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ORANGE ORCHARD AND VINEYARD, NEAR FORTERVILLE.

Photos. by Roberts.

PORTERVILLE.

BY CHAS. AMADON MOODY

MARVELOUS as are the contributions which California has already made to the wealth—and the aggregate comfort and happiness—of the world, they are all but insignificant by comparison with those which are yet to come. That this is the safest of prophecies will appear almost at the outset of any inquiry into the subject, and the evidence become more convincing at every step. For even in those sections which have been longest settled and most fully developed—the two conditions, by the way, are by no means invariably coincident—the possibilities which remain commonly far exceed those already utilized. And as for the larger part



A PORTERVILLE BUSINESS STREET. Photo. by Roberts.

of the State, it is a conservative use of words to say that barely enough of its resources have been turned to account to faintly shadow forth what shall hereafter be.

To the elect many who know and love California these truths may seem so obvious as hardly to be worth recording. The apology for here stating them must be the peculiar force and convincingness of the evidence in their favor obtained from a study of the town whose name heads this article, and the territory tributary to it. For Porterville is one of the older communities of the State, prosperous, ambitious and far from unprogressive. The record of her material achievements is one of which her citizens are justly proud. Yet the number of those citizens might be increased tenfold and the

value of the annual product of the district multiplied by a much larger factor, still leaving abundant room for an even greater development. It is the purpose of this article to make clear how broad a field for individual effort is here offered, and how ample are the returns which may be reasonably expected.

Porterville is situated on the eastern edge of the San Joaquin Valley, just where it begins to rise into the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. To the north, south and west lies the nearly level floor of the great valley; a few minutes drive to the east takes one among the outposts of the snowy range. Right here the Tule river emerges from its long but lively course among the mountains to a more deliberate progress through the plain.

Quite apart from its picturesqueness, this position on the dividing line between sections of so widely different character has special ad-



A HOME AMONG THE ORANGE TREES.

vantage, not only in the inevitable modification of climatic and atmospheric conditions, but in the increased variety of the industries which center there. This will be manifest as we proceed.

Porterville is about 275 miles from San Francisco by rail; some 215 miles from Los Angeles. Fresno is 70 miles away to the north, while Bakersfield, with her rich tributary oil-fields, lies 55 miles to the south. A division of the Southern Pacific railroad passes through the town, and the service, so far as local requirements go, is reasonably satisfactory. None of the through trains between San Francisco and Los Angeles run by way of this division at present, but it is hoped that the management will soon see the commercial wisdom of making a change in this respect. Certainly there are many travelers who would prefer to break the monotony of the long ride through the level valley by this nearer approach to the superb mountain range. That the impressions of the fertility and varied re-



THE SIERRA NEVADA FROM PORTERVILLE.

sources of the foothill country which the passengers must gain would help somewhat to its rapid further development hardly needs an argument.

The citrus fruit industry is the one that naturally comes first in writing about Porterville. "Getting a living from the products of the soil" can hardly present itself in more attractive form than the ownership and cultivation of an orange or lemon orchard. Not only is a well kept orchard a thing of beauty through all the changing seasons, and a delight to the esthetic sense, but the money returns in favorable localities are larger from a given area, and (one season with another) more certain than from almost any other crop. The natural consequence is that laud known to be in every way adapted for citrus fruit culture is worth the very highest price—and is a satisfactory investment, even at figures that startle those not acquainted with the facts.

Now, since by far the greater part of the orange and lemon crop of California is produced south of the Tehachapi, it will be a surprise to many to

