

**Overview of
“Davisville 1905: The Year the Town Woke Up”
An exhibit by John Lofland and Jim Becket**

note by John Lofland

This pdf overview consists of six photographs, one each of the six panels that made up the exhibit “Davisville 1905: The Year the Town Woke Up.”

The six photos were taken for the purpose of simply showing where each of the 74 placards should be placed rather than to convey the details found on each sheet. Instead, the details are provided in each of the 16 pdf files that follow this one.

The 16 topics of the exhibit are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. What This Exhibit is About | 9. The Commission Visits Yolo Co. |
| 2. Peter Shields’ State Farm Passion | 10. The Campaign, May-December |
| 3. The State Farm Bill | 11. The Women’s Improvement Club |
| 4. George W. Pierce’s Passion | 12. The Chief Booster: Scott |
| 5. Martin Sparks & Pierce | 13. The Decision Drags On |
| 6. March 30: Davisville Stirs | 14. Selection Commission Punts |
| 7. The State Farm Promotion Committee | 15. Wickson Inspects Yolo County Sites |
| 8. Chamber of Commerce Born | 16. 1905 Ends; 1906 Portends |

The originals of the placards and their digital files are archived in the Special Collections Department of the UCD Shields Library. Additional working materials are archived with them. Any member of the public can examine these materials during normal opening hours.

1. WHAT THIS EXHIBIT IS ABOUT

This exhibit gives a brief glimpse of life in Davisville from 1850 to the single year of 1905, one-hundred years ago.

It does so with special focus on the town's preoccupation with choosing the site of the "State Farm School" and new agricultural research and staff of the University of California.

We begin with an account of Judge Peter Shields' campaign leading up to the March 18, 1865 signing of legislation creating a commission to select a site for that school.

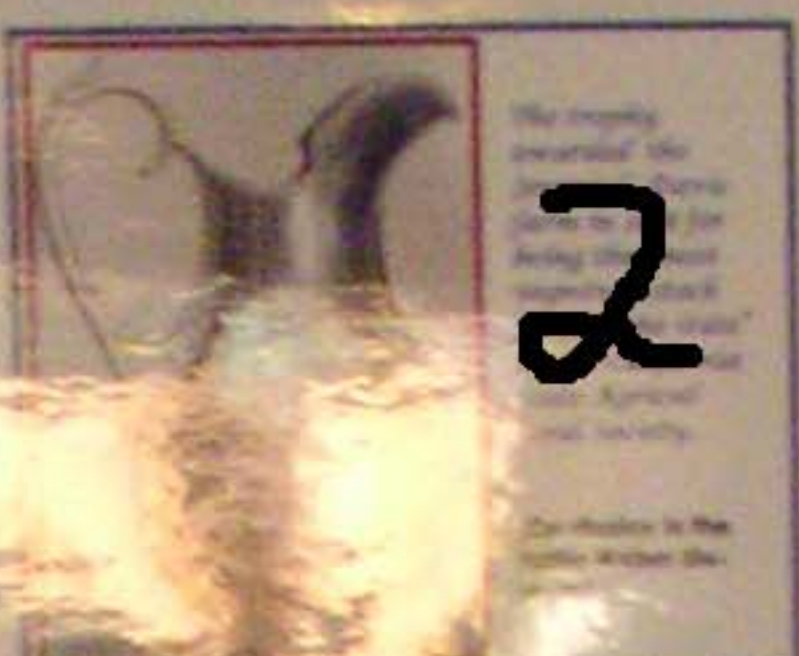
This act triggered the flurry of Davisville campaigning that is exhibited on the following panels.

The better to set the context, we begin, just below, with a few views of 1865 Davisville — its surroundings, streets, buildings, and people.

Enjoy!

John Loffland and Jim Beckett
Exhibit Designers
The Davis Historical Society

1



The image shows a large, multi-story building with a prominent central tower or entrance. The building appears to be made of brick or stone and has several windows. It is surrounded by trees and other structures, suggesting an urban or campus setting.

