



The Paper Column

by
Peter Huntoon

Marijuana and Oil: Roads to the Highs of California National Banking, 1880-1924



Figure 1. This \$20 Series of 1902 date back is the only reported note from The First National Bank of Maricopa. Photo from Heritage Auction Archives.

British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon oil well blowout in April 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico is claimed to be the worst oil spill into an ocean in history. It is estimated that 4.9 million barrels of oil escaped before the well was capped on July 15, 2010 after 86 harrowing days. A barrel of oil measures 42 gallons.

There was a far more voluminous blowout 100 years before in a developing oil patch in the southwestern corner of the San Joaquin Valley of California, midway between the towns of Maricopa and Taft. This well, named Lakeview #1, which blew out on March 15th, 1910, spewed an estimated 9 million barrels of oil onto the land surface during the next 544 days. It created a flood of oil that so severely glutted the market, the price of crude dipped to a third of its former price.

The resulting mess was in part responsible for the chartering of two short-lived national banks, one each in Maricopa and Taft. These banks were being organized as the oil was raining down across the landscape, and oil-drenched men were attempting to impound and collect as much of it as possible before it seeped into the ground, evaporated or flowed downstream into Buena Vista Lake at the terminus of the Kern River 8 miles away.

Lakeview #1 was situated on a known conjoined oil producing structure called the Midway-Sunset trend in what are called the West Side fields. There were oil seeps and asphalt deposits there that the Indians had used for millennia, which prospectors were beginning to seriously size up in 1889. At first, asphaltum was mined and processed into fuel oil and high grade asphalt.

The Sunset Railroad, a joint venture line from Bakersfield operated by the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads, arrived in Maricopa in 1904 to move the asphalt and oil. The Sunset Western Railroad was incorporated in 1908 to build a spur line into the Taft area.

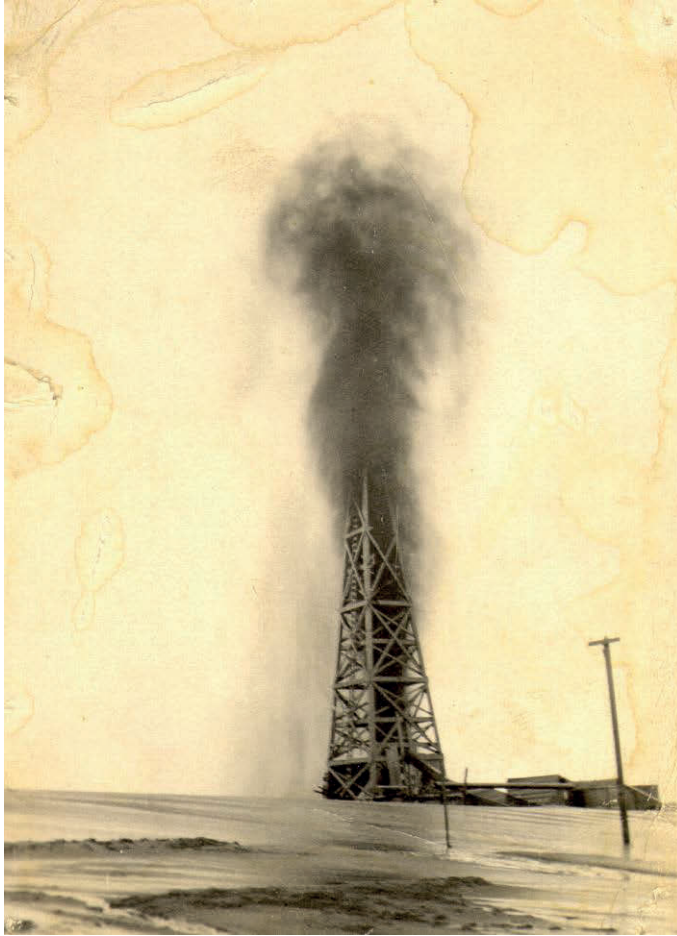


Figure 2. The Lakeview #1 gusher was the most productive well in the West Side oil fields of the San Joaquin Valley of California. The well blew out of control for 544 days, yielding about 9 million barrels of oil, much more than escaped from the British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon well in the Gulf of Mexico. The national banks in Taft and Maricopa owe their origins to the boom that came on the heels of this well. Photo courtesy of the West Kern Oil Museum, Taft.

In the meantime, several holes were drilled in the Midway in 1900, but were dusters. Finally in May 1901 a well was brought in near what would become Taft that produced over 4,000 barrels that year. The Midway Field along the north end of the Midway-Sunset trend by itself was producing a bit over 400,000 barrels of oil a year by 1908 and a boom was developing.

Taft was undergoing a metamorphosis. Originally it was called Siding No. 2 when the Sunset Western Railroad reached the locale on New Year's day 1909. The nearby settlement was known as Moro, but the railroad wouldn't accept Moro as the name for their siding because they didn't want it confused with Morro Bay on the coast. Their solution was to add an "n" and call the budding town Moron. Residents bridled at the name.

The Taft post office was established in Moron in April 1909, and named after President Taft by most accounts. The town of Taft was incorporated in late 1910, which eventually encompassed the siding, Moron and surrounding environs.

Maricopa, six and a half miles to the south-southeast, was incorporated in 1911.

