creamery, California Milk Products and Avoset merged to become Avoset Co. In 1961, Foremost purchased the California Milk Products plant from Avoset and operated it until Foremost ceased operating in Gustine in 1984.

## Carnation Condensery No. 23

The Carnation Milk Products plant was built in Gustine in 1920, on land purchased from Miller & Lux. "Velvetized Carnation Evaporated Milk" is shipped overseas and is found on the grocery store shelves in every town and hamlet in this nation. Carnation is a household word and its factory in Gustine is vital to Gustine's economic life.

## Carnation Can Plant

The Carnation can factory opened in Gustine in 1933 where it converted 440 tons of steel annually into nearly 90,000,000 cans to be used for canned milk and other Carnation products. The cans manufactured in the Gustine plant were the “vent hole” type, so named because of a small hole in one end of the can. The cans were filled with evaporated milk through the small hole.

This plant closed in 1984 when operations were moved to Stockton.

## Western Condensing

The Western Condensing plant opened in 1933. It was also built by Roy Kruger. Many of the men working for Kruger left him to work at the plant when it opened.

This plant made sweet sugar and animal food out of the cheese whey they bought from the Bordens Company. They would concentrate this whey and ship it to other plants for processing. They sold their sweet sugar to the California Milk Products plant where it was refined.

The Western Condensing plant was purchased by Foremost in 1955 and ceased operations in 1984.

## Underground Lines

Steam lines ran between the California Milk Products plant and the Western Condensing plant. California Milk Products sold steam to Western Condensing because Western Condensing had no boilers. The Gustine Creamery, after they made their butter, would ship their skim milk to CMP by an underground pipeline. The lines are still there today in a T shape. They run from Avoset north along the railroad tracks into a T extending to the east to Beatrice Cheese, then under T&M Nut and the railroad tracks and Highway 33 to the former Foremost plant (California Milk Products/Western Condensing).

## Three Day Walk

In 1897, Mr. Agostini was renting the Bunker ranch. Needing more cows, he traveled to Salinas. “I’ll buy the cows if the milker comes with them.” The milker was Angelo Beffa, father of Camilla Beffa Rocha. Angelo Beffa walked across the Pacheco Pass to Gustine.

One man rode ahead on horseback to check the gates, the second man brought up the rear in a wagon with the food for the other two and Angelo walked herding the cows. It took him three days.

## Four Day Cattle Drive

The Joe P. Gomes Sr. family came across the Pacheco Pass from Watsonville in the late 1890s to settle first in Crows Landing and then in Gustine in 1910.

Mr. Gomes and his brother drove the cattle on horseback and Mrs. Gomes followed in the covered wagon containing her sister-in-law and newborn son. One night was spent at Bell's Station. It was in the middle of a rain storm. The creek overflowed and the cows went with the water down stream, not across it. With only two men to help, it took hours of work rounding the cattle up.

It took them four days to reach the West Side.

## Early Dairy Days

Joseph Martinho recalls Gustine's early dairy industry. "There were several types of dairies. There were those of 20 acres which were run by a man and his family; those of 40 acres which were run by a man and a hired hand; those of 60 acres which three men owned; and those of 100-120 acres which were owned by four employers or partners.

In the old days we had to skim the milk and only sell the cream. The cream was transported into town in five and 10 gallon containers with a horse and buggy. We raised hogs on the rest of the milk.

We would sell the butterfat to the Gustine Creamery. The balance was sold to California Milk Products.

Days were long and the work was hard back then. A farmer had to get at 3 a.m. to milk the cows. This would take about three hours. After that the dairyman had to clean up, eat breakfast and then go out to the fields to work the land. After lunch the whole process would start over again.

The farmers worked the hard way. The money wasn't there and they lacked equipment. Water was a big problem in those days. Miller & Lux had control of the water. Usually, the water would run out by July and the farmer could not grow any more crops. He had to rely on dry hay to feed his cows.

Grasshoppers were another problem that the farmers had to face. They would come through and wipe out entire crops. One bad year they even ate the fence posts. Farmers would have to leave a strip of hay in the middle of the field for the grasshoppers. They would mix poison from the county with beet pulp, so the grasshoppers would eat it and die.

The weather was warmer back then. There was a lot of dry farming. The crops, sprinkling systems and canals of today make the weather cooler.

Cows were grazed back then and not penned like they are today. A farmer grew everything that he needed and seldom bought from others."

Raised on dairies, Joseph Martinho worked for the Western Condensing Company, which merged with Foremost in 1955. He spent 39 years total with the company, 30 of which he was plant

manager.

## Five Meals A Day

While the men worked hard on the dairies, milking cows and working in the fields, it wasn't easy for the women in those early years. Mary Bettencourt Aguiar recalls coming as a young bride to the Silva dairy where she helped cook five meals a day, having to feed the families, the milkers and the extra hands during the hay season.

Bread had to be baked every other day. The wood floors had to be mopped with lye mixed in with the water. Cooking was done on a wood stove and there was no refrigeration. When an icebox was finally obtained, you could buy fish on Thursday to eat on Friday, with no guarantee it would stay cold. The women managed.

## Early Telephone Service

The early grain farmers in the Gustine area shopped in Hills Ferry and later Newman as there was no Gustine. Out of habit, many continued to do business in Newman even after Gustine was started.

In 1907 the telephone agent from Turlock made a liberal proposition to the farmers living south of Newman. Furnish the phones, build the line, a fence line, and the telephone company would meet them on the edge of Newman and bring their lines into Newman. They would be given 24-hour service for only \$3 a year. The people in Newman paid about \$18 for the same service. The farmer had to put up \$20 for materials for the line.

Because of this, many farmer's lines were formed in the Gustine area. The Sturgeon Telephone Company, Bunker Farmer's Line, Romero Telephone Company and at least one other line started by Peter P. Hansen came into existence. Later on, the Gustine-Newman Telephone Company came into existence in the growing town of Gustine. But all the lines from the Gustine area were fed into Newman's "central" office.

In 1923 a franchise was awarded to Pacific Telephone and Telegraph for putting a central office in Gustine in place for the farmer's lines which had been in the town since 1911.

Members of the Gustine-Newman Rural Telephone Company met at the "courthouse" to dissolve the company. Also, at that time the Bunker Farmer's line came into Gustine's new central office.

The first phone call made in Gustine through its new central was placed by Jack Banchio, manager and owner of the Gustine Hotel, on April 16, 1923 at 10 a.m.

## Sturgeon Telephone

In 1912 J. Frank Snyder founded the Sturgeon Telephone Company. He served as president and Hans Peter Petersen was secretary and treasurer. This was probably the first telephone company



in rural Gustine. It served the Cottonwood area and was connected to “central” in Newman.

It was with great difficulty that he was able to get the farmers together to organize. All wanted phones, but it took several months to get the six or eight together at a meeting. The company was named for Ed Sturgeon, founder of the little Cottonwood community of Sturgeon.

Mr. Snyder was elected president and was re-elected to that position for almost 30 years. In later years his son-in-law Robert Butts served as secretary and treasurer.