2


2. PETER SHIELDS' STATE FARM PASSION

Born in 1862 and raised on a modest farm just east of Sacramento, Peter J. Shields became an attorney and was elected a Sacramento superior court judge at age 38.

He never forsook his rural roots, however, and had an avid interest in improving agriculture and agricultural education. In 1899, he met a Penn State agriculture graduate and learned, to his surprise and delight, that there were college programs in scientific research in agriculture at universities in other parts of the country.

This was a turning point in Shields' life. From 1899 to 1905, he dedicated himself to campaigning for a "State Farm" and "Farm School" in California, authoring bills in 1901 and 1903, and was eventually successful with his third attempt in 1905.

8



The map shows a grid of streets in Davisville, with various landmarks and buildings labeled. The map is titled "Davisville, 1865" and shows the layout of the town at that time.

3

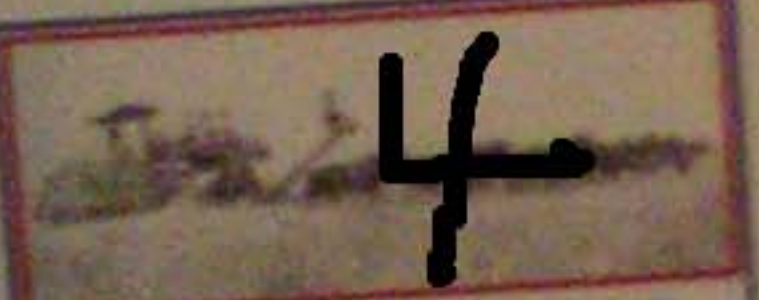
According to Shields, University of California Officials did not want a State Farm.

The image shows a document or a page from a book, with text that is partially obscured by a large number '10'.

10


Biography of Judge Shields by Ann Schaefer in her official history of UC Davis, Abundant Harvest (2001, p. 13)

9



The image shows a large, multi-story building with a prominent central tower or entrance. The building appears to be made of brick or stone and has several windows. It is surrounded by trees and other structures, suggesting an urban or campus setting.

4



The image shows a large, multi-story building with a prominent central tower or entrance. The building appears to be made of brick or stone and has several windows. It is surrounded by trees and other structures, suggesting an urban or campus setting.

5

Shields found...

The image shows a document or a page from a book, with text that is partially obscured by a large number '12'.

12

Shields Reflects on the Politics of Passing a State Farm Bill

The image shows a document or a page from a book, with text that is partially obscured by a large number '11'.


11



The image shows a large, multi-story building with a prominent central tower or entrance. The building appears to be made of brick or stone and has several windows. It is surrounded by trees and other structures, suggesting an urban or campus setting.

6

In a 1932 Memorandum (shown below), Shields reported he promoted establishment of a Farm School, but had no hand in the selection of a specific site.



14

Shields Writes of His Work in the 1925 UCD Record

The image shows a document or a page from a book, with text that is partially obscured by a large number '13'.

13



The image shows a wide street in Davisville, lined with buildings and utility poles. The street is paved and has a few people walking on it. The buildings are multi-story and appear to be made of brick or stone.

7

Peter Shields...



The image shows a group of people sitting on a bench or in a field. They are dressed in early 20th-century clothing. The scene appears to be outdoors and possibly a public gathering or a school event.

15

09.03.2005

3. THE STATE FARM BILL

Governor George Pardee signed the bill (below) on March 18, 1905, authorizing the siting and development of a University of California "State Farm." Its main purposes were to be research, education, and public service on agricultural practices suited to California conditions.

Although already existing in Berkeley, agricultural research was inherently limited by the atypical weather and soil conditions of the area.

16

4. GEORGE W. PIERCE'S PASSION

While Peter Shields was the driving force for the creation of a University of California State Farm, George Washington Pierce Jr. was the driving force for siting it at Davis.

In this section we introduce Pierce as a person. In other sections that follow, we report on his extensive State Farm campaign activities, along with some of other participants in our story.

21

5. MARTIN SPARKS & PIERCE

Martin V. Sparks was a 72-year-old farmer who owned 788 acres of land west of Davisville in 1905. Less than a week after Governor Pardee signed the State Farm Bill, 6 days before the general event "mass meeting" on March 30, George Pierce visited Martin Sparks on his way into town.