Julius Fried, a grocer, chose the site for Lakeview #1 halfway between the towns after incorporating the Lakeview Oil Company on December 9, 1908 among friends. They spudded their well on the first of January, 1909, using traditional cable tool drilling technology. Progress was slow; the venture sorely underfunded. Months later at a depth of 1,655 feet, they sold a 51 percent interest in the well and the controlling interest in their company to Union Oil Company. Union's interest in the property turned on the fact that it was a convenient place for Union to build some oil storage tanks, but Union's interest in the well was less than enthusiastic.

The cable tool method employed a drill bit consisting of a long, solid, round, blunt piece of steel commonly 15 feet or so in length that was suspended from a cable that was run through a pulley at the top of a tall wooden derrick. A cam mechanism connected to the cable caused the heavy steel bit to rise and suddenly drop. The blunt end chipped away at the rock at the bottom of the hole.

Some 20 or so feet of water was maintained around the bit at the bottom of the hole so the rock chips could sluice upward out of the way as the bit dropped. The driller could feel an increasing tug on the cable as the water became saturated with chips.

When the tool became sluggish, he would withdraw the bit entirely from the well by winding the cable on a mechanical spool and lower a bailer to the bottom to pick up the cuttings. The bailer was a hollow pipe with a flapper valve on the bottom that allowed the water and cuttings to move into it, but only the

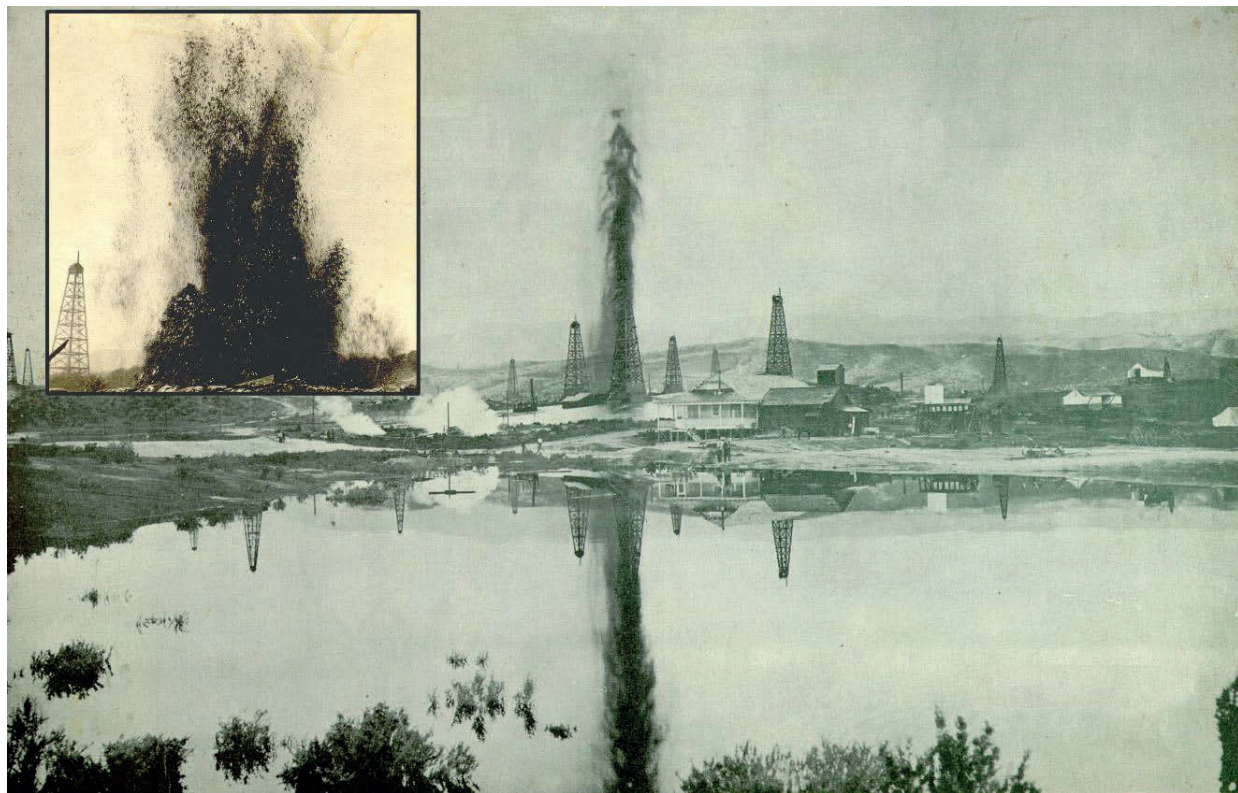


Figure 3. The Lakeview #1 gusher and its reflection off the lake of oil that was discharging from it. The inset shows the roiling oil in the pond created after they built a 25-foot high levee around the well in an attempt to try to bring the flow somewhat under control. Photo courtesy of the West Kern Oil Museum, Taft.

water to drain out as the bailer was lifted out of the hole. The bailer had to be tripped all the way in and out of the hole before the drill bit could be lowered back in so that drilling could recommence. It was a slow tedious process and just got worse the deeper the hole.

These were the early days of oil well drilling. The technology of lowering a long string of steel pipe into the upper part of the hole and pumping cement into the annulus between the outside of the pipe and wall rock to seal it into place had not yet come into practice. As that idea developed, innovative minds saw that a blowout preventer could be attached to the top of the pipe where it protruded above the ground, which could be used to contain the contents of the well should a high pressure zone be encountered.

