



Museum Matters

Inside this issue:

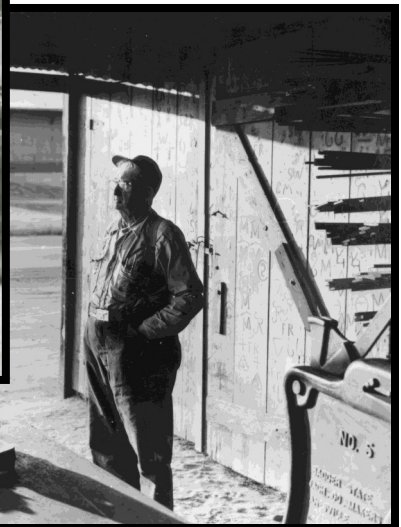
- Noteworthy 1
- From the Collection 2
- Historical Highlights 3
- Super Sleuths 4
- Curator's Corner 4

**Noteworthy:**

We are very excited to announce that our next large restoration project will be our blacksmith shop in the pioneer village! We are honored to be working with the Witt family to complete this long overdue preservation of history. The Museum has worked together with the Tulare County Historical Society for two years to raise funds for this project, so we are happy to know we can now begin the process of restoration.

The blacksmith shop was first established by Charles Hockett in 1907 in the Ducor area. Cliff Witt took over the shop after Hockett and worked there for many years. Mr. Witt was well known for his artistry in making branding irons for cattlemen of the valley.

The brand boards in the Gun Room display case inside the museum were taken from the front of the building. Donald M. Witt (2/4/1907 - 8/31/1969) passed away and his widow gave the building and much of the equipment to the museum.



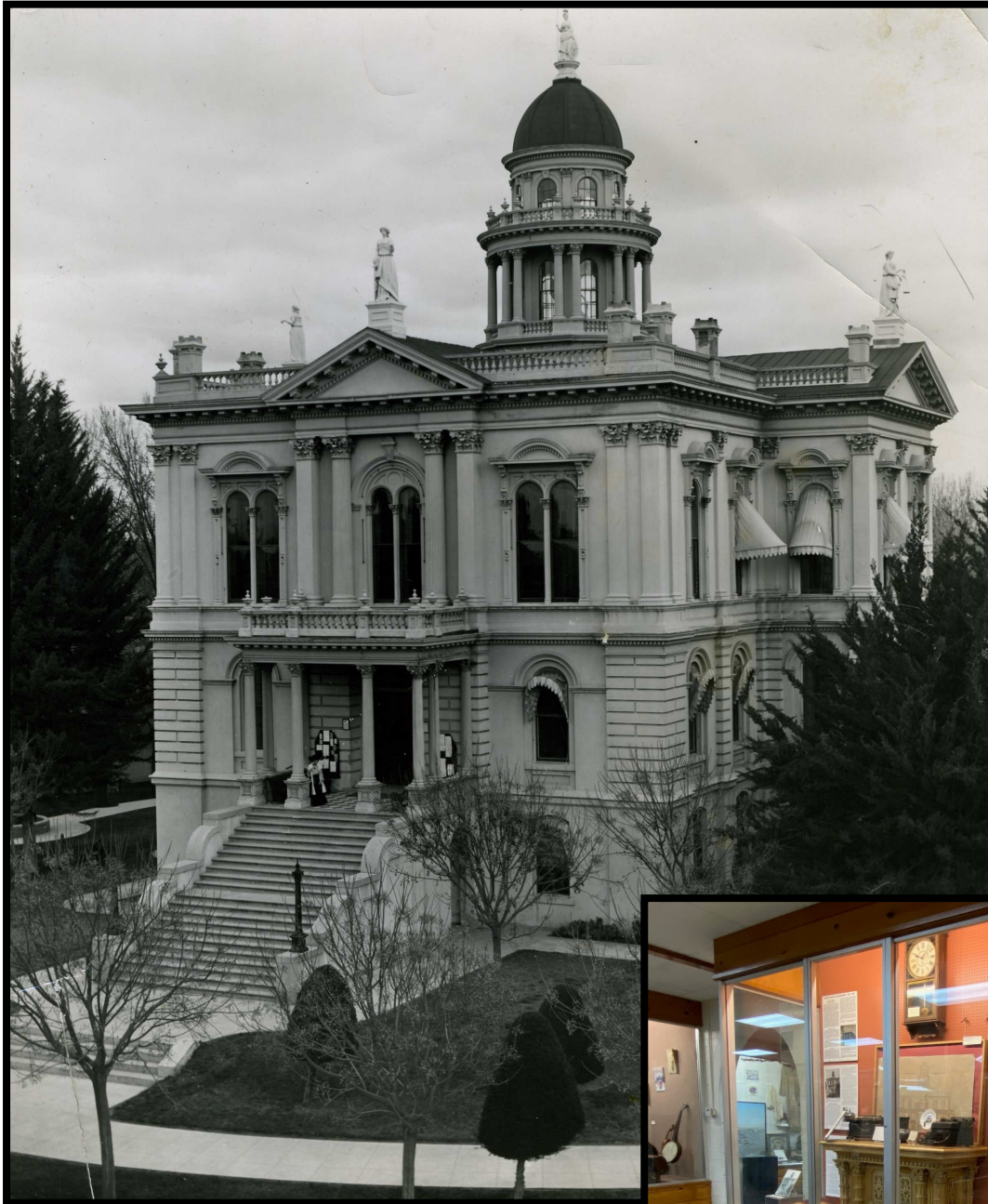
Above: Cliff Witt working in his blacksmith shop