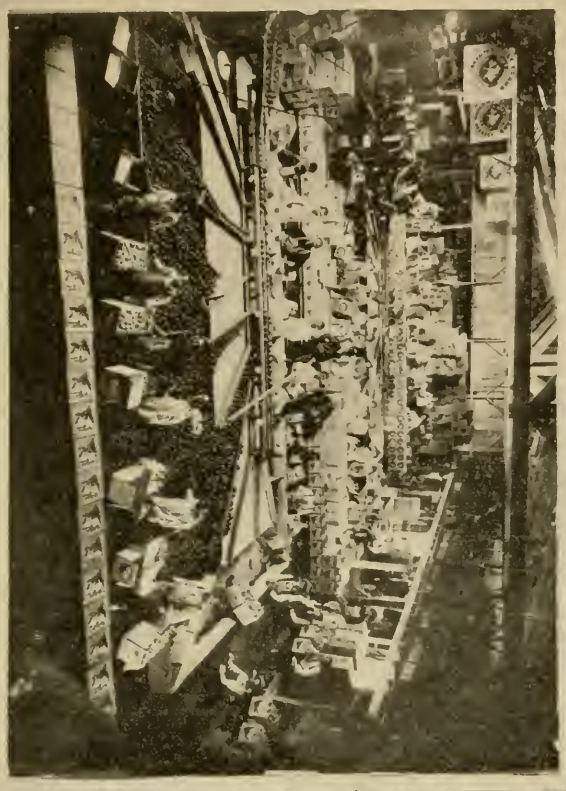
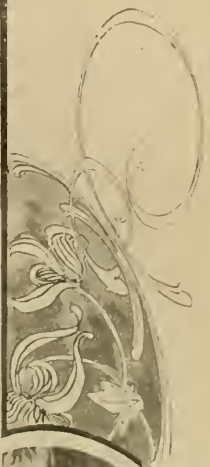
learn that a considerable area of as choice citrus land as any in the State is immediately adjacent to Porterville. Indeed, there are some points in which this section has a very decided advantage over the most famous orange-growing districts of Southern California. Time was—and not long since—when such a statement would have been met with more or less polite incredulity, and a stock jest concerning a shipment of oranges from the territory in question was, “Where did they buy them?” The point of the joke was obvious enough in 1893, when the shipments of citrus fruits from Porterville were but seven carloads; it is effectually dulled this season by the shipment of three hundred and fifteen carloads from this point alone.

The citrus lands of the Porterville district lie for the most part either on the gentle slopes leading up to the foothills or in the protected valleys opening widely for miles back among the hills. The soil is generally of great depth, and of such fertility that even in the older orchards the use of fertilizers has been very slight. Nor has this been at the expense of the trees, as their strong growth and continuously profuse yield fully proves. The Tule river furnishes irrigating water to the land “under the ditch,” which includes most of the orchards. But “dry years” have been as profitable to Porterville as to other communities which were put to the inquiry as to whether water could not be obtained from beneath the surface of the ground to offset the scarcity on the surface. The result here has been not only the development of water to supply every present requirement, but the proof that over many square miles an inexhaustible body of water will be struck almost anywhere at a depth of from sixty to one hundred feet. This not only removes any possible danger of failure of the water supply, but widely extends the area adapted to citrus fruits and other crops requiring irrigation.

One of the great advantages enjoyed by Porterville orange-growers is the early date at which the fruit matures, enabling the bulk of the crop to reach the market long before shipments begin to arrive in quantity from elsewhere. This season, for example, the first carload of oranges—sweet, well colored and highly flavored—left Porterville October 30th, while practically the entire crop had been shipped December 15th. This early maturity is easily enough accounted for by the higher average summer temperature, the nights in particular being warmer than in other orange-growing sections.