Instead, in 1910, all you did was kept on drilling. If you did hit high pressure oil, the well simply blew as the oil burst to the surface as a gusher. Then everyone mobilized to collect as much of the oil as possible by whatever means they could. Such gushers were considered signs of success and although feared they were actually relished. No one was particularly concerned about adverse environmental impacts in those days.

The bailer got stuck in the Lakeview #1 hole at a depth of 2,225 feet on March 15th. Unbeknownst to anyone at the surface, the hole had begun to pass next to a highly over pressured productive sand unit only a few feet wide but over a mile long that crossed the trend of the Midway-Sunset field. Only a few feet of rock separated the hole from the over pressured zone, so the rock started to deform into the hole and pinned the bailer. No one had any idea that this was what was causing the bailer to stick.

An over pressured zone in oil parlance has a very precise meaning. Over pressure means that when the drill penetrates a fluid bearing zone, there is sufficient pressure on the fluid at that depth to cause the fluid to rise all the way to the land surface. In this case the fluid was oil mixed with gas, and the pressure on it was far in excess of that required for the oil to flow up the well bore to the surface. The Lakeview #1



Figure 4. View looking from Taft toward 25 Hill early during the oil boom. Photo courtesy of the West Kern Oil Museum, Taft.

well was tapping into a highly over pressured oil reservoir - the most dangerous kind there is.

According to Rintoul (1978) the Union production superintendent, Walter Barnhart, encouraged driller Roy McMahon at 8 pm to yank hard on the bailer with forceful up and down motions on his cable in an effort to unstick it. The hole had been drilling for 14 months now.

Suddenly, with a terrific roar, the bailer shot from the hole with such force that it crashed through the crown block on the top of the drilling derrick. A geyser of dark brown oil shot to heights of 200 feet. Men ran in every direction.

What had occurred was that the bailer had shot like a bullet 2,225 feet up the well bore and was launched into and hung up in the top of the derrick like a spear as it exited the well.

The immediate nightmare risk was fire. If the oil and gas coming out of the hole caught fire, it would be a major disaster with the first order of business to devise some technique for putting out the fire as it was fed by fuel from below. No fire developed, so the men regrouped and started to jury-rig means to capture the oil.

The initial flow was estimated at 18,000 barrels per day, enough to create a small torrent of oil as it rained down on the surroundings. Work focused on containing the oil. A 4-inch pipeline was built in just four hours to eight 55,000 gallon storage tanks two and a half miles away.

All the time this frantic activity was taking place, the flow from the well increased as the well bore eroded. It didn't take long before the gusher destroyed the derrick and sand coming up with the oil buried the engine house, nearby bunk houses and a coal shack.

Work began immediately to construct earthen dam reservoirs to capture the oil on the sloping land between the well and Buena Vista Lake. Sixty acres of ponds were scratched out using horse drawn scrapers, which were used to gouge out the sandy soil and pile it on levees during the ensuing weeks. Over 400 men were employed using horse teams brought in from as far away as 300 miles.

The oil initially overwhelmed the storage tanks. Eventually a pipeline was built to the west coast with a terminus at Avila south of San Luis Obispo. The oil from the Lakeview gusher accounted for a significant share of the oil in the pipeline.

It is estimate that 90,000 barrels per day were shooting from the well at its peak a month after it blew. Eventually a 25-foot high sandbag levee was built around the gusher to pond the oil so that maybe the depth of the oil in the pond would provide sufficient back pressure to retard the flow.

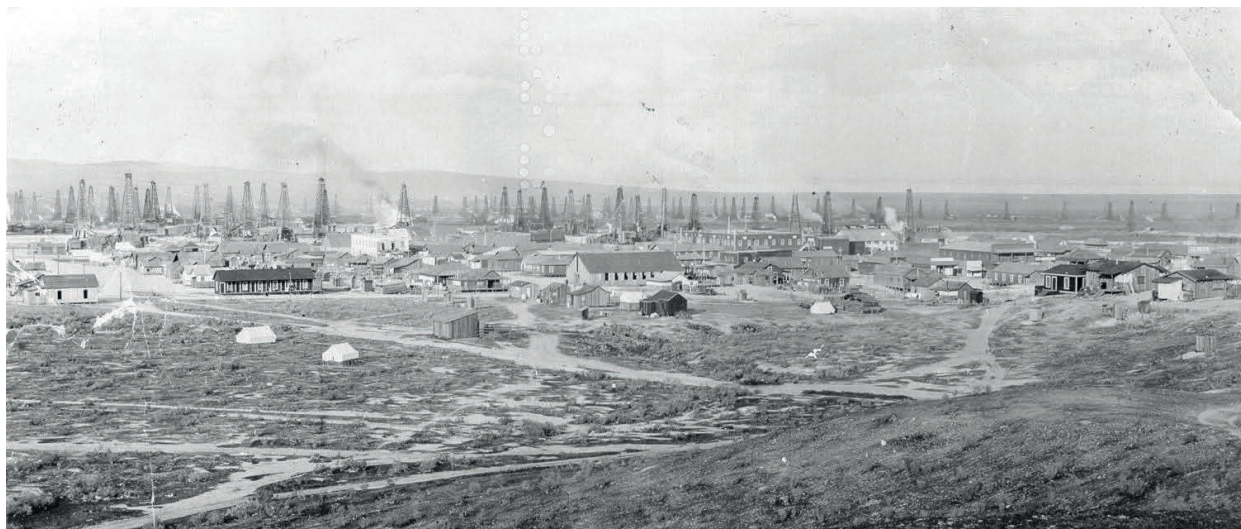


Figure 5. View looking northeastward across Maricopa, California, circa early 1920s. Photo courtesy of the West Kern Oil Museum, Taft.