Pierce asked Sparks to give him an option to buy his ranch for the purpose of offering it as a site for the State Farm.

Sparks agreed to providing such an option, and the document, reproduced below, was signed on April 17, 1905.

25

...page of the bill... carried this... Perhaps... one of the 700... passed in this bill... change Davisville... fundamental work.

This Morning's News.

The legislature adjourned yesterday. The shortest session on record of the state. Business all cleared up and 700 bills in the hand of the Governor.

17

Upper




Lower



George Pierce family picture

Mr. and Mrs. George Washington Pierce Jr. and sons, George Gardner and Dwight.

22



Martin Sparks

26

Copy of the "University Farm" bill as introduced.

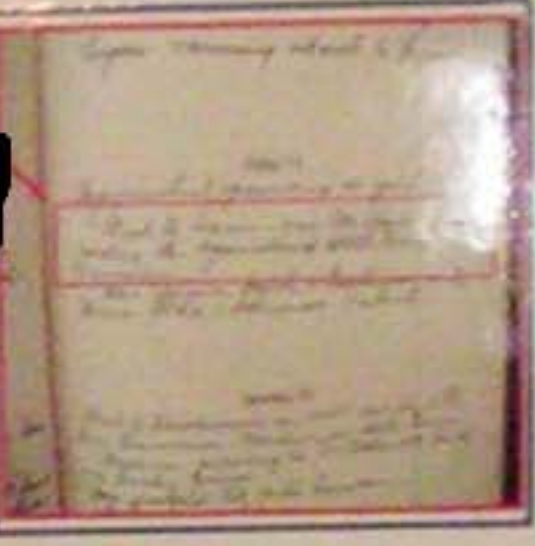
These are pages 1 and 2 of 4 pages.

18

Reproductions of Pages 3 & 4 of the original University Farm Bill.

19


Sparks journal entry recording that on Friday, March 24, he...



27

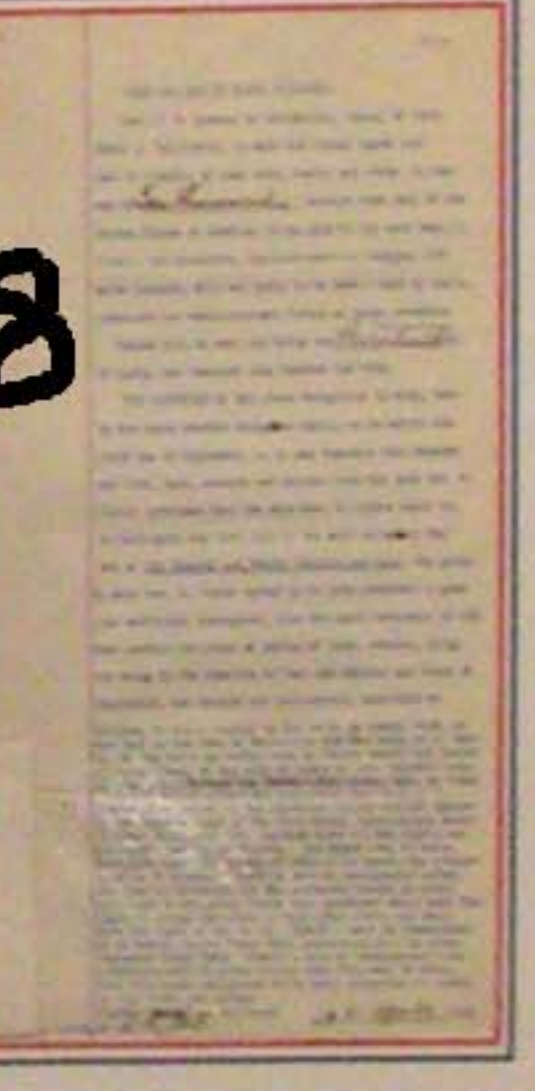
In her abundant harvest, Ann Spurns provides biographies of the Pierce and LaRue families, who had neighboring farms west of Davis and abutting the "Sparks Place."