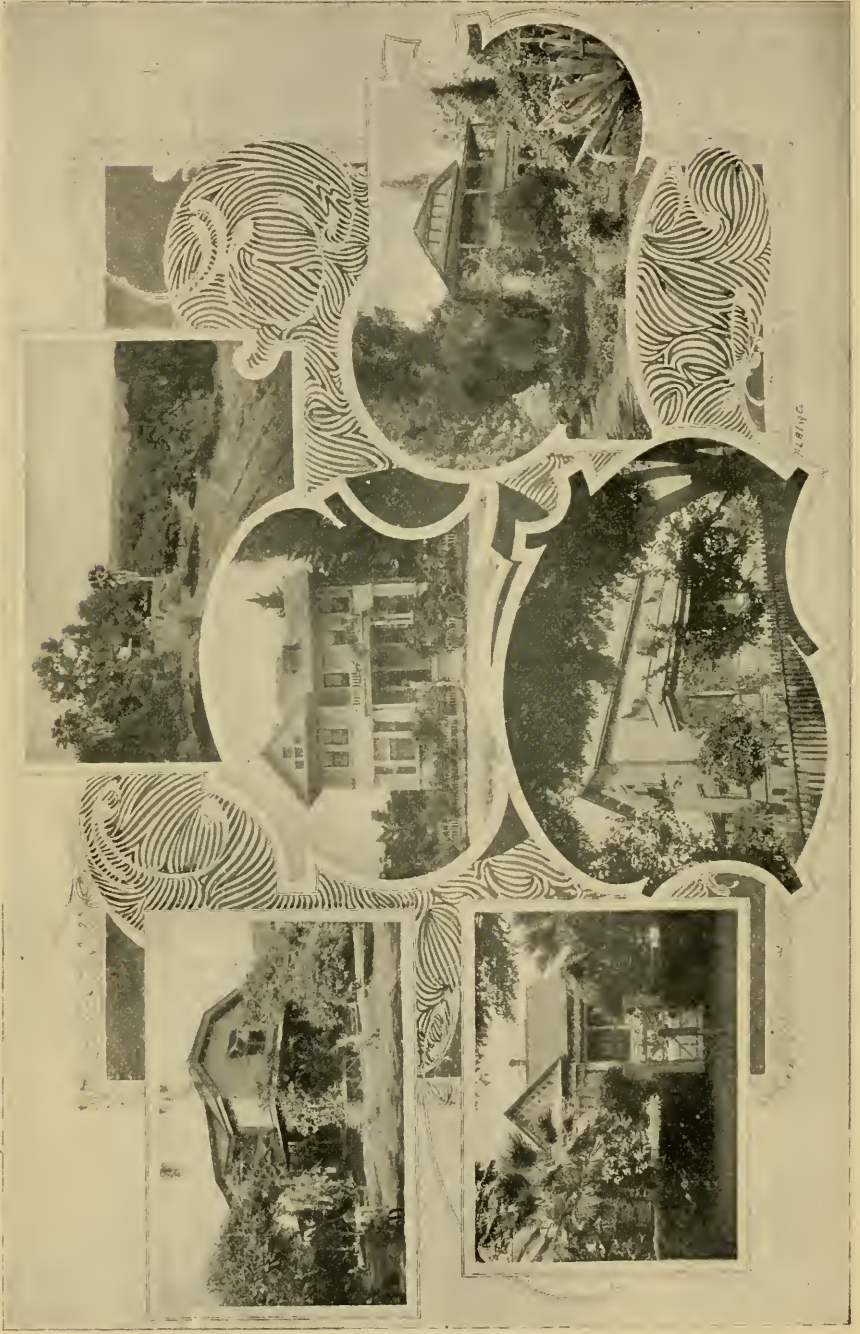
As to the quality of Porterville oranges and lemons, the long array of prizes taken at fairs and exhibitions for many successive years and in competition with fruit from every citrus-growing district in the State, form a sufficiently conclusive array of evidence.

With all these points to encourage the raising of citrus fruits, it would be natural to expect that most of the suitable land would be already utilized for that purpose, and that what was left would be held for at least as high prices as rule elsewhere. The facts are quite otherwise. The total area of the citrus orchards in the territory strictly tributary to Porterville is not far from 1200 acres—certainly



WHERE PORTERVILLE ORANGES GROW—AND WHERE THEY ARE PACKED.

Photos. by Roberts.



SOME PORTERVILLE HOMES.

Photos. by Roberts.

does not exceed 1400. How many thousands of acres every whit as well adapted for the purpose are now turned to vastly less profitable uses cannot, of course, be stated precisely, but the figure is certainly a large one.

And these lands can be bought for only a fractional part of the price freely paid for similar property elsewhere. As good orange land as any in the State, under the ditch and with full water-right, can be had for from \$75 to \$100 per acre. Land as good in every other respect, but "above the ditch" may be had at half these prices, even when near-by tests have demonstrated the reasonable certainty of developing plenty of water at small cost.