The Snyder family did most of the repair work on the line which served over 30 farm families. Howard Snyder recalled that there were three lines and that he helped maintain them while a student at Gustine High School. The early lines were on a splice and were connected to a fence post. They were always getting tangled up and shorting out. There were two batteries in each phone and it was Howard’s duty to change them all once a year. The batteries came 100 in a barrel, packed in hay. In 1939 the Sturgeon Telephone Company joined Gustine’s “central.”

### Romero Telephone Company

The Romero Rural Telephone Company was organized Jan. 19, 1920, with L.H. Cox as president; Fred J. Warren, vice president; L.H. Menzel, secretary; J.S. Hulen, treasurer; and Joe Fantazia, director. Because the new company did not know the exact cost of building the line, each of the 20 original shareholders paid \$50. The first meeting was held on the Manual Marshall Ranch, with later meetings being held at the Romero School house.

In 1923 when Gustine got its own “central” the Romero Telephone Company transferred their switch board from Newman into Gustine.

The Romero Telephone Company was reorganized and incorporated on Nov. 12, 1942 with J.S. Hulen as president; F.J. Pearce as secretary and treasurer. The system consisted of approximately 23 miles of telephone lines and 20 members.

It disbanded in 1953 when absorbed by Pacific Telephone and Telegraph.

### Giovannoni Chalk Building

From chalk rock, dug out of the West Side foothills, early dairy pioneer Peter J. Giovannoni built a stone house creamery on his Cottonwood area ranch. The chalk rock produced a cool building.

Mr. Giovannoni had learned the art of making American cheese in Gilroy in 1889. This chalk building was later used by him as a cheese factory.

Although no longer in use, it is still standing in full view east of Highway 33 and south of Pfitzer Road. It is the only chalk building in Gustine and represents an interesting incident in the progress of the dairy industry in Gustine.

## Duck Hunting in Gustine

Before irrigated agriculture and before the gold rush, our valley was a vast pristine wetland. The area east and south of Gustine was a marsh from fall until spring. The area was a natural magnet for birds navigating the Pacific Flyway. The skies were blackened with flights of ducks and geese.

From the earliest days of the Yokuts Indians, hunters have taken to the marshlands in the fall of the year to seek their limits, whether as a duly licensed hunter who observed the bag limits or the market hunters who killed the birds by the thousands.

In 1901, when the duck population was numbered by the million, the bag limit was 50 compared with last season's four a day, with only one being a sprig.

Duck hunting was big business in those days, particularly after the coming of the railroad in 1889. Market hunters shipped wagon loads of ducks to the commission merchants in San Francisco for restaurant use.

Aileen Snyder's father, Joseph M. Heacox, was a market hunter who shot mallard, sprig, widgeon, teal, and spoonbill ducks, along with gray, white and Brandt geese for shipment to San Francisco. Mrs. Snyder tells how young boys in the region sold blackbirds as "quail on toast" and burrowing owls as "squab." These were served to the dudes from back seat at the Palace Hotel on Market Street.

Duck clubs sprang up in the area. The first one was the Gustine Gun Club. It was organized in 1907, a club house was built and the whole town population of 27 attended the opening night dance. Jim Jensen said, "I played the violin, but enjoyed dancing so much I turned over the job to others." The Gustine Gun Club was reorganized in 1926 as the Gustine Land and Cattle Company.

In 1913 Jack Banchio organized a gun club which made use of the Gustine Hotel Preserve. The grounds adjoined those of the Gustine Gun Club. Mr. Banchio, who was also the proprietor of the Gustine Hotel, was famous throughout the valley for the duck dinners he served at the hotel.

In 1920, 100 limits of ducks were taken opening day from the Hotel Preserve and the same amount from the Gustine Gun Club. The 5,000 birds were mostly teal, with only a few of the larger birds being bagged.

The Gustine Gun Club is one of 150 duck clubs located within the Grassland Water District on the West Side of Merced County covering 45,738 acres. There are 64 duck clubs outside the Grassland Water District covering 13,679 acres all on the West Side of Merced County. The clubs have two to 80 members with shooting grounds running from 80 to 3,200 acres.

Radical changes over the years in food and water conditions have led to fewer birds in this area,

much of which was devoted to dry farming of grain in the early days, providing feed for the great flocks of ducks and geese. If our wetlands can be preserved and left uncontaminated, there will continue to be duck hunting in Gustine for years to come.

### A Close Call

Headlines in the Gustine Standard on March 17, 1911 proclaimed, "Gun Club Keeper Has Close Call in Slough." The keeper at the Gun Club had a narrow escape last week while the high water caused by the prolonged storm was at its worst.

While driving through one of the sloughs on the club grounds, his horse was rendered helpless by the rushing water and thrown from its feet. The animal was carried downstream, and being entangled in the harness was drowned, while it was only by a fierce struggle against the current that the keeper safely gained the bank."

### Tree Planting1922

In response to the popular statewide idea of lining California's highways with trees, the Gustine and Newman Chamber of Commerce organized a joint community effort to plant black walnut trees on both sides of the highway between Gustine and Newman.

The great event occurred on Feb. 13, 1922. Each participant paid \$1 for a tree and set the tree in a place designated by the number on his ticket. The entire three-and-a-half-mile stretch of highway was divided into sections, each section placed under a competent superintendent who told you how to plant your tree properly.

Five hundred people turned out for the historic event which was followed by a hot dinner at the Pentecost Hall in Pentecost Hall in Gustine, served by the combined forces of ladies from the two towns. American Legion ceremonies were held and prominent speakers were present, movies were shown in the afternoon and a dance was held that evening.

The Standard reported that, "the avenue of trees will remain as a monument to the pride and public spirit of this part of the valley and as the years go by we will always feel a pride that we had a part in such a magnificent result."

However, there were no funds available to the Chamber of Commerce to pay for having the trees watered and cultivated. It was then suggested that everybody who set out tree should see that they were taken care of, for the first year anyway. Dr. Stagner, W.H. Gilbert, W.W. Wehner, C.R. Perrier and L.C. Cornett were especially noticeable for the good care and attention they gave their trees.

By June of the following year, there were only 67 trees in good condition on the west side of the highway and only 29 had survived on the east side. Many of the trees on the east side had been burned in their infancy by the careless railroad gang who burned off the fox trails. Today, only a

half dozen black walnut trees remain to remind us of the great tree planting of 1922.

## Gustine Post Office

There was a time when early Gustine residents went to the hole in the old cottonwood tree on Cottonwood Road to pick up their mail.

From that unofficial “drop” in the cottonwood tree, a more advanced office was established in a grocery store on Jan. 2, 1884. The office was in the town of Sturgeon, located on the southwest corner of Whitworth and Snyder Road.

Six years later, on Oct. 28, 1890, the Sturgeon office closed, to be replaced by the Ingomar office, which remained intact until Jan. 31, 1921.

That’s when the Ingomar office was moved in with the Gustine Post Office. The change was mainly due to the resignation of the postmaster, when he sold his store, which was run in connection with the post office. The new owner did not wish to handle the mail.