Right: Cliff Witt in front of his blacksmith shop



## **From the Collection:**

Minerva, the Roman Goddess of Wisdom and Justice, stands tall in our West Wing just as graceful as she appeared on the highest dome of the Tulare County Courthouse that was once located on the corner of Oak and Bridge streets in downtown Visalia. This redwood statue of Minerva is the only remaining part of the early building. An earthquake during the summer of 1952 brought about the condemnation of the courthouse just over seventy-six years after the laying of its cornerstone on October 18, 1876.





## Historical Highlights:

We will be installing a new exhibit in our Military display highlighting the history around Camp Babbit. A special thank you goes out to Ron Vaughan for providing additional history and photos for the exhibit.

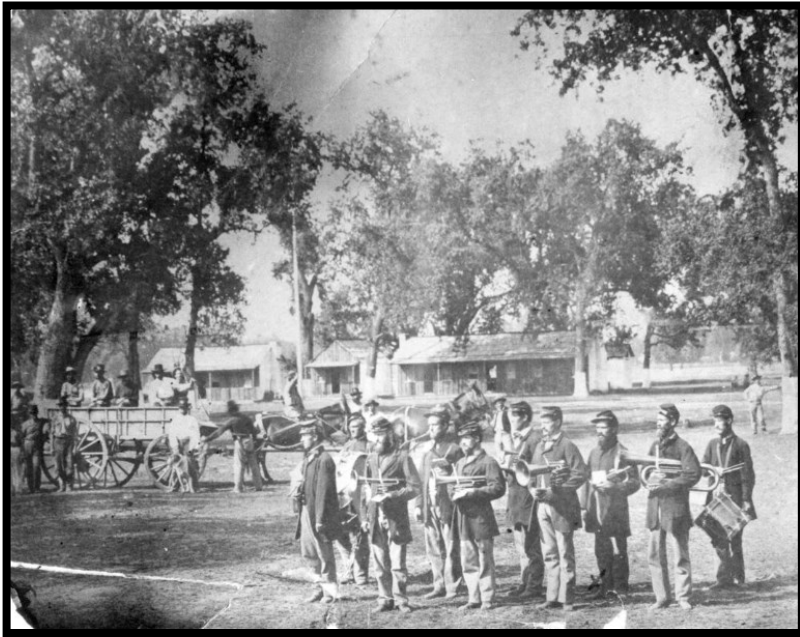


Photo courtesy Tulare County Library

of Southern sympathizers in the area.

More men from Company D soon arrived at Camp Babbit as well as troops from Company I, with about 300 men total at the peak of its occupation.

Although no outright revolts occurred, several incidents did increase tensions in the town.

On March 5, 1863, soldiers broke into and destroyed the office of pro-Confederacy newspaper *Equal Rights Expositor*. The paper had been publishing defamatory statements about both the soldiers stationed at Camp Babbit and President Lincoln as well as inflaming secessionist sentiments.

In August of the same year Sergeant Stroble of Company I was shot and killed by James Wells during a conflict with a group of pro-secessionists. Wells was able to flee to Mexico before he could be apprehended.

Camp Babbit was closed in September of 1866 after the troops were mustered out.

Compiled by: Savannah Navarro, Museum Assistant

In October of 1862, roughly 10 years after Visalia's founding and one year after the start of the American Civil War, a garrison of approximately 60 men from Company D of the 2<sup>nd</sup> California Volunteer Cavalry arrived in the town under command of Lt. Col. George S. Evans to establish Camp Babbit. The establishment of the camp was determined to be necessary to prevent an uprising due to a high number

### CALIFORNIA FIFTY YEARS AGO

Here is some more interesting news of fifty years ago from the Grizzly Bear:

#### Visalia Newspaper is Wrecked.

The siege of Vicksburg continued to be the main point of interest in the Civil war. Nothing of importance was doing elsewhere, but war influences were creating scenes and events of local interest in this state.