As an illustration of the wealth which is created in the process of establishing orange groves upon such land there may be named a



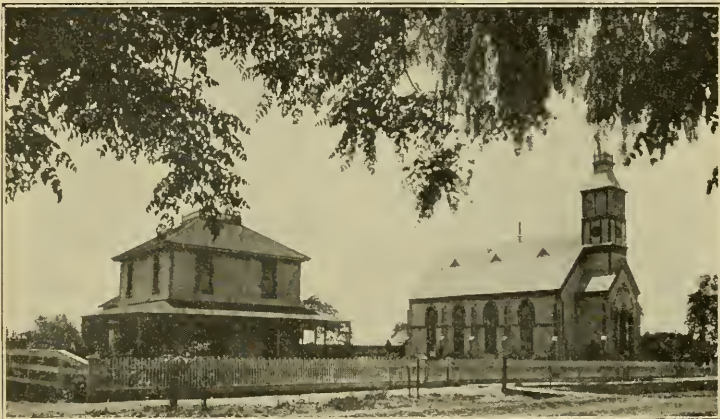
WHERE WAYFARERS FIND WELCOME.

single five acres of five-year-old orange trees near Porterville, the crop from which this season sold on the trees for \$1,000. This is, of course, an exceptionally favorable result, and is not quoted as a specimen of what might usually be expected. The ordinary returns, however, are quite large enough to make the first cost of the land appear insignificant compared with its value when so improved.

If the acreage of choice citrus lands about Porterville is large, that peculiarly adapted to deciduous fruits is larger still, and an even greater proportion of it remains undeveloped. On the rich, loamy bottom-lands, the peach, apricot, plum, prune, nectarine, pear and fig flourish and bear bountifully. The same climatic conditions

which bring Porterville oranges to marketable condition ahead of those from most other sections promote both early maturity and choice quality in deciduous fruits. Yet up to this time hardly more attention has been paid to this branch of horticulture than enough to prove the possibilities. The sufficient character of the proof may be indicated by referring to one orchard of 160 acres, nearly all prunes, the crop from which sold in 1899 for more than \$15,000. The returns from another orchard of the same size, close by, set to peaches, apricots, plums and prunes, amounted to about \$6,000 for the same year. At suitable elevations in the mountain valleys, apples find a congenial home.

Altogether, it is probable that the area devoted to deciduous fruits in the Porterville district will increase many-fold within a few years. These have a distinct advantage over citrus fruits for persons of limit-



ONE OF THE CHURCHES.

ed capital in the lower price of suitable land, the smaller cost of planting and cultivation, the lessened need of irrigation and the shorter time required for bringing them into bearing.

Viticulture, too, tested as yet only on a small scale, gives promise of becoming an important industry. Broad stretches of level country offer just the soils which the vine most loves; the absence of chilly nights and the steady heat of the summer sun, almost unbroken by clouds or fog, hasten the ripening of the grape even while they increase the percentage of sugar in it; and September—the raisin-drying month—is almost absolutely free from dew, to say nothing of rain, enabling the curing to be completed in the shortest possible time and at the smallest cost.

So much space has been given to the subject of fruit-raising because the opportunities for successful enterprise along that line seem broadest and most varied. As has been already intimated, this in-

dustry is here only in its infancy—lusty and thriving to be sure—but, as one earnest gentleman puts it, “with most of its future in front of it.” Two more primitive, but often highly profitable, occupations—wheat-farming and stock-raising—have in the past played the major parts. And so far are they from being “played out,” that conditions in them were never more favorable than in this present year of grace. Immediately tributary to Porterville are approximately 180,000 acres of grain-fields, mainly devoted to wheat. There are those who find the dead-level of great wheat fields monotonous, but one might travel far and be well repaid by the sight of mile after mile set close with the sturdy green blades, framed and spangled with



AND A SCHOOLHOUSE.

such torrents of wild flowers as are seen nowhere but in California. Nor does it detract from the beauty of the scene to know that (present favorable conditions holding) the wheat crop of the district this year will probably sell in the primary market for something like \$3,000,000.

The country about Porterville has always been particularly favorable for stock-raising—its earliest use. The variety and luxuriant growth of wild grasses and grains give early and long-continued green pasturage, the grazing season being still further extended by the proximity of mountain and plain, with their differing conditions. During the long, dry season the uncut grass cures to a natural hay, which gives ample nourishment till the winter rains again cover the



JUST A BITE OF HAY.

fields with grass. But even here, the rapidly extending culture of alfalfa promises to greatly extend the business and improve its condition. For while the average requirement of native pasture land for cattle is from ten to fifteen acres to the head, a single acre of alfalfa will abundantly feed three or four head during nine months of the year, and a small additional area will furnish hay to carry them through the remaining three months.