The Gustine office was established on May 17, 1907, with William M. Willey as postmaster. Jim Jensen reported that “until the first post office was set up in Gustine, residents obtained their mail in Newman. Willey had a little trouble at first to get enough business to justify a post office. He made daily visits to the business houses to pick up mail orders to be sent to wholesale houses. They were small orders so that he could mail something every day, to show a need for a post office. It worked.”

Even in the early days the Gustine office was expected to call for customers living in the Santa Nella area, as it continues to do today.

The original post office was on Fifth Street, between Third and Fourth avenues, then it was located in the IOOF building on Fifth Street and Fourth Avenue. Today the Gustine Post Office is located at 316 Fifth St. where it continues to be staffed by dedicated public servants.

## The Gustine Library

The Gustine Branch of the Merced County Free Library was opened on Nov. 22, 1910. It was located in the back of the Gustine Stationery Store next to the Park Restaurant, where First Interstate Bank is located today.

Miss Antoinette M. Humphreys, the county librarian, arrived on a Sunday night and spent Monday in completing the details for the opening. Shelves were set up and tables installed in readiness for Tuesday evening’s open house. The Misses Truitt assisted Miss Humphreys in receiving the visitors.

The evening was taken up by a program of music and recitations, piano selections being rendered

by Miss Maybelle Walker, Miss Leslie Hollingsworth and Mrs. A.D. Davenport. D.A. Sherwood performed on the mandolin. Fifty persons attended the opening and more than half of these checked out books. Miss Humphreys predicted a rapid growth for the Gustine branch. She promised to soon send over a dictionary and the new International Encyclopedia.

Mrs. Carrie Holst served as librarian from 1917 to 1945. Gussie Petersen, first certified librarian, served in that capacity from 1945 to 1962. Eleanor Cassity assumed duties as the branch librarian at that time and worked for 20 years before retiring and being succeeded by the present librarian, Louise Chivers, who took over the library Oct. 1, 1982.

From the less than 100 books in 1910, Gustine's library now contains 5,500 books, plus donated paperbacks, periodicals, major news weeklies, books for the visually impaired, records and video tapes.

The library has been housed on Sixth Street in Henry Miller Park since 1948. It has something for everyone. "If you can't find what you want, we can order it."

### **Gustine Volunteer Fire Department**

The Gustine Volunteer Fire Department holds the unique title of being the first organization of any kind in the brand new little town of Gustine. Isolated on the West Side, the town had no services available to it that could be effective, so for the first few years the fire department acted as the planning and legislative body for the town.

Originally organized on Dec. 16, 1910, Jack Hazelwood was elected fire chief with S.C. Cornett and R.W. Nagle as assistants. More than 20 volunteers signed up.

The first action taken by the organization was to order each member to donate a two-and-a-half-gallon bucket. These buckets were then placed in a rack located across the street from the Miller & Lux building, location now of the IOOF building, so they would be readily available in case of fire. An iron triangle had been erected in the lot on which to sound the fire alarm.

Local carpenters made several ladders to give the department its first fire fighting equipment. Miller & Lux announced that they would contribute 25 percent of all money collected for the new department.

The department was reorganized in 1921 as the Gustine Fire Department, with Chief Frank F. Latta, First Assistant Chief William Manlove, Second Assistant Chief Elmer C. Jensen, Treasurer E.J. Goldenberger and Secretary A.S. Balthazar. Other members in 1921 were Woodruff, Pearce, Clinkenbeard, Forrest, Owen, Levy Wilson, Petersen, Amos, Schmidt, Lockridge, Azevedo, Allen, Jones, Johnson, McBride, Bradley, Carey, Peters, and Snyder.

The chief of the fire department is a volunteer job and there is an election each year to decide

who will be the top man. Current chief, Richard Vierra, has served since 1980. The city volunteers are just that, volunteers. There is no pay for city fires and these brave men must be ready to get up at all hours to battle a blazed. Gustine is justly proud of its volunteer firemen.

## Gustine Standard

The oldest business in Gustine, in continuous operation, is the Gustine Standard. Its first issue was published on Nov. 4, 1910, under the guidance of Publisher William C. Perry. The mast proclaimed that the Gustine Standard was “A Standard Paper for an Above Standard Community.”

For the first five months, the paper was apparently published upstairs in the Miller & Lux building, where the Gustine Pharmacy is now located, and touched on many of the same news topics to be found in a typical issue of today’s Standard. The headline for the second issue proclaimed, “Gustine to have Branch Library.” A week later the lead story was headlined, “Irrigators will hold next meeting here.”

The Standard followed by one year the short-lived Gustine News. When just three weeks old, the Standard wanted to know “whether or not it is expected to pay for the alleged sins of its predecessor; the defunct Gustine News.” The publisher had been out selling subscriptions and evidently had encountered some resistance and/or distrust.

## Justice Court/Jail

The Merced County Justice Court/Jail was built in 1911 by Roy Kruger and A.D. Davenport at a cost of \$5,900. It is of reinforced concrete construction throughout and was designed in a Spanish style with a plaster finish and a metal tile roof. “It is a little smaller than some of the other county buildings, but is the equal of any of them in architecture.”

The Merced County Board of Supervisors authorized that the building be connected to Gustine’s sewer system and also gave permission for the purchase of \$150 worth of furniture. The building was frequently referred to in early issues of the Standard as the “court house.”

Early fire department meetings were held there and when Gustine incorporated in 1915, the “Trustees of Gustine City” were allowed to use the building for meetings.

In 1917, the Chamber of Commerce secretary was asked to confer with Supervisor George Whitworth regarding fencing the “court house” because loose stock being driven along the road were trampling everything planted there.

The Standard reported in 1931, that “no longer will plaintiffs and defendants, attorneys and clerks, voters and election boards and others who visit the local courthouse, shiver and shake in the cold wintry air that generally fill our hall of justice, for Judge Shifter Mathews has induced the county to have a beautiful new gas heater installed in the main courtroom and now everything will be ‘hotsy-totsy’. But even at that, the courthouse is a good place to stay out of unless you’re on the



right of the fence.”

In 1948, when Paul Alford was chief, the office of the police department moved into the building under an agreement whereby the City of Gustine would lease the jail for 25 years. The agreement provided that Gustine would pay \$1 a year rental and would receive \$1.65 per prisoner per day for care of county prisoners.

In 1963, the building was deeded to the City of Gustine, but by 1980 the Justice Court/Jail was falling apart. Electrical deficiencies, obvious violations (such as one toilet for male and female employees) and termite damage led the police department to move to the new Gustine City-County building next to the fire station.

The building sat idle until leased to the Gustine Historical Society, who restored it and plan to reopen it as the Gustine Museum, at the time of Gustine’s Diamond Jubilee. The Gustine Museum and the Holy Ghost Catholic Church are the only two remaining mission style buildings in Gustine, as both the original high school and grammar school buildings have been torn down.

### Jailbreak in Gustine

Gustine pioneer A.D. Davenport built the Justice Court/Jail in 1911. He recalled how the first prisoner in the new jail was leaning against the door when suddenly it came open and he fell out. Fearing extra punishment if he ran away, the prisoner reported the incident to the constable, Mr. Oliver Carey. The Constable then notified Mr. Davenport.