The work was frightful because all labored under the spray from the geyser. Imagine coming home after a day's work out there completely drenched in oil so that the only thing people could see that wasn't black was the whites of your eyes. You would take off your clothes, put them in a barrel of distillates in your back yard and then wash yourself off from head to toe with distillates. Distillates are a mix of kerosene, gasoline, benzene, etc. Next you would take a bath, dry your clothes in the sun, run the clothes through a wringer washing machine to get as much of what remained out, and then tomorrow put them back on and go out for another 12-hour work day.

On windy days droplets of oil from the gusher spotted clothing hung out to dry 25 miles away.

Finally, on September 9, 1911, the pressure in the reservoir had depleted sufficiently that the well caved in and the flow ceased.

The Lakeview gusher was so productive that crude oil became a glut on the market. There was so much oil available, the price of crude so cheap; Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company built earthen lined ponds near Bakersfield to store the oil for the day when the price of crude would recover.

About 40 percent of the oil from Lakeview #1 was recovered. The rest was simply lost. The volume that was lost probably exceeded the volume that flowed into the ocean from the BP Deepwater Horizon well.

Of course what the Lakeview gusher did was fuel a drilling frenzy along the Midway-Sunset trend and major discoveries were made in pools north of Maricopa, north of Taft and in the vicinity of McKittrick. Other gushers were brought in, but none ever rivaled Lakeview #1.

For a time you could view 7,000 wooden derricks in big clusters dotting the 15 miles of barren sandy hills along the Midway-Sunset trend. All were laced together with pipes and storage tanks of every description. Other fields were being developed nearby to the north and east in the West Side district of the San Joaquin Valley as well.

The Midway-Sunset field still remains very productive with something on the order of half a billion barrels of reserves left to produce. If you go there today, you will see that the derricks are long gone, replaced by densely packed pump jacks for as far as you can see.

The Midway-Sunset trend has produced almost 3 billion barrels of oil, is the largest oil field in California, and currently ranks as the 9th largest field in the United States, including Alaska, based on proved reserves. The field is classified as a giant. It is a little recognized fact that California was the leading oil producer in the United States at the start of the 20th century, and the Lakeview gusher helped it maintain that vaunted position.

Figure 6. Ad from the Bakersfield City Directory showing the Producers Savings Bank building constructed in 1901 on the southwest corner of 19th and H streets, which also housed the interlocked First National Bank of Bakersfield organized that same year. Photo courtesy of the Kern County Library, Bakersfield.

Maricopa and Taft Get National Banks

The success of the Lakeview #1 gusher certified that there was big money to be made in the West Side Oil Fields, and that fact was a magnet for bankers.

In time, the Standard Oil Company of California (Chevron) made Taft its operational headquarters, employing as many as 6,000 people. Of course, Chevron was but one of several dozen oil companies that operated in the area, with Union Oil still being one of the biggest players. Clustered around both Taft and Maricopa were service companies that supplied everything imaginable to operate a giant oil field. It wasn't until the late 1960s that Chevron moved its accounting and finance offices to Concord, California, from Taft.

Two state chartered banks were organized in Taft in quick succession during March 1910; specifically, the Taft Branch of the Oil and Metals Bank of Los Angeles and The West Side Bank (Gianopoulos, 1998). The Oil and Metals branch opened April 21st; however, it was liquidated along with its Los Angeles parent in September 1911, so the owners could pursue other interests.

In the meantime The First National Banks of Maricopa and Taft were organized in early 1911, respectively holding national charters 9957 and 10088. The simultaneous arrival of the Maricopa and Taft national banks in 1911 was not a coincidence. The prime mover behind both was Clinton Edward Worden, at the time vice president of The Producers Savings Bank of Bakersfield, and its satellite The First National Bank of Bakersfield, charter 6044. At the time Clinton also was a vice president of both The First National Bank and interlocked First Federal Trust Company of San Francisco.

The First National Bank of Maricopa operated out of a brick building on the northeast corner of California and East Main in downtown Maricopa. California Street is California state

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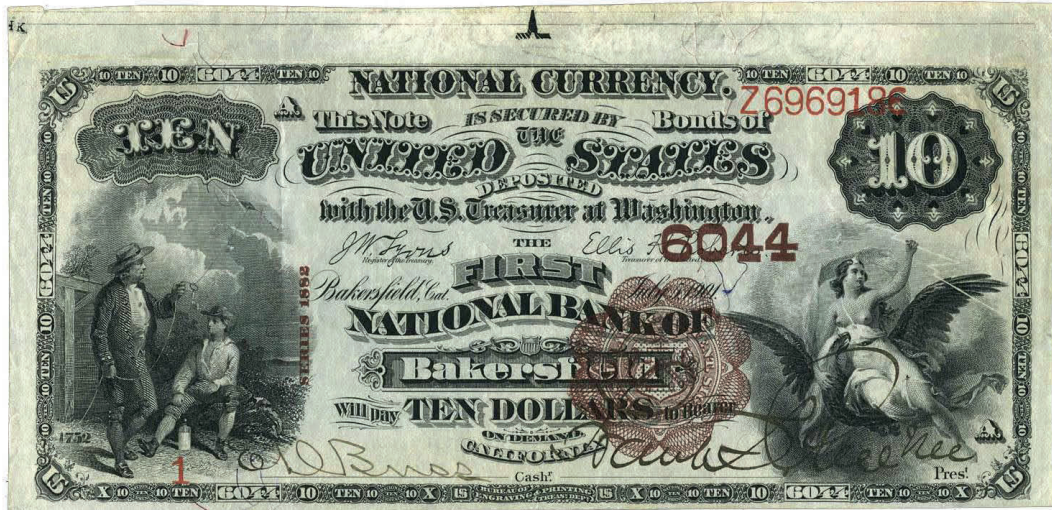