The Pierce and LaRue Families



23

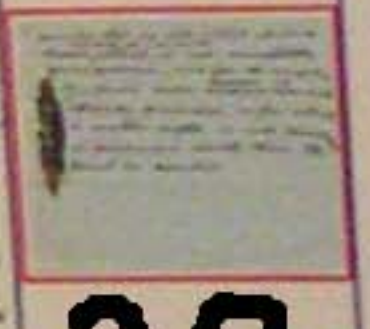
Twenty-four days after his private pledge to Governor Pardee (March 24), Sparks gave Pierce a binding option (April 17).



28

Enlarged copy of the famous "blue slip" Judge Shields hand wrote just as the University Farm bill was going before the Legislature and attached to the bill with a pin.

This amending slip contains an irrigation requirement. It was added at the urging of Yuba County leaders, who knew it would squelch dozens of competitor sites.



20

From 1890 to 1905, Pierce kept a journal in which he recorded his activities in the State Farm campaign.

The journal for 1905 is included in the report.

We report his journal here because he produced a remarkable record on which we and others have drawn.



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6. MARCH 30, DAVISVILLE STIRS

March 30, 1905 might well have been the single most important day in the history of Davisville (soon to be Davis).

From its start in 1868, Davisville never formed a government and could not even organize a viable association of its business people. Put off ferantly, aside from having two churches, public and civic

organization was weak or non-existent.

But this began to change on March 30. A committee called a meeting of business leaders in the town and the town began to organize for the purpose of becoming the site of the new State Farm.

29

7. THE STATE FARM PROMOTION COMMITTEE

As reported in column 6, the assembled "mass" voted to form two groups and elected a committee to carry out the responsibility for these purposes.

The first was named "The State Farm Promotion Committee" (some called it the "boom committee").

George Pierce was elected chair of this committee.

The second was "a permanent organization" for the town (Column 8).

A Finance Committee was also appointed.

32

8. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BORN

The second committee created at the Mass Meeting of March 30 was appointed to organize a permanent organization for the town.

Dr. W. E. Bates was appointed chair of this organizing committee.

Technically, the State Farm Promotion Committee was a unit of this "permanent organization," which did not yet exist. In a short time, the Promotion Committee could not act before the parent organization formed. But this did not stop it from starting a campaign.

The "permanent organization" was formed on May 17, 1905 (reported below).

38

Davis Enterprise report on the Thursday, March 30 "Mass Meeting"

- The emergent & ad hoc character of the meeting
- Marlin Sparks makes good on his promise to George Pierce, thus making forming organizations more credible
- A "promotion" committee is then formed
- Because Davisville had no "permanent organization" of a civic sort, a committee to form one is appointed

It then being a well-known affair to form, plans and arrangements for the meeting.

There was a committee of five men, including George Pierce, who were to be in charge of the meeting. They were to be in charge of the meeting. They were to be in charge of the meeting.


30

At least three of the seven main Promotion Committee were graduates of the University of Illinois. The list of promoters included the following: George Pierce, Dr. W. E. Bates, and others.

George Pierce, Dr. W. E. Bates, and others.


33

Sketch of the life of Dr. W. E. Bates by John Larkley in the Davis Enterprise "Portraits of the Past" series.



34

Portrait of the past by John Larkley in the Davis Enterprise "Portraits of the Past" series.



35

Publishing on Saturday April 1, two days after the historic mass meeting described above, Editor Scott expresses both pleasure and caution about Davisville's capacity for public action.

His guarded response is prompted by the previous absence of an organization working for the advancement of the best interests of the town and the recent failure of the Men's League.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 1905

In the last issue of the Enterprise we expressed our pleasure and caution about Davisville's capacity for public action. His guarded response is prompted by the previous absence of an organization working for the advancement of the best interests of the town and the recent failure of the Men's League.