Mr. Davenport couldn’t understand why the door had come open as he had purchased a very expensive lock to put on the door. Carey and Davenport then returned to the jail and the constable locked Mr. Davenport in the cell. Mr. Davenport leaned against the door for a while and to his surprise the door flew open and he fell out. The faulty lock was repaired and there have been no “jail breaks” in Gustine since.

### Gustine City Band

Here comes the band! To the majority of people in this small community of Gustine, this statement means the Gustine City Band. Organized in 1911, the city band is still going strong, playing most of the time for Portuguese festas, which are held in the valley from late May until early fall. The band has also performed for the local Fourth of July celebration, county fair parades, Mexican Independence Day fiestas and once for a Chinese funeral. The band had to curtail its travel throughout the valley and coastal regions during the early 1940s because of the gasoline shortage but resumed its schedule after World War II and has been active every summer since.

This is probably one of the very few musical organizations, if not the only one, which has remained together for this period of time. A contributing factor to his accomplishment probably



is that it is such a family oriented group. Records are incomplete to establish just how many fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, brothers and brothers-in-law and even grandfathers and grandsons have been known to march together, and still do.

Another important factor is the local school's music program which has fed accomplished musicians into the city band of the years.

The band was once sponsored by the Eagles Lodge (BPOE), but since has been relatively independent of any sponsorship. Raising money for uniforms has come from a variety of sources, including donations from individual "fans," the Gustine Chamber of Commerce, and many times from the members themselves.

"Espirit de Corps," needless to say, has never been lacking in this group. Many people have contributed much of their lives to the band. One of the outstanding among them includes Glenn R. Vidler. Mr. Vidler was one of the original directors of the band. Years later, his son Raymond, took this position. A few members who performed under these two brilliant men are still with the band. Another gentleman, probably the city band's most serious critic, who has also been a most loyal supporter, playing in the band himself for many years, is "Papa" Tony Rocha, an accomplished musician in his own right.

The community of Gustine is justly proud of the Gustine City Band.

### Chamber of Commerce

The Gustine Chamber of Commerce was organized on Feb. 19, 1912. Meeting in the Miller & Lux hall, they elected: J.E. Hollingsworth, president; A.D. Davenport, vice president; E.L. Ludlow, secretary; and C.W. Hawks, treasurer.

Directors were D.T. Haley (Dairy Delivery Company), J.R. Jensen (blacksmith and builder of Gustine's first building), J.C. Holst (ice cream store owner), G. McDonald Jr. (manager of Miller & Lux store) and Joe Amabile of the Amabile Hotel.

Other charter members were named Truitt, Andersen, Steele, Kruger, Currier, Chappel, Hazelwood, Blatt, Dethlefsen, Reutter and Kerr. The large Italian population was represented by charter members Amabile, Banchio, Chettro, Marchese and Borrelli. The small but growing Portuguese population was represented by two store owners, J.V. Azevedo and M.M. Silva.

Within one month, the Fire Department, which had previously acted as the planning and legislative body for the town, indicated a desire to come under the supervision of the Chamber of Commerce.

For the next four years, until the city was incorporated, the Chamber of Commerce was a tremendous force in the community. It led the movements for street lighting, electricity, better

roads and sewer system and finally for incorporation. The Chamber of Commerce handled Gustine's first Fourth of July celebration. Members circulated the petition to form a Gustine Union High School District.

The Gustine Chamber of Commerce continues today, as it has for the past 78 years, to play a strong leadership role in the community.

### Gustine Opera House

The grand opening of the Gustine Opera House was announced in May of 1912. Located on Fifth Street between the present day Davenport Real Estate and O'Rourke Insurance, it featured an electric piano and motion picture shows. E.J. Goldenberger and Jack Silva often ran the projector for the shows.

Various acts were booked. Appearing there were the Kenworthy Players, "a first class road stock company, who carried their own scenery to correctly stage the plays offered.: Live "photo" plays were presented with good music given between acts.

Vaudeville acts came from San Francisco. Appearing for a week's engagement was the Marion Woods Company. They featured a select line of comedians and dramas, interspersed with vaudeville numbers. Popular prices were 35 cents, 25 cents and 15 cents. Ladies were to be admitted free if accompanied by a gentleman holding a 35 cent ticket.

One Saturday night program was "The Master Hand," a three reel about animal training and also a one-reel Keystone comedy. Price was only 10 and 15 cents.

Once a noted hypnotist, Professor O.H. Caruthers appeared. On a Friday afternoon at 2, he hypnotized a young man in the show window of J.V. Azevedo's store where he slept until 8 when he was carried to the opera house and awakened on the stage in full view of the audience.

Local talent was seen at the Opera House. It was advertised that "Miss Hazel Snyder will sing at the entertainment next Tuesday in the Opera House. She has a beautiful voice and Mrs. Neher will be her accompanist."

In 1915, Gustine High School students presented their play "Tangles of Love." It starred George DeGregori, Ralston Woodruff, Verner Tinnin, Fulton Bambauer, Eddie Kingsley, Anita Redman, Fanny Bladt, Nellie Bizzini, Irma Hales, Marjory Brown and Maryon Fairman.

Lena Nunes Ouse recalls performing in the Opera House in the play "The Mother-in-Law." A company would come into town and select Gustine High School girls to act in plays. The students were provided costumes and most of the lines were read by members of the company.

Sold by the bank to Peter P. Bladt in 1915, Mr. Bladt began to renovate the building. "The floor is to be inclined so as the back seats command a full view of the stage, the walls and ceilings are to

be covered with suitable material and opera chairs will take the place of the uncomfortable camp chairs that have previously been and annoyance to the patrons of the place.” A heating system was to be installed, the new ceiling was to be of ornamental metal and 150 chairs were to be in place.

On March 7, 1920, the Opera House was consumed by fire. It was a Sunday night and the house was packed to the doors with men, women and children, when fire started in the projection room about 9:30 p.m. and spread throughout the structure. The audience had time to leave through the several exits without anyone being injured, although Camilla Beffa Rocha recalls the frantic search for her missing brother.

Also burned were two buildings south of the Opera House, one occupied by Justice H.K. Morris and the other the residence of Dr. C.E. Stagner.

Firemen “Red Cornett and Eddie Parraguez did some excellent work with an inch hose with which they fought back the fire on the street side while the big stream was working on the other side and the top. Having only one string of hose made it impossible to work on both sides.”

Much credit was given to “the men who put in their best efforts on the bucket brigade which Mayor Haley got going and to those who helped in getting out things from the building that were in danger.”

M.M. Silva’s grocery store was directly across the street. The always filled watering trough in front of the grocery was the only source of water available to fight the fire, which threatened to destroy the city.

Anna Silva Schuman recalled the horse trough also contained her pet goldfish. Bucket by bucket the men emptied the horse trough in their attempt to put out the fire. Unfortunately, when the fire was over, the Opera House had burned to the ground and Mrs. Shuman’s pet goldfish were gone.

## Banking in Gustine

There were no banks in the Gustine area in 1907. Gold was used exclusively. People would pack the gold around in their pockets. Large amounts were often hidden in men’s leather boots. Pioneer businessman Jim Jensen related that, “long about the time accounts were due, I would have anywhere from \$150 to \$300 in my pockets.”