Figure 7. The First National Bank of Bakersfield was organized in 1901, and issued only Series of 1882 notes. Photo from Heritage Auction Archives.

highway 33 that leads north to Taft. Cashier N. Y. White was the operating officer of the bank during the entire time it was in business.

The First National Bank of Taft opened in the Oil and Metals Bank facility in the 300 block of Center Street within two weeks of the latter's closing. The officers of the First National then contracted for the construction of a substantial concrete building at 501 Center Street, and opened at that location on July 22, 1912. Clarence S. Crary served as cashier of the bank at the outset of its founding in 1911 and 1912, followed by C. D. Shirk who presided in that office until the bank was liquidated.

Clinton E. Worden

Worden's residence was in San Francisco, a mansion at 1155 California Street on Nob Hill across from the home of William Henry Crocker, president of The Crocker First National Bank of San Francisco. By the time Worden got involved in Maricopa and Taft, he already was well on his way to insinuating himself as an important player in California banking.

Worden had been a vice president in The First National Bank of Bakersfield from the time of its organization in 1901, and remained in that position until he was elevated to the presidency in 1913. His ownership position in The Producers Savings Bank, which was the older bank having been organized in 1892, also dated from 1901.

It is obvious that Worden was very self-possessed, self-confident, entrepreneurial and socially gifted. The latter allowing him to circulate among the wealthy and to form financial alliances with the elite to their mutual benefit. He was born in Michigan on January 9, 1858, and migrated to San Francisco to make his fortune.

His first enterprise was the Clinton E. Worden Company, a wholesale pharmaceutical firm established in 1881 at 214-220 Townsend Street. The firm appears to have dealt primarily in patent medicines, most notable being all sorts of cannabis indica products. Cannabis indica - a potent form of marijuana - was packaged with various compounds including strychnine, arsenic, zinc phosphide (rat poison), digitalis and ergot as cure-all's for all sorts of human ailments.

He is forever enshrined in precedent-setting trademark case law for having The California Fig Syrup Company sue him in 1897 for marketing a knockoff of their syrup-of-fig product, which was sold by both to ease digestive difficulties, foremost among them being constipation. This suit wound its way to the U. S. Supreme Court where in 1903 that court acknowledged that indeed Worden had infringed on the California Fig Syrup Company product, but no punitive damages were due California Fig Syrup Company because both medicines were fraudulent concoctions that had nothing to do with figs at all, but rather were made from senna, a potent laxative (Findlaw).

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| | | | |
|---|----|----|----|
| 160 Camphor, Opium and Tannin..... | 35 | 1 | 60 |
| Camphor, 1 gr Tannin, 2 gr | | | |
| Opium, 1-4 gr | | | |
| 161 Camphor, Valerian and Hyoscyamus..... | 35 | 1 | 60 |
| Camphor, 1 gr | | | |
| Powdered Valerian, 1-2 gr | | | |
| Extract Hyoscyamus, 1-2 gr | | | |
| 162 Cannabis Indica, Ext., 1-4 gr..... | 35 | 1 | 60 |
| 163 Cannabis Indica, Ext., 1-2 gr..... | 55 | 2 | 60 |
| 164 Cannabis Indica, Ext., 1 gr..... | 95 | 4 | 60 |
| 743 Strychnine sulphate, 1-20 gr..... | 20 | | 85 |
| 650 Strychnine Compound, No. 1..... | 65 | 3 | 10 |
| Strychnine, 1-20 gr | | | |
| Quinine Sulphate, 1 gr | | | |
| Arsenous Acid, 1-20 gr | | | |
| Iron by hydrogen, 1 gr | | | |
| 651 Strychnine Compound, No. 2..... | 45 | 2 | 10 |
| Strychnine, 1-100 gr | | | |
| Ext. Cannabis Indica, 1-16 gr | | | |
| Phosphorus, 1-100 gr | | | |
| Iron proto-carb., Val., 1 gr | | | |
| 697 Arsenic Sulphide, 1-60 gr..... | 20 | | 85 |
| 705 Iron, Strychnine and Arsenic..... | 50 | 2 | 35 |
| Iron by hydrogen, 2 gr | | | |
| Strychnine, 1-40 gr | | | |
| Arsenous Acid, 1-30 gr | | | |
| 318 Cannabis Indica, extract, 1-4 gr..... | 45 | 25 | .. |
| 319 Cannabis Indica, tincture, 1-2 minim. | 40 | 23 | .. |
| 320 Cannabis Indica, tincture, 1 minim. | 40 | 23 | .. |
| 321 Cannabis Indica, tincture, 2 minims. | 45 | 25 | .. |
| 322 Cannabis Indica, Arsenic and Iron... | 75 | 40 | 11 |
| Extract Indian Cannabis, 1-6 gr | | | |
| Arsenous acid, 1-60 gr | | | |
| Reduced Iron, 1 gr | | | |
| 323 Cannabis Indica, Digitalis and Iron.. | 80 | 43 | 11 |
| Extract Indian Cannabis, 1-6 gr | | | |
| Fluid Extract Digitalis, 1-2 minim. | | | |
| Reduced Iron, 2 gr | | | |

Figure 8. Entries in the 1899 Clinton E. Worden Company pharmaceutical catalog. Photo courtesy of Andrew Garrett, Museum of Reefer Madnes.