The same factor, too, has given a filip to the comparatively neglected dairying industry, which now offers excellent opportunities. A creamery has lately been built near the town, and is already doing a considerable business, with both facilities for and expectations of a rapid increase.

Manufacturing has made but slight progress in Porterville, the excellently equipped flouring mill, with a daily capacity of sixty barrels, being its most important representative. A smelter is now being built at the edge of the town to convert into commercial products an extensive and valuable deposit of magnesite, long known to exist, but only now coming into use. Available water power, crude oil for fuel at near-by points, and the electric energy supplied at reasonable rate by the Mt. Whitney Company, offer a choice of motive power for further development in this direction.

The mineral resources in the vicinity of Porterville have been barely nibbled at. Some attention has been paid to gold mining, both placer and quartz, for many years, but not on a considerable scale. There are evidences of an important body of copper ore, some twenty miles back in the mountains, and it is reported that this will soon be thoroughly exploited. The proved oil belt is extending



WITH FLOCKS AND HERDS.

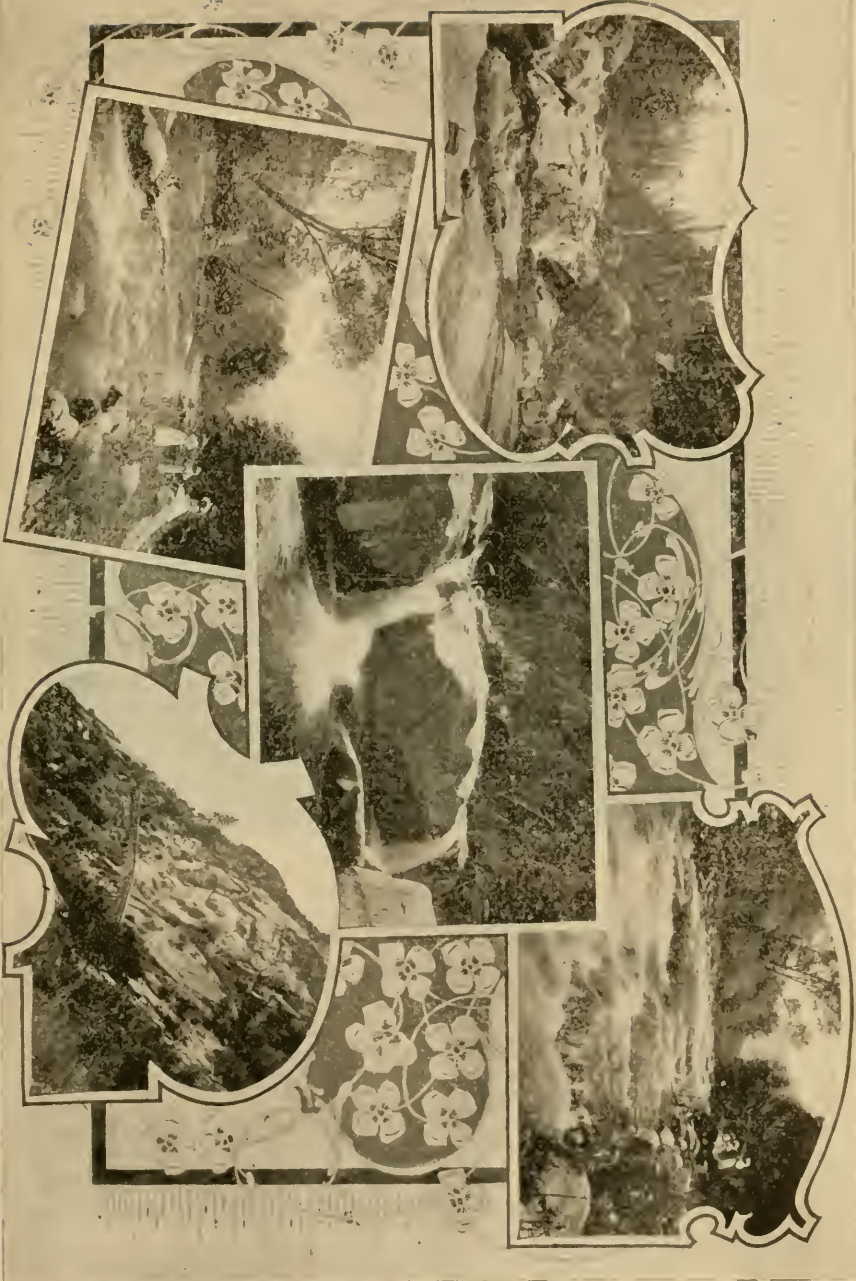
steadily nearer to Porterville, and the meaning of favorable indications which may bring it still closer is about to be carefully tested.