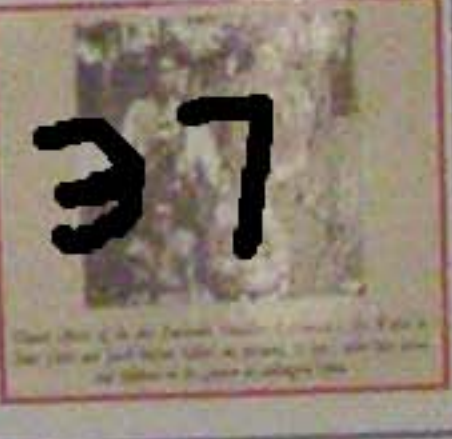
31

Portraits of the past by John Larkley in the Davis Enterprise "Portraits of the Past" series.



36

This is the only known photograph of John Larkley, who died in early 1908 at age 47, not long after this photograph was taken.



37

A committee to form a civic organization was organized at the March 30th mass meeting. Over time, the group decided on a name and drew up a scheme of organization.

To the right, the Enterprise reports on the May 10th meeting of this new organization, the Chamber of Commerce.

The main committee was organized with the idea of what was thought to be major projects.

Note that the first issue deals with "Seminars," which were the program of bringing people to Davisville.

39

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

It is a pleasure to announce the formation of the Chamber of Commerce of Davisville, Va. The Chamber was organized on May 17, 1905, and its first meeting was held on May 24, 1905.

40

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber of Commerce of Davisville, Va. was organized on May 17, 1905, and its first meeting was held on May 24, 1905.

41

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber of Commerce of Davisville, Va. was organized on May 17, 1905, and its first meeting was held on May 24, 1905.

42

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber of Commerce of Davisville, Va. was organized on May 17, 1905, and its first meeting was held on May 24, 1905.

43

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9. THE COMMISSION VISITS YOLO CO.

On Saturday, May 26, the State Farm Site Selection Commission arrived in Davisville by train to begin a five-day tour of the various sites being offered in Yolo County.

44

10. THE CAMPAIGN, MAY-DECEMBER

Led by the hard-charging (and apparently sometimes abrasive) George Pierce, the Committee undertook several Davisville promotional efforts over the rest of 1905.

47

Reproduction of the two-page offer the Promotion Committee sent to the State Farm Selection Commission dated May 12, 1905

49

Saturday, May 26th, the State Farm Selection Commission arrived at the Davisville depot at 7:20 am.

COMMISSIONERS IN OUR COUNTY TODAY

Arrived on this morning's train at Davisville, and were met by a host of friends and the Town and Town Club.

45

STRIKE IN THE PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

In 1905, the Promotion Committee consisted of George Pierce, Chairman, and several other members.

48

Pierce's Journal of the Davisville Campaign

The following is a copy of George Pierce's journal of the Davisville campaign, written during the campaign.

50

The "Ideal Spot" Booklet

In addition to face-to-face lobbying, one of the Promotion Committee's more important products was a 20 page booklet measuring some five by six inches titled "An Ideal Spot for a University Farm."

51

Davisville, May 27th report on the May 26th Commission Tour of Yolo County Sites.

COMMISSIONERS TOUR YOLO

Report on the May 26th Commission Tour of Yolo County Sites.

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11. THE WOMEN'S IMPROVEMENT CLUB

The same burst of civic enthusiasm that created the State Farm Promotion Committee and the Chamber of Commerce also led to forming a Women's Improvement Club.

Women's groups such as this one in Davisville were

created in towns across the nation in this same period.

The idea was that towns might be run much like household. That housewives should lead what was called "municipal housekeeping."

52

12. THE CHIEF BOOSTER: SCOTT

While the Promotion Committee and the Chamber of Commerce lobbied the State Farm Selection Committee and pointed out all the outstanding features of the area, Judge William A. Scott, owner, publisher and editor of the

Davisville Enterprise, lobbied the town itself to "shape up."

indicated below and in examples throughout. Scott shamelessly promoted Davisville and urged the populace to action.

57

Women's Improvement Club (WIC) formed June 17

Club officers are a "who's who" of Davisville society

Editor Scott makes his editorial views part of this news story

Davisville Women's Improvement Club

When Scott set it up, he had a secret hope: to help the town.