The Clinton E. Worden Company also got into a scrape with the Army over 7 million underweight quinine tablets shipped to the Philippines to protect troops against malaria. Hospital officials in Manila noticed that the pills were not having the desired effect on patients, which when analyzed were short 35 percent in quinine, the difference being made up with flour. Worden's lawyers pleaded that the weight problem was the result of loss of moisture between the time the pills were made and received in the islands; however, his firm was blacklisted from further military contracts in 1901 (Pharmaceutical Era, Jan 23, 1902).

It appears that he incorporated the pharmaceutical business as the National Pharmacy Company about the turn of the century, then sold out after the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906 (San Francisco Chronicle, Jul 24, 1924). This allowed him to immerse himself in banking, which would become a means to more easily compound his wealth. His knack for circulating among San Francisco's elite appears to have been propelling him in this direction for some time. He married Evelyn Amelia Towne on November 8, 1893, who was the widowed daughter of Alban Nelson Towne, general manager and 2nd vice president of The Central Pacific Railroad and president of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Towne died in 1896, but by then Worden set up what today would be called a venture capital company called the Clinton E. Worden and A. N. Towne Company.

He bought in as a vice president of both The First National Bank and interlocked First Federal Trust Company of San Francisco sometime after the turn of the century, at about the same time he emerged on the Bakersfield banking scene.

He also shows up as vice president of the Richland Belt Railway across the bay from San Francisco in January 1907, along with William S. Tevis who was its president. It is no surprise that Tevis was president of The Producers Savings and First National banks of Bakersfield. Tevis also was president of the powerful Kern County Land Company, a company organized by his father Lloyd who happened to have been

Figure 9. The First National Bank of Maricopa occupies the northeast corner of California and East Main. The abutting buildings were replaced by clouds in this vintage postcard view. Photo courtesy of Arri Jacob.



president of Well Fargo Bank and a founder of the Pony Express. Although Tevis' major financial interests were in the southern San Joaquin Valley, he too resided in San Francisco.

Worden's Banking Empire Expands

Worden organized The First National Bank of Richmond, charter 9734, on March 25, 1910, and then opened the Richmond Savings Bank in the same building on July 1, 1911. Clarence Crary, the same man who served as cashier of The First National Bank of Taft during 1911 and 1912, also was cashier of the two Richmond banks and probably had ownership interests in them as well as in the Taft bank.

Worden set himself up as president in the Richmond, Maricopa and Taft banks, but, of course, ceded operational control of each to appointed cashiers or other officers.

The Producers Savings Bank of Bakersfield, operating under a less restrictive state charter than The First National Bank, was the launching pad for his Maricopa and Taft ventures. He then organized a branch of the Producers Savings Bank at Wasco, a town northwest of Bakersfield in March, 1912. He was elevated to president of The Producers Savings and The First National banks the following year.

In 1915 Worden began first to consolidate and then eventually cash out of these enterprises. He



Figure 10. The sign for The First National Bank of Taft is being moved in 1911 down Center Street to the former quarters of the Oil and Metals Bank in the building on the left. Photo from Gianopulos (1998).



Figure 11. The interlocked First National Bank of Richmond and Richmond Savings Bank organized by Clinton E. Worden in 1911 occupied this building. Photo courtesy of Arri Jacob.

took advantage of California banking law, which allowed branch banking. The First National Bank of Maricopa was liquidated on April 15, 1915, and its business assumed as a branch of The Producers Savings Bank of Bakersfield. This was followed by the liquidation of The First National Bank of Taft on January 15, 1916, which also was established as a branch of The Producers Savings Bank.

Worden relinquished the presidency of The First National Bank of Richmond in 1917, but not his ownership interest in it. He stayed on as a director.

The charter for The First National Bank of Bakersfield came up for extension in 1919. Rather than extend the bank, Worden organized a new national bank on April 1, 1919 out of the corpus of The Producers Savings Bank, and called the new entity The Producers National Bank of Bakersfield. The new bank was awarded charter 11327.



Figure 12. This rare Richmond Series of 1902 date back note sports the printed signature of Clinton E. Worden. Photo courtesy of Andrew Woodruff.

Next, on May 15, 1919, Worden merged The First National Bank of Bakersfield into the new Producers National. He immediately renamed the consolidated bank The First National Bank. Of course, the old name now was operated under new charter 11327, charter 6044 having been relinquished in the merger. Worden served as the first president of the bank, but turned those reigns over to cashier W. E. Benz in 1920.

The Ardizzi-Olcese Bank, a private bank organized in East Bakersfield during 1918, was merged into the new First National Bank of Bakersfield in 1922, and made a branch of the latter. Worden's new



Figure 13. The private Ardizzi-Olcese Bank at the northeast corner of Baker and Jackson streets in East Bakersfield was merged into and made a branch of the new First National Bank of Bakersfield in 1922 as the final piece in Clinton E. Worden's southern San Joaquin bank empire. The building is a 99-Cent Store today. Photo courtesy of the Kern County Museum, Bakersfield.