The rugged and broken mountain country which commences almost at the doors of Porterville, and stretches for mile after mile, growing even wilder and more precipitous, right up to the loftiest and most imposing peaks of the Sierra Nevada, have been only slightly "prospected" in search of minerals. That they will disclose stores of such wealth is probable enough. But no discoveries of that nature can possibly compare in importance with the value of that mighty barrier to the dwellers on the plain. It is the storehouse in which the snow and rain of winter are conserved for thirsty summer days. From its forests of redwood and pine and oak come the cooling, spicy breezes that freshen and vivify the heated air of the valley.

The sportsman can find there deer and bear and other game aplenty; the streams are well stocked with trout; while if any better places have been discovered in which one who is weary of well-doing may just "loaf and invite his soul," the fact is not of record in the office of any county clerk. There are medicinal springs whose virtues rival those of many a far-famed resort; there are hot springs, at whose touch rheumatism and kindred ailments hasten away; and innumerable cold springs with no virtue at all except the incomparable one of supplying bountifully just clear, pure water. There are great groves of the Giant Sequoia, and forests of the stately sugar pine, and sheltered grassy slopes where alpine flowers run riot.



AMONG THE FOREST GIANTS.



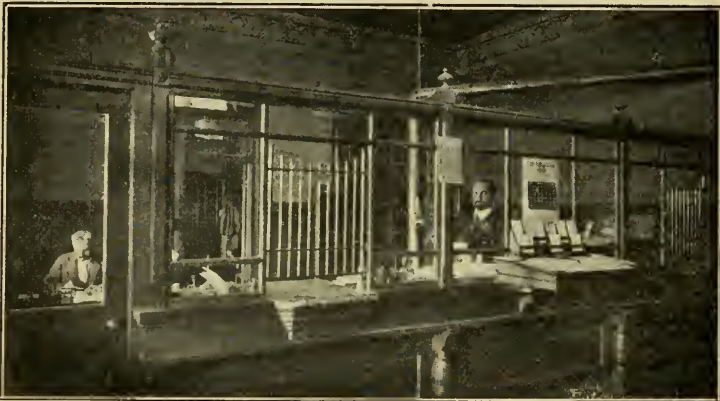
"WHERE SUMMER BREEZES DWELL,"

Photos, by Roberts,

But there is no need of cataloguing the myriad fascinations of the mountains. The point to be made here is that one day's easy ride from the fertile lands, described in these lines, brings one into the heart of them. If summer heat is found uncomfortable, therefore—dangerous or unbearable it never is—the way of escape is an easy one.

The purpose of this article has been to indicate, as accurately as may be and erring, if at all, on the side of conservatism, the present resources and probable line of development of the Porterville district. No doubt can remain in the mind of anyone who will take the pains to investigate the facts that it is one of the most promising sections even of regal California.

The town of Porterville itself does not differ greatly from other well ordered and progressive communities of its size. One need not insist upon its churches, its schools, its fraternal organizations, its



“ITS PROSPEROUS BANK.”

volunteer fire department, its comfortable hotel, its prosperous bank, its charming homes, or its well stocked business houses. These are there, of course. Nor need one dwell longer upon the endless charms and healthfulness of California's climate than to say that Porterville has its fair share.

The point which it is desired to press home is that there is need of and opportunity for both men and capital—the quality of the men being of more importance than the quantity of the capital—to cooperate in developing the resources, and in doing so to win prosperity, while all the time surrounded by delightful conditions of living. If any reader wishes more detailed information, it can be obtained by addressing the Secretary of the Board of Trade, Porterville, Tulare county, California.

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