At times, Editor Scott was already calling "Davisville" "Davis."

53

Meeting on October 28, the Club decides to organize a benefit dance

Meeting at Davisville

Subscribers of "Women's Improvement Club" at the Davisville Hotel

The Women's Improvement Club was organized on October 28, 1905. The meeting, held at the Davisville Hotel, was a success. The club decided to organize a benefit dance.

54



The caption below the photo reads: "The caption under the picture (left) on the cover of the Enterprise..."

58

Perhaps there is no single example more revealing of Scott's self-appointed role as "The Davisville Booster" than this front page column about the Gold Medal Almonds (and other items) on January 14, 1905

59

but is also quick to point out that he is right

and then reminds his readers that this is not an isolated case

then presents more fearless predictions

but then concludes with another shot at the Men's League

GOLD MEDAL FOR DAVISVILLE

For Almonds the Best Grow in All the World, So Say the St. Louis Judges

The W. C. T. U. had a weekly column in the Enterprise. This is a reprint from the paper for the week of April 7, 1905

60

W. C. T. U. Notes

Enterprise Report of the Club's November 30th Ball

Because Davisville apparently had so little civic activity, a fund-raiser of this sort could reasonably be thought of as a "big social and financial success."

At times, Editor Scott was already calling "Davisville" "Davis."

WOMEN'S IMPROVEMENT CLUB BALL

55

Shown are several examples of Scott's use of his newspaper to "boost" Davisville. Other examples are found in numbers 4, 8 and 13.

61

The Women's Improvement Club poses for a group picture during its founding

56



Scott's Print Shop, 303 G Street, c. 1925

57



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13. THE DECISION DRAGS ON

In the euphoria of May and June, Davisville people, as well as others, hoped for a quick decision from the Commission.

However, months went by and there was no action. Newspaper editors and others began to call for a decision and to speculate on reasons for the delay.

Editor Scott followed these matters closely and reprinted editorials and reports from other newspapers, some of which are reproduced below.

In addition, Scott himself exhibited a certain impatience over the seemingly slow pace of the Commission and began to fret about it, as also seen below.

63

14. SELECTION COMMISSION PUNTS

While Scott was fretting and charges were flying, the Commission was divided. Most significantly, UC President Wheeler had strong misgivings about any non-Berkeley site, and especially one outside Alameda or Contra Costa County.

It was not until November 27 that the Commission decided to deal with its internal divisions by "punting" the matter to an

outside expert in the form of UC Professor of Agricultural Practice and Superintendent of Agricultural Extension, Edward J. Wickson.

Wickson was asked to tour all the sites, evaluate them, and to make a recommendation.

He was still engaged in this process at the end of 1905.

67

15. WICKSON INSPECTS YOLO COUNTY SITES

After getting his charge to inspect all sites, Wickson set out immediately to comply, but the task evidently took longer than expected, as he did not arrive in Davisville until December 24—a Sunday—and Christmas Eve no less!

In his account below, "PROF. WICKSON WAS HERE," Scott explains that Wickson's unexpected arrival time was due to

being "delayed up the valley beyond his expectations." However, the Position Committee was in hand to greet and lead Wickson to touring the sites, which included the Sparks property.

Scott reports that "the Professor seemed well satisfied." But no decision yet!

71

In a September 30th Enterprise Editorial, Scott says not only that the State Farm at Berkeley.

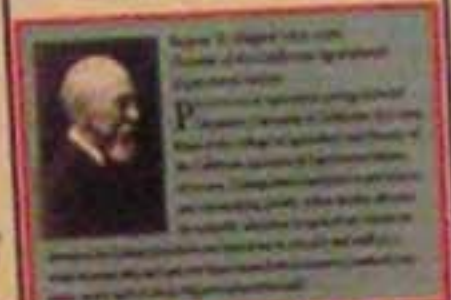
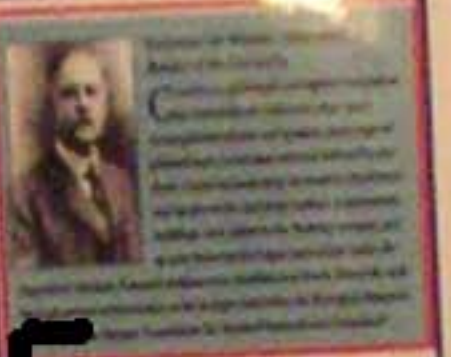
64

If Wheeler prevails, says Scott, he will make permanent enemies of valley farmers—and have a pathetic farm to boot.