First National Bank of Bakersfield bank now possessed branches in four prospering satellite communities in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Thus, Worden consolidated all of his San Joaquin banking interests into a single entity.

The big move came on May 3, 1922, when Worden sold the entire enterprise in one fell swoop to A. P. Giannini's Bank of Italy. The main office and various branches of the former First National Bank of Bakersfield became branches of the Bank of Italy. W. E. Benz and Louis V. Olcese were appointed vice presidents, each staying in the banks in which they had served previously, which was characteristic of such mergers.

Shortly thereafter, on October 7, 1922, Worden sold The First National Bank of Richmond and companion Richmond Savings Bank to The Mercantile Trust Company of San Francisco, where it became a branch of the latter.

At the end of 1922, at age 64, Worden had cashed out of his San Joaquin and Richmond banking interests a very wealthy man. He retained his vice presidencies and directorships in The First National Bank and First Federal Trust Company of San Francisco. Then he died July 23, 1924.



Figure 14. W. E. Benz, vice president and cashier of The First National Bank of Bakersfield, was elevated to the presidency in 1920, as Clinton E. Worden was consolidating his bank holdings in the southern San Joaquin Valley preparatory to selling them. Photo courtesy of Arri Jacob.



Figure 15. San Francisco banker Amadeo P. Giannini momentarily sated his appetite for banks by purchasing The First National Bank of Bakersfield and turning it and its branches into branches of the Bank of Italy in 1922. Wikipedia photo.

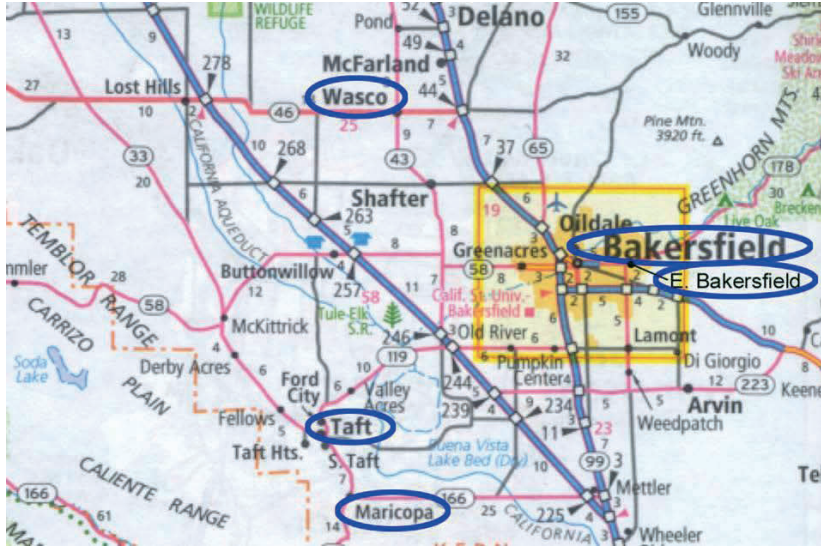


Figure 16. Map of the southern San Joaquin Valley showing towns containing Clinton E. Worden's First National Bank of Bakersfield and its branches in 1922.

period of only three years. Those from charter 6044 are more common, but consist entirely of Series of 1882 notes.

In contrast, the circulations of the Taft and Maricopa banks were mere pocket change. The Taft bank supported a circulation of a little over \$24,000 during its four-and-a-half-year life. Counting the redemption of worn notes, this circulation consumed a total of 1,648 sheets of 10-10-10-20 Series of 1902 date and plain backs during the five years the bank operated. None are reported.

The First National Bank of Maricopa was a minimally capitalized bank organized in compliance with the provisions of the Gold Standard Act of March 14, 1900. That act was famous for placing the nation on the gold standard and was the darling of eastern hard money interests who benefitted from a constrained money supply and high interest rates.



Figure 17. Note bearing Clifton E. Worden's signature as president from the second First National Bank of Bakersfield. Ultimately all of Worden's banks in the southern San Joaquin Valley were consolidated into this bank and then sold to A. P. Giannini's Bank of Italy in San Francisco, whereupon they were operated as branches of the Bank of Italy. Photo from Heritage Auction Archives.

For decades previous, populist western and southern Democrats had been rallying for what they called free banking. The tenet of the free banking movement was the perception that money was in short

The Bank of Italy went forward to be nationalized in 1927 as the Bank of Italy National Trust and Savings Association, later renamed the Bank of American National Trust and Savings Association in 1930.

National Bank Notes

From the perspective of national bank note issues, the two First National Banks of Bakersfield had respectable final circulations of \$150,000 (charter 6044) and \$400,000 (charter 11327). However, the Series of 1902 notes from charter 11327 are decidedly scarce with only a handful reported owing to the fact that they were issued for a



Figure 18. Proof of a \$10 Series of 1902 note issued by The First National Bank of Taft. No issued notes have been reported from this bank. Photo from the National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution.

supply in the developing regions such as the San Joaquin Valley, so growth and prosperity were artificially constrained. The populists, who were monetary inflationists, sought the unrestricted organization of banks, which they felt would infuse their towns with cash. This, in turn, would facilitate local and regional economic development.

Passage of the Gold Standard Act is attributed to Republican William McKinley's popularity following the successful execution of the Spanish-American War, which carried with it a treaty ceding the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guam to our jurisdiction. The act contained one major populist sop in order to buy Democrat's votes. It provided for the organization of national banks with capitals of \$25,000 in towns with fewer than 3,000 people, half the capitalization previously allowed.