It was very difficult in the early years for the many Italian immigrants to obtain loans from a bank, so Michael DeGregori, Gustine’s leading Italian citizen, became their banker. His notebook listed the money lent and repaid. Many prominent family names can be found in that “little black book.”

In January 1909, a branch of Henry Miller’s Bank of Los Banos was established in Gustine. For

two weeks the bank business was conducted in the lumber yard office of Miller & Lux, Inc. opposite the Southern Pacific Depot. When the Miller & Lux building was completed, the banking business was then carried on in the main office on Fifth Street. This continued from 1909 to 1913.

In 1913 stock was sold and the bank of Gustine organized. They purchased the business of the Gustine branch of the Bank of Los Banos. The Bank of Gustine moved into its new building in October of 1913.

The construction of the bank building completed the four corner intersection of Fifth Street and Fourth Avenue. The Miller & Lux Store, Gustine Hotel, IOOF Building and the Bank of Gustine were all beautiful buildings we can be proud of even today.

In 1926, the Bank of Gustine was purchased by the Liberty Bank, a branch of the Bank of Italy and in 1930 the bank's name was changed for the last time to the Bank of America.

The Gustine Branch of the Bank of Newman was established in 1919. Following several name changes, the bank is known today as First Interstate Bank. Vacated by First Interstate Bank in 1960, the original bank building remains today at 361 Fifth St.

Both the Bank of America and First Interstate Bank continue their proud traditions of serving the financial needs of the community.

## Bald Eagle Mine

It was in 1899 that A.D. "Dwight" Davenport first went into the upper Quinto Creek area, some 15 miles Southwest of Gustine. On the trip, he noticed chunks of white rock or ore, commonly called "Float" but paid little attention to them, thinking it limestone or chalk rock. On later trips, however, he gathered specimens and in 1914 had the samples analyzed, to learn that the ore was Magnesite at the Bald Eagle was the purest in the state, when it was first mined, being more than 99 percent pure Magnesite.

In 1915, Mr. Davenport with Messrs. Henry Knight and Ed Kingsley, took up mineral claims on the present mine site and began first operations. During 1916 and 1917, the mine was leased to a group of Oakland men and considerable ore was shipped out.

But it was in 1930 when the mine was sold to Sierra Magnesite Company that feverish expansion began. Tons of lumber, steel, cement, machinery and other materials and supplies were trucked in and the Bald Eagle Mine site became a small town in itself. Six modern dwelling houses, one a duplex, were constructed a short distance up the creek. These were for the married men employed at the mine. Below was the big dormitory for the single men, with a recreation room and shower. The great mess hall was capable of seating a hundred men and the cooks turned out fine meals in enormous quantities.

A smaller building housed the office force and officials, including the engineer, stenographers,

draftsmen and the mine superintendent, Mr. Perry. A 97-foot well supplied all buildings with good fresh water. Perhaps the most striking sight above ground was the seven story processing plant.

Eugene Lindgren, the mine's last manager, said miners would tunnel into the mountain at one level and then move to another level following the Magnesite deposits, which ranged in thickness from two to 12 feet. Tunnels were reinforced with timbers to keep them from collapsing.

Miners used dynamite to blast the Magnesite out of the mountain, setting the charges late each afternoon after the mine was clear of men. The next day the miners would clear the Magnesite out, drop it down chutes inside the mountain, pile it in ore cars and dump it into the processing plant.

The Magnesite was graded, crushed and sized in the processing plant. The processed ore was then trucked 16 miles to Ingomar by Service and Trucking Co. (Ted Peters Trucking) of Gustine, where it was loaded onto railroad cars and shipped across the nation.

Magnesite, a heat resistant material, was used to line steel mill furnaces and line the decks of battleships during World War II. It was also used to make electrical insulators and to process wood pulp into paper.

Vic Martino relates that once a week Martino's market delivered meat and groceries to the mine, dodging ore trucks all the way. When the Quinto Creek came down, the mine would call and delay delivery until the creek the miners would use winches to pull the loaded pickup across the creek.

Frank "Frisky" Machado worked at the mine as a mucker in 1935. He would ride a bus to the mine each day from Gustine, a one or one and a half hour trip each way, for 25 cents a day. Every Friday, on payday, the bus owner/driver would buy wine and the miners would drink the wine on the bus ride home. Thus the miners looked forward to payday for more than one reason. Mr. Machado was paid \$4 a day and considered it good money.

Abandoned in 1944, the decaying seven-story processing plant, collapsed tunnels, an old ore car and a few rusty remnants are all that are left of the mine's glory years, when more than 100 men a day worked the Bald Eagle Mine.

### **Our Lady of Miracles**

In the late 1920s and early 1930s a great number of people from the Azores came to California and settled in Gustine. It was in 1933 that M.B. Souza (probably better known as Manuel Sao Miguel) suggested to his friends from the Azores that they too, here in a new, far away land, continue the tradition of celebrating the Our Lady of Miracles festa.

It was on the island of Terceira that the story of Our Lady of Miracles began. According to legend a vision of the Blessed Virgin occurred. All that is known is a miracle was performed. It is a fact that where this miracle did occur the grass has a different aroma from elsewhere on the island and that a barren, burnt rock was formed by nature to resemble a chapel. After many years the people of Serrta decided that the holy spot be named for the Blessed Virgin and it was then named Our Lady of Miracles.

Each Sept. 6 the people would pay homage to the occasion and would make pilgrimages to the holy site. Many of these began at night and the procession, with candles winding up the mountain side for miles, would be seen afar and would act as a signal for the faithful to join them for worship on the following morning at the Sanctuary.

As this was an exhausting trip, some of the people brought their cows so that refreshments could be had during their stay at prayers. This later led to the priest blessing the cows (Bodo de Leite) and this was added to the annual pilgrimage. As more and more people joined in this celebration and as the villagers of the island were poor, it was the custom that after the cows were blessed and prayers finished, that the cows would be milked and the milk given to the people. Also there were some villagers who brought sweetbreads and these were given.

After the refreshments then the social portion of the pilgrimage would begin with singing of hymns that were entirely original and spontaneous by the singer. After the singing there would be a chamarita, the Portuguese folk dance performed in a circle.

In Gustine, after many months of planning Manuel Souza and John T. Mattos got support of the project and in 1936 the first celebration was held in Gustine. There are only two places in the world where this festa is held. The original site just outside Serrta and in Gustine.

The queen is an American adaption to the celebration. She represents the Portuguese speaking people of this community in activities throughout the state. The first queen in Gustine was Amelia Mattos, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Mattos Sr. She earned her honor by selling the most tickets to a portion of the celebration.

There is a statue of Our Lady of Miracles that is enshrined in Gustine's Our Lady of Miracles Church. A little larger in size than the original statue that is revered in the Azores, its place here was brought about by Manuel Souza. Later John T. Mattos and John T. Braza went to San Francisco and commissioned the work of creating the statue for Gustine. The statue arrived in time for the first celebration here in 1936.