We are not surprised at yet the Editor's view of the State Farm at Berkeley, as he has been known to be in the habit of making the most of the State Farm at Berkeley. The State Farm at Berkeley is a very profitable business, and it is a very profitable business. It is a very profitable business, and it is a very profitable business.

Two UC officials alleged to be opponents of the State Farm at Berkeley.

65



With Wheeler continuing to drag his feet and to favor a Berkeley or a close-to-Berkeley site, the Commission is stalled. Finally, in a metaphor, "punted" the problem to an "expert," Professor E. J. Wickson.

68

LT. Governor Anderson tried to simplify Wickson's evaluative task by confining it to only Yolo and Solano counties. But, Wheeler puts for Berkeley to the end by persuading the Commission that Wickson should examine all sites, and yet others he might develop.

STATE FARM COMMISSION TAKES ACTION

PROFESSOR EDWARD J. WICKSON, Superintendent of Agricultural Practice and Extension, was appointed by the State Farm Commission to inspect all sites, evaluate them, and to make a recommendation.

Davis Enterprise Report of Wickson's December 24th Visit

By all accounts, Professor Wickson's visit to Davisville was a very thorough one. He arrived on Sunday, December 24th, and remained in Davisville until Christmas Eve. He was accompanied by Mr. J. J. Scott, Editor of the Davis Enterprise.

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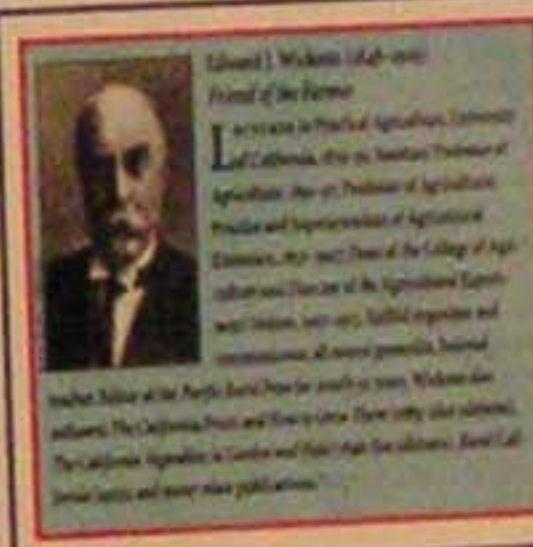
Some proposals offered free sites for the State Farm. This was of course worrisome for the proposals involving private property were written on the matter, including this one that Scott reprinted from the Sacramento Union.

66

At times the rhetoric became tough, as in this passage suggesting that a donation might amount to a bribe.

Concerning A "Free Site" In a quiet way the suggestion for a free site for the State Farm at Berkeley is being made. It is a suggestion that is being made in a quiet way. It is a suggestion that is being made in a quiet way.

69



Edward J. Wickson, Superintendent of Agricultural Practice and Extension, was appointed by the State Farm Commission to inspect all sites, evaluate them, and to make a recommendation.

16. 1905 ENDS; 1906 PORTENDS

While high hopes continued, the siting of the State Farm and School at Davisville was by no means certain on the last day of 1905.

There was no decision.

COMING IN 1906: • Does Wheeler compromise? • Does the Commission tentatively decide?

STAY TUNED FOR THE OUTCOMES IN 1906!

73

CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibit would not be possible without the financial support of others and the availability of the historical documents we reproduce here.

74

From the left: Benjamin L. Wheeler, President University of California; David S. Jordan; Edward J. Wickson, Superintendent of Agricultural Practice and Extension.

70



Photograph taken at a State Farm Permit Day since 1905.

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