Maricopa qualified, so The First National Bank initially was capitalized at \$25,000 with a bank note circulation of only \$6,250. The circulation increased to \$25,000 as the bank prospered and its officers increased the capitalization of the bank during its four year existence. Miraculously one note has been recorded from its issuance of 1,427 sheets of 10-10-10-20 Series of 1902 plain backs.

Incidental to this tale is The First National Bank of Richmond over on San Francisco bay. Note issues from that bank were modest supporting a circulation that grew from \$25,000 in 1911 to \$100,000 when the bank was liquidated in 1922. Only a handful of

Figure 19. 2010 view of the oil field on the Midway-Sunset trend north of Taft. Notice that Union Oil is still a major player in the field. Long gone are the wooden derricks, all having been replaced by electrically driven pump jacks.



Series of 1902 date and plain back notes have turned up from the bank making them as scarce as those from the second First National of Bakersfield.

Worden's acumen made a lot of money for him in his San Joaquin Valley and Richmond banks and in the process created rarities for national bank note collectors. Putting together a note from each of his banks definitely constitutes an uphill battle for anyone with the courage to try!

Postscript

Clinton E. Worden, the prime mover in this tale, left a trail of bread crumbs in the form of mentions in web sites devoted to marijuana, Supreme Court case law, social registers mostly centered around his wife, listings in bank and business directories, a couple of obituaries, and Oakland cemetery records. All of these simply marked his place at specific moments in time in specific endeavors. Nothing in his wake revealed anything about his personality other than what I have deduced above.

Worse, I could not locate a photograph of him, something surprising for a man of his stature. None accompanied the obituaries I found in the San Francisco and Oakland newspapers. Similarly no museum or library in California possesses an image, and believe me, I turned over every rock in the San Joaquin Valley and San Francisco area that I could to unearth one. I can only conclude that Mr. Worden was camera phobic!

After this article was written and laid out, fractional currency specialist Jerry Fochtman took it as a personal challenge to find one and located the newspaper photograph of Worden that appears here.

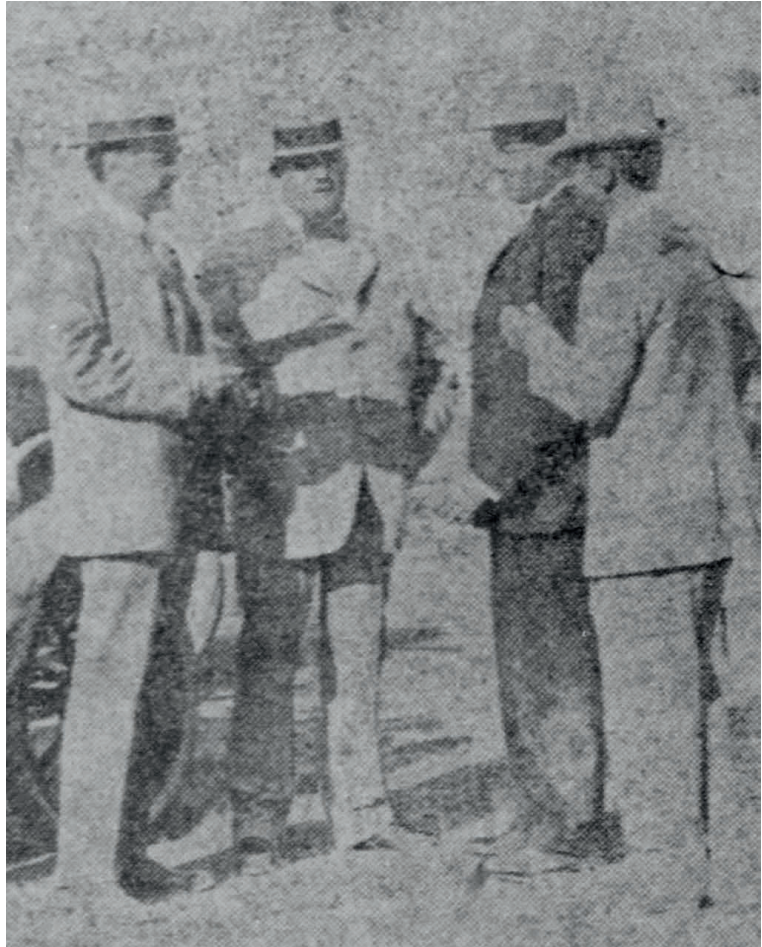


Figure 20. Grainy photograph of Clinton E. Worden, second from left, discussing the results of a 50-mile car race with officials of the Automobile Club of California, which sponsored the race. From The San Francisco Call, Sunday, July 7, 1907.

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Agnes Hardt, Sandra March and Jan McCall of the West Kern Oil Museum went out of their way to make my research visit to their museum as productive as possible. Jamie Yakes alerted me to the oil part of this story by bringing to my attention a brief historical note he found pertaining to the Lakeview #1 gusher in the Wall Street Journal that had been reprinted from a June 13, 2010 article by Steve Harvey in the Los Angeles Times. William Raymond drew my attention to Clinton Worden's connection to Bakersfield banking. Andrew Garrett, Museum of Reefer Madness, provided copies of the Clinton E. Worden Company pharmaceutical catalog. Arri Jacob supplied scans of two postcards illustrated here.

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