The "Bodo de Leite," the procession of the statues, the bull fights, the queens and her maids, the singing and the hymns that tell stories of the event, the chamaritas, the auction of gifts are all added portions to the real thing, the prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary-Our Lady of Miracles.

For hundreds of years the villagers of Serrta, Terceira, have marked this great religious event and



for over 50 years it has been a highlight in the Gustine community shared by all the residents, regardless of their particular faith.

## Gustine FFA

### by Conrad Lehfeldt

Agriculture has been a part of Gustine High curriculum since its early days. Mr. Thompson was the first teacher. In 1936 the Smith-Hughes vocational classes were introduced by principal Walter J. Pierce. Mr. LaRain Marble was the first director of vocational agriculture and FFA advisor.

The chapter was chartered by the state association. Carmelo Bloise served as first president. Mr. Hogan served as advisor from 1937-39. Conrad Lehfeldt followed from 1939-64. His successor was Joe R. Mello, a former member of the local chapter who served 1964-74. The present adviser is Mrs. Charlie Rodrigues.

Prior to the FFA, ag students took animals to the South San Francisco Fat Livestock Show. They would hold a local stock show before going to San Francisco. This local show has been held annually ever since. It is said to be the oldest local FFA stock show in California.

For many years it was held in the gym. With the change in the character of agriculture from primarily dairy (40 cows to 40 acres) to orchard and row crops, the show is not as large as it was previously, although it is still an important event.

After World War II, it was not unusual for over 125 head of dairy cattle to be exhibited, plus swine, sheep, beef and sometimes poultry and rabbits. Gustine businessmen and farmers have been generous in their support with trophies and ribbons. Local FFA members have shown and still do at many of the area fairs like Los Banos, Merced, Chowchilla, state and the junior livestock show at the Cow Palace in San Francisco.

Girls became part of the FFA activities in the late 1960s and made an important contribution to the program.

The purpose of the FFA is to improve agriculture, develop leadership and foster community participation. A parent and member banquet and awards program (once called father and son) is held annually. At Thanksgiving and Christmas members provide baskets of food and toys for the less fortunate. In recent years they have displayed animals at the elementary schools to give town students a d hands-on feel for animals. A farm machinery parade is also held. The activities all serve the purpose of the FFA.

## West Side Hospital

Opened in 1938, the West Side Hospital has served the medical needs of the Gustine-Newman area for over 50 years. It was originally founded as a private hospital by doctors A.M. Roscoe,



Paul A. Werthman, E.W. Bulley and J.E. Thompson.

In 1947 plans were made for greatly enlarging the facilities. To provide more space for the hospital kitchen, it added to it the kitchen area that had been a part of the apartment in the building. Also erected was an office building that extended east from the south end of the hospital. This addition provided offices for the physicians and surgeons but also for X-ray and other equipment. space then occupied by such equipment was converted into a much larger nursery.

Closed in 1956, it reopened in 1957 as a community owned facility. Eight doctors were invited to join the medical staff. They were doctors Vernon Goutiere, John Lanfranki, Everett Lefforge, Frank Reimer, Robert Harriss, J.E. Thompson, Ben Leonard and Warren Wagers. Dr. Thompson was elected chief of medical service and Dr. Harris was named secretary. Miss Helen Osten of Madera was named nurse-administrator. Wilmar Jensen served as legal counsel for the district.

The West Side Hospital Auxiliary was formed on Oct. 8, 1957. Margaret Jensen was unanimously elected its first president

## 911

On March 1, 1970, Gustine became the first city in the state of California to have the universal emergency telephone number system. Gustine residents could now telephone the police department, the fire department or summon an ambulance by dialing only three digits-911. Previously, it was necessary to dial seven digits to reach these emergency services. The new system was installed by the Pacific Telephone Company.

Gustine joined some 30 communities in the United States that were currently using 911 for emergency calls.

Gustine City Manager Ed Petersen and Chamber of Commerce President Katherine Levine joined Gustine Mayor Dan Galatro in the unique ribbon cutting ceremony.

## Cottonwood Church

The Cottonwood Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1905 on the northwest corner of Highway 33 and Cottonwood Road. Previous to the building of the church, Protestant services were held in the Cottonwood School.

It was built by A.D. Davenport and was the first church building in Gustine. A parsonage was provided and later in 1917, in cooperation with the cottonwood Farm Bureau, a social hall was added. It was to be used as a meeting place for members, young folks and the Farm Bureau.

A choir was formed and many social events were held there, including movies, skits and ice cream socials.

When Gustine began, many of the church members started attending services in Gustine. With declining membership, the church closed and was purchased in 1927 by M.O. Souza, who occupied the parsonage as a residence. The church itself later became the Cottonwood Grocery Store.

Gustine's first church is still occupied today as a private residence.

### Community Presbyterian Church

In December 1908, a Sunday School was organized in the Gustine Grammar School house with about 20 members by Reverend Authur Hicks. For several years previously Sabbath School had been conducted by Elder Thomas F. Kerr and Mrs. Kerr lived on their Hunt Road ranch south of Gustine and were concerned over the fact that the closest Presbyterian Church was in Newman.

The couple was interested in young people and they began holding Sabbath School at the same schoolhouse when it was located on Azevedo Road (Enterprise School).

A piece of land and \$100 was donated by Miller & Lux in the town site of Gustine. On Feb. 6, 1910 the church organization was completed with 16 charter members. They were the Kerr, Walker, Frank, Clark, Kniebes, Williams, Steinberg, Mitchem and Villar families.

The lot given by Miller & Lux is now part of Gustine Elementary School. The original chapel is now a residence just north of the Legion Hall. The manse that was later erected is now a residence on West Avenue.

Known initially as the Gustine Presbyterian Church, in the mid-20s when the Methodist churches of Ingomar, Cottonwood and Gustine were closed, it was agreed to change the name to Gustine Community Presbyterian Church.

When Gustine was started, the Enterprise School was moved to town and became the Gustine Grammar School. In 1918, feeling the need to expand, the school district offered to buy the church property for \$4,500. This offer was accepted and the present church site was purchased. The Gustine Methodist Episcopal Church was purchased and moved to the site. This is now the Fellowship Hall.

### Methodist Episcopal Church

The Methodist Episcopal Church began in Gustine in 1911. The Reverend Burton Hamlin served as pastor. Regular church services were held in the Miller & Lux Hall every Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m. Sunday School was held following the sermon. All were cordially invited to attend.

The building was dedicated in June of 1911 and joined the existing Cottonwood Methodist Church. The church building was later purchased by the Presbyterian Church and moved to its present site by Roy Kruger. This is now the Fellowship Hall of the Presbyterian Church.

## Holy Ghost Catholic Church

The Catholic community of Gustine originally had to travel by horse and buggy to Newman to attend mass. The site for the Gustine church was purchased from Miller & Lux for \$10 in gold and was dedicated in 1912. Father Leal of St. Joachim's Church in Newman attended the dedication and said the first mass. He then served as pastor for both the Newman and Gustine Churches.

Father Leal lived in the sacristy of the church until the rectory could be built. The original rectory was destroyed by fire in 1929 and a new rectory was constructed in 1930 which is the one standing next to the church on Seventh Street.