E. J. C. Kewen, a member of the assembly from Los Angeles county, introduced a set of resolutions which were intended to declare the efforts on the part of the administration, to subdue the rebellion, a failure. This brought forth the wrath of the Union men. Assemblyman Thos. Fitch, from El Dorado, had asked the appointment of a committee to investigate the disloyal position of Col. Kewen. These, and other similar occurrences, had a tendency to excite the people to passion and a determination to suppress disloyal utterances was the result.

At Visalia, on March 5th, a large detachment of soldiers who were located at Camp Babbit, near that town, gathered in front of the office of a newspaper called "The State Rights Expositor" and wrecked it, by breaking the press, smashing the furniture and knocking the type into pi. The paper was published by L. P. Hall who, under the cognomen of "Long Primer" Hall, became notorious on account of his secession sentiments throughout the Pacific Coast.

On the afternoon of March 31st a young man named Burnett, on horseback, dashed down Main street, in Red Bluff, waving a secession flag and hurrahing for Jeff Davis. At the end of the street he turned to make a dash back, but a big crowd had gathered and a citizen named Powell commenced shooting at him, which brought him to a stop. While many were shouting "Hang him!" and others went after ropes, some of the cooler heads hustled Burnett into the jail, close by, and saved him from summary punishment. He stated that he expected about twenty others to join him in his ride, but they evidently had "cold feet." Burnett was taken to Camp Union, Sacramento, by Lieutenant Heath, tried by a court martial, and sentenced to hard labor at Fort Alcatraz until the end of the war.

lake. It resulted in the killing of sixteen Indians and the severe wounding of Corporal McKenna. A determined effort was to be made to put an end to the trouble in this section, by exterminating every buck that was wearing war paint, and a hunt for their scalps was begun in a systematic manner.

On March 11th Thos. M. Heston and Dr. J. A. Roberts, prominent citizens of Visalia, quarreled and fought a street duel. Heston fired seven shots and Dr. Roberts six shots. Dr. Roberts was struck twice and died in a few hours. Heston was unharmed, but narrowly escaped.

At El Dorado, Calaveras county, on March 15th, J. Matthews and Charles Skinner quarreled over the possession of a Confederate states flag which Skinner had hung upon a saloon wall and Matthews had taken down. Both drew bowie knives and cut and slashed each other until they fell frightfully wounded and were expected to die.

### MAY EXPECT STORMS UP TO MID-APRIL

Father Ricard of Santa Clara College  
Bases His Statements on  
Sun Spots.

SANTA CLARA, March 29.—Dangerous storms, accompanied by a fair amount of rain may be expected on the Pacific Coast up to mid-April, according to the observations of Father Ricard of Santa Clara observatory. He makes his deductions from the sun spots and calls attention to his previous forecast, which covered the last storm. "Like a transcontinental train," he says, "they have run on time."

The forecast follows:

By the northern spots, our next storms will appear March 26 to 30 (already on the coast), April 1 to 4, 8 to 11, 15 to 17, 21 to 24, 27 to 30, May 4 to 7, 11 to 14, 17 to 20, 24 to 27, June 1 to 4.

By the southern we get March 24 to 29, April 1 to 4, 7 to 11, 14 to 18,

Modesto Morning Herald Sun—March 30, 1913





## Super Sleuths Needed!

We are unsure of when this photo was taken. Please let us know if you recognize any of the people in this photo or if you know what school this class attended. If you can help us out, please email Amy at the address below.

Find us on the web:

[tularecountymuseum.org](http://tularecountymuseum.org)

Call us: (559) 624-7326

Email Amy: [aking1@tularecounty.ca.gov](mailto:aking1@tularecounty.ca.gov)

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## Curator's Corner

Hello history heroes,

We have had a very full year to be thankful for as we look back on 2023 here at the Museum. Thank you to everyone who was able to visit and support our efforts this year to hold events, create new exhibits, and host school groups. In the new year we are looking forward to officially opening our new building that holds our restored ag equipment, beginning work on the restoration of our Blacksmith shop, and opening a new cultural exhibit highlighting the Southeast Asian community in Tulare County. We wish everyone a Happy Holiday season and look forward to seeing you at the Museum in 2024!

~Amy King-Sunderson