In 1941, an old building was moved from the airport to Seventh Street and is still in use as a social hall by the parish and the community.

Father E.H. Heubbers served the church from 1935 to 1945. During his tenure the Italian Catholic Federation was organized, the Altar Society formed and the parish celebrated its silver anniversary.

Father John B. Forde came to Gustine in 1947, remaining until his death in 1978. Under his leadership Our Lady of Miracles School opened on Sept. 3, 1951 and a new church, which seats 850, was built in 1965 on Linden Avenue. It was renamed Our Lady of Miracles Church in 1986.

The original mission style Holy Ghost Catholic Church building was used for a short time as a meeting hall for various parish organizations, however, it stands empty today.

## Assembly of God Church

The Gustine Assembly of God Church began in 1943 when a small group of people who had been assembling in various homes for prayer meeting obtained an old garage building holding regular services with Rev. J.R. Rhoads as pastor.

The Linville building now stands on the site where this garage building once served as the church's meeting place.

In 1945, under the guidance of Rev. Don Fleming, the church members began building the actual church. Completed in 1947, the church was organized and incorporated in 1949.

In 1953 the personage was built and stands at the back of the church lot. Several years later the need for more Sunday School rooms became apparent and these were added.

In 1965, a new foyer and offices were added and in 1967 the new sanctuary was built to complete construction at the corner of Fifth Street and First Avenue.

In 1980, the name of the church was changed to Westside Christian Center due to the church serving Newman and the surrounding area.

The women's Missionary Council of the church was founded locally in the 1940s. Responsibilities of the local group include foreign and home missions and benevolence, such as aiding "children's homes" and supporting district sponsored projects and local projects such as the needy families of the church.

### Baptist Church First

In February 1946, a Baptist Mission was organized in Gustine. It was sponsored by the First Southern Baptist Church of Patterson. Rev. Eugene Greenfield served as the mission pastor.

On Oct. 6, 1946, a Baptist Mission was organized in to the first Southern Baptist Church of Gustine. Later, the name was shortened to First Baptist Church of Gustine. The charter member of the congregation were the families of Cope, Tanner, Lawrence, Brewer and Hooks.

In December of 1951, a lot on Sycamore Avenue was purchased as the site for new church building. Bonds totally 14,000 were issued to finance the construction. The building was officially dedicated on March 29, 1953, during services in the new building.

Between July 1955 and 1969, the property east of the church was bought from the Seventh Day Adventist church, including their building, so the church property now fronts on two streets, West and Sycamore.

The Women's Missionary education organization. It serves to promote Christian Missions through a program of mission study, prayer, community missions, stewardship and missionary education of youth

The missionary society does mending for rest home resident, furnishes clothing to Indians, provides church services in the rest homes and helps the needy and sick. The brotherhood consists of the men and boys with the same ultimate goals.

### Fraternal Organizations

1910 – Ladies Improvement Club

LOOF

1911 – Danish Athletic Club

1912 – Gustine Chamber of Commerce

Portuguese Union

1913 – Pride of Romero Rebekah Lodge 340

Gustine Pentecostal Society

1920 – American Legion Post 240

1926 – American Legion Auxiliary  
Gustine Rifle and Pistol Club  
Sons of Italy.  
1927 – Gustine Exchange Club  
1928 – Yellow Dogs Kennel  
1930 – 20-30 Club  
1933 – New Era Grange  
1936 – Our Lady of Miracles Society  
1943 – Rotary Club  
1946 – Native Sons  
VFW Post 763  
Westside Rifle and Pistol Club  
1947 – Native Daughters  
VFW Auxiliary  
Fraternal Order of Eagles  
Gustine Community Club  
1948 – Lions Club  
1960 – Gustine-Newman Soroptimist Club  
1961 – WWI West Side Barracks 2506  
WWI West Side Barracks Auxiliary  
1971 – West Side Saddle Club  
1978 – West Side Young Homemakers  
West Side Art Association  
1984 – Gustine Historical Society

## American Legion

The Gustine Post of the American Legion began on Nov. 30, 1920 in the City Hall when prospective turned out to elect permanent officers. The following officers were elected: Post Commander E.J. Goldenberger, Vice Commander Fred Pettit, Adjutant-Treasurer L.K. Woofruff, Chaplain F.F. Latta and Sergeant at Arms W.L. Gilbert.

The Post 240 has been named in honor of private Manuel M. Lopes, U.S. Army, 91st Division, 363 Infantry, Company D. He was one of the first serviceman from Gustine to give his life in World War I. He died on May 13, 1920 at Leterman Army Hospital, Presidio, San Francisco, of complications received in battle.

The post sponsors two boys to boy's state; one from Gustine and one from Newman. They participate in the American schools' award to a boy and girl from Gustine Junior High, Yolo Junior High and Our Lady of Miracles School.

Active in Both Newman and Gustine celebrations, they sponsor, with the VFW, the Veterans Day program and the Memorial Day services at Hills Ferry Cemetery. The Legion also presents the

national colors at football games and other civic functions and serves as honor guard at all military services for deceased veterans.

## VFW

The Veterans' of Foreign Wars Post 7635 was incorporated on June 7, 1946. The first officers to command the new post were Commander Roy Ross, Service Commander Allen Lopes Jr., Junior Vice Commander B.E. Vaughn, Secretary-Treasurer Tye Tanner and trustees Howard Moffet, Fred Landon and Manuel H. Azevedo.

The post was named in honor of Corporal Joseph G. Rose, U.S. Army, 32nd Division, Company H, who was the first serviceman from Gustine to give his life in World War II. He was killed while on active duty May 29, 1943, on Attu, Aleutian Islands.

The post sponsors the Voice of Democracy Contest at three schools and places merchant flags on the streets of Gustine on holidays. They actively participate in community celebrations in Gustine and Newman and sponsor, with the Legion, a Veteran's Day program and Memorial Day services at Hills Ferry Cemetery.

Money raised from selling fireworks and corned beef and cabbage dinner, go to their various local programs and also to support the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Mich.

## Legion Auxiliary

The American Legion Auxiliary Unit 240 was chartered Aug. 10, 1926 with Fanny Jensen as the first president and Stella Bertelsen as secretary.

Each year the unit sponsors two girls to Girl's State; one from Gustine and one from Newman. They donate to local youth programs and to the San Luis Convalescent Hospital at Christmas time. Famous for selling "poppies," the money received supports numerous activities.

They participate in the Veteran's Day program and in the Memorial Day Services at Hills Ferry Cemetery, where they assist the VFW Auxiliary in decorating and placing crosses on the graves of Gustine veterans.

## VFW Auxiliary

The first meeting of the Joseph G. Rose Auxiliary to VFW Post 7635 was held April 25, 1947. The first president of the unit was Joseph G. Rose's sister, Irene Gomes. Other first officers were Senior Vice President Dorothy Koebel, Junior Vice President Grace Osburn, Secretary Helen Cole, Treasurer Madelyn Landon and Chaplain Mary Avila.

The members donate \$800 annually to the Cancer Society. They also sponsor, with the VFW, the Voice of Democracy contest and assist with the Memorial Day program. Their sale of Buddy Poppies each year benefits the relief fund, used to support the VFW National Home, California



VFW Hospital fund, Special Olympics and the Veteran's Hospital in Livermore.

Each year, on Memorial Day, the Auxiliary decorates and places 500 flags and crosses on veteran's graves at Hills Ferry. A corned beef and cabbage dinner, rummage sale and no-bake cake sale are the fund-raisers held to sponsor their many charitable activities.

### Frank F. Latta

California historian, Frank F. Latta, was born near the mouth of Orestimba Creek, west of Newman, Sept 18, 1892. He was the son of Cumberland Presbyterian minister, Eli C. Latta and Cottonwood school teacher Harmonia Campbell Latta. In 1899, his family moved 10 miles farther south to a home on the Garzas Creek near Gustine.

Latta was graduated from Occidental School. There was no high school in Gustine at that time, so he stayed home and farmed. Two days before his 21st birthday, Gustine Union High School was started and he enrolled. Latta would have graduated in three years, but attended school half time his third year and taught the remaining half. By taking special courses at the University of California, he became one of the few people ever credentialed in California to teach in the same high school where he was a student, before being actually graduated from high school. He taught drafting and physical education and assisted Principal C.R. Perrier in cataloging and organizing the high school library.

In 1919 while in the US Army, he married Jean Allen, the marriage producing four children. Following World War I, he went into the contracting business in Gustine. When the Gustine Volunteer Fire Department was reorganized in 1921, Frank Latta was elected chief.

In 1905, while attending Occidental School, his teacher, Edith Hollingsworth encouraged him to gather the history of the school district by interviewing the original settlers, many of whom were still living. This encouragement kindled in him the urge to continue gathering historical data and resulted in Frank Latta being the central valley's foremost historian. He gathered more than 17,000 stories of San Joaquin Valley pioneers. His combined book, newspaper and magazine articles totaled more than 3,000 publications.

At the time of his death in 1983, he was writing a book on the Newman-Gustine area called *Sky Farmers, Mule Skinners, Hay Muckers, Buckaroos and Bindle Stiffs*.

Latta's book was to have more than 500 pictures of the early West Side. It is hoped that the book will still be published.

*Handbook of Yokuts Indians, Dalton Gang Days, Saga of Rancho El Tejon, Tailholt Tales and Joaquin Murrieta and His Horse Gangs* are several of Frank Latta's books still in print.

### Jack Hazelwood

One of the most popular and respected pioneers of Gustine was John (Jack) T. Hazelwood. A



native of West Point, Texas, he came to the Gustine area in 1906 as a water tender for Miller & Lux. When Gustine began he entered into business with Jack Eddleman in a barbershop and pool hall. He also owned several other businesses in Gustine at one time or another including a clothing store and a service station.

It was due to his work in the field of law enforcement though, that Jack Hazelwood is most remembered. From the earliest days of Gustine, he served as night watchman, city marshal, constable, chief of police and justice of the peace. At the time of his death in 1960, he was a special Merced County deputy sheriff.

In 1912, while a constable, Jack Hazelwood met with a gun accident that resulted in the loss of his left hand and part of the forearm. This occurred while duck hunting at the Gustine Gun Club.

The Gustine Standard reported that, "When the news of his wretched mishap spread over the town and community, business was almost wholly suspended and the citizens gathered in groups eager to learn all the data possible. All were hoping that the wound was not so serious as a first reported. Constable Hazelwood hoped that his hand might be saved and that he would escape being maimed for life. The injury being in an important joint and the shot tearing it to pieces as it did, left no alternative but amputation. Hazelwood submitted to the knife like the fearless officer that he has proven to be. He is resting comfortably at the writing of this and being a young man with a splendid constitution he should make an early recovery."

Less than a month later, Jack was back on the job after an alleged horse thief.

A veteran of the Spanish American War and a member of the Romero Lodge of IOOF, Jack Hazelwood was elected as Gustine's first fire chief in 1910. He was a charter member of the Gustine Chamber of Commerce and was a leader in the effort to get a high school started in Gustine.

An ardent historian, he tried for many years to get a museum started in Gustine and a statue of Henry Miller placed in Henry Miller Park.

Jack Hazelwood will always be remembered as one of the most competent and respected law enforcement officers in this section of the valley and one of Gustine's most popular pioneer leaders.

#### Dr. "Gus"

Dr. Axel W. Gustafson came to Gustine in January of 1925 to assume the practice of Dr. C.E. Stagner. He stayed to practice medicine for over 25 years, during which time he came to embody all the qualities found in a true country doctor.

Born in Sweden in 1881, his family came to the United States when he was year old and settled in Marquette, Michigan. After graduating from high school, he entered college to study medicine

and received his degree from the University of Southern California in 1916 and then served during World War I. He interned at the San Joaquin County Hospital at French Camp and was resident physician there for two and one-half years before coming to Gustine.

Many warm, loving stories are told of Doctor "Gus," as he was affectionately known. Matthew Fantazia relates that he was born on May 6, 1925, on the day Dr. Gus was to marry his wife Erma. For the next 28 years he always received a card from the doctor and his wife on his birthday.

He was kept busy delivering babies. Isabelle Castro was the first child he delivered in Gustine and Adrienne Lawrence his last before his death.

Known as the doctor who made house calls, Inez Vierra Martin recalls, as a child being gravely ill with the flu. Dr. Gus made the 24-mile round trip to her home, twice a day, to visit her, making the second trip without being asked, because he was so worried.

Clarise Bonner Miller remembers the middle of a hot summer when she was living on the Miller ranch in the hills west of Gustine and her daughter kept running a high fever. Dr. Gus would drive into the hills to the ranch to see the little girl, saying at the door, "This isn't an official visit, this is just to visit." Fritz Hymiller relates that an office or home visit was \$1 and if the doctor came more than once a day it was still only \$1. A baby was delivered for \$25. If you had to see a specialist or another doctor, he took you in his own car from Gustine to wherever the other doctor was located. If he took you for a stay at a hospital, he would also pick you up and bring you home.

The author, who was delivered by Dr. Gus, remembers as a child, visits to his office. Pictures of Dionne quintuplets lined the walls. Mrs. Gustafson would often distribute candy to the children sitting on the wicker chairs in the waiting room. If you were a good little patient during his examination, Dr. Gus would reward you by taking you into his back yard and letting you see his pet chipmunks.

His love of children extended to the schools where for many years he served as school doctor. A statue in loving memory of Dr. Gus has been placed near the library of Gustine Elementary/Junior High School.

This kindly, sympathetic and unselfish man devoted his life to safeguarding the health of so many residents of Gustine. Quiet and unassuming, he brought them into the world, nursed them through all their illness and in many cases, made the last days of their loved ones happier because of his faithful attendance.

His friendly smile, his cherry greetings, his willingness to help on any occasion, earned him the respect of every man, woman and child who knew him.

Dr. A.W. Gustafson passed away on May 14, 1952 and was laid to rest in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles. His wife, Erma, wrote, "Strange, a little above him is a spot called 'Lullabye Land' where babies up to five years old are laid away, a lovely marble statue of angels watching over them. His heart and soul were always with little children.