



**Fresno County Historical Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission
Historic Places Application**

IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: Reedley College campus
2. Historic name: Site of Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch
3. Street or rural address: 955 N. Reed Avenue
 City: Reedley Zip: 93654 County: Fresno
4. Parcel Number: _____
5. Present Owner: State Center Community College District
 City: Fresno Zip: 93721 Ownership is: Public Private
6. Present Use: Community college campus
 Original Use: Farm and home of Thomas Law Reed and family

DESCRIPTION

7a. Architectural style: *not applicable*

The architectural style should be identified from a list of accepted style identifications from the following list.

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Adobe | Arts & Crafts | Art Deco | Austrian Succession |
| Baroque | Beaux Arts | Byzantine | Cape Cod |
| Chateausque | Classical | Revival | Colonial Craftsman |
| Dutch Colonial | Eastlake | Egyptian | English Tudor |
| Four-Square | French Tudor | Georgian | Gothic |
| Half-Timber | International | Islamic | Log Cabin |
| Mediterranean | Mission | Monterey | Normandy |
| Prairie | Pueblo | Ranch | Richardsonian |
| Romanesque | Second Empire | Spanish | Colonial Stick |
| Swiss Chalet | Victorian | | |

7b. Briefly describe the present physical description of the site or structure and describe any major alternations from its original condition. Descriptions should include such characterizing details as exterior material, roof shape and material, number of rooms, interior materials, fireplaces, and other parts which may represent a specific style. Include additional elements of the site such as detached garage, barn, tank house, outhouse, corral, entrance gate, pond, canal, storage shed, kiln, packing shed, gardens, arbors, landmark trees, and others.

The site retains little evidence of its historic use as the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch. The site now serves as the campus of Reedley College. The southern portion of the site is developed with numerous buildings. The northern portion serves as the college's Agriculture Department farm.

There are three elements that still exist as evidence of the Reed occupancy.

1. The property along Reed Avenue and the former alignment of Manning Avenue is bounded by a series of California fan palms. These palms were planted by the Reeds as border trees probably sometime in the mid to late 1890s. It is estimated that 125 palms were planted originally. Sixty-one palms remain as of September 2020.
2. A single Canary Island date palm is located in what was the front yard of the second, and last, Reed family home (built 1908) on the property.
3. The home referenced above had a river rock stone foundation. Not all of the stones were removed from the property when the house was demolished. Consequently, numerous stones can still be found in the orchard that now occupies the home's former site. (This site is scheduled to be developed within the next couple of years with the building of a fine and performing arts complex.)

8. Construction date: Estimated: _____ Factual: _____

9. Architect: _____

10. Builder: _____

11. Approximate property size (feet): _____ Frontage: _____ Acreage: __ 420 acres ____

12. Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated No longer exists

13. Alterations: _____

14. Please enclose a photograph, black & white if possible.

See Attachment for photos

15. Locational sketch map. (Draw and label size and surrounding streets, roads, and prominent landmarks.)



Detail from USGS Topographic map T15S R23E (2018) with shaded area showing location of Reedley College campus

16. Surroundings: (check more than one if necessary)

Open land	Scattered buildings	Densely built-up
√ Residential	Industrial	√ Commercial
√ Other: ___ agricultural, river _____		

17. Threats to site:

None known	Private development	Zoning
Vandalism	Public works project *	
Other:		

*Over the last two or three decades there have been proposals to address increased traffic on Reed Avenue by widening the street. These plans have, in some cases, proposed removal or relocation of the California fan palms. Community sentiment seems to favor a solution that leaves the palms undisturbed. The applicant knows of no current plan to alter the street in any way that will require the removal or relocation of the palms.

Is the structure: *not applicable*

On its original site	Moved	Unknown
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18. Related Features: _____

SIGNIFICANCE

20. Briefly state historical and/or architectural importance (include dates, events, and persons associated with the site.)

Significance of the Site

The site of the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch is perhaps the most historically significant place in the city of Reedley relative to the city's founding. Reed was an early area settler and owner of the property that came to be the Reedley townsite. His agreement to deed over a portion of his property to the Pacific Improvement Company in return for the establishment of a Southern Pacific Railroad depot resulted in the town's founding. His subsequent activities in selling land, building businesses, and supporting community development assured the success of the new town of Reedley.

Reed Family and Settlement on the Site

Thomas Law "T. L." Reed was born in Ohio in 1847. Two years later T.L.'s father, George Reed, went to California in search of gold. Ultimately, George went missing and was never heard from again. The absence of his father meant times were difficult for Reed's mother and his five siblings.

During the Civil War, Reed's two older brothers joined the Union Army. As the oldest son remaining at home, the fourteen-year-old Reed bore many family responsibilities. But T. L. yearned to join the army like his brothers. Brother John tried to persuade T. L. not to enlist by telling him that his mother needed him at home and that the horrors of war were something he prayed his younger brother would never have to experience.

Reed was unconvinced. In 1864, at age seventeen, he volunteered to be drafted as a substitute for another man. Reed hoped that the extra money that he got for being a substitute would help make life a bit easier for his mother.

T. L. sustained a shoulder wound nine months later. Before his wound could completely heal, the war ended, and he was discharged from the army. The veteran of Sherman's march to the sea and other battles was able to return home. His brother, Daniel, wasn't so lucky. He died of wounds at Bentonville.

Reed married Amantha Ann Smith in 1868. They made their first home in Chester Cross Roads, Ohio, and engaged in farming. Later, the Reeds lived in Michigan while T. L. was in the cheese making business.

Reed came to California in the summer of 1876 to investigate the prospects for farming. He found opportunity in the Woodland area of Yolo County. It was here that Reed's family joined him in late 1876. By then the family included three children, Horace, Nina, and Edmund. The Reeds' first-born son, Daniel, had died at age three.

While in Yolo County, the Reeds rented land and grew wheat and barley. Among those from whom he rented land were officers of the 76 Land and Water Company, the entity that was selling land and building an irrigation system for some 30,000 acres of southern Fresno County and northern Tulare County, east of the Kings River. Reed's landlords encouraged him to consider moving to the "76 Country" to farm. In 1883, Reed traveled south to get a first-hand look at what this new area had to offer. What he saw made him enthusiastic.

In March of 1884, Reed made his move to what was then known as Smith's Ferry, Fresno County, to begin farming. Popular accounts say that he came with "eleven head of horses and mules, and \$1,000 of borrowed money." With these few resources, Reed immediately went to work plowing and planting wheat seed on 200 acres of land. He returned to Yolo County in the summer to harvest his last crop there. Then, in the fall of 1884, the Reeds moved permanently to Fresno County.

The Reed family, now one member larger with the birth of daughter Jessie (another daughter, Sarah, had died soon after birth), established their residence in the old Smith's Ferry Hotel building, near the present Olson Avenue bridge over the Kings River. The ferry and hotel had ceased operating in about 1874. The deserted property was acquired by the 76 Company in 1882.

T. L. Reed began a steady expansion of his farming operation. In 1886, he purchased over 1,200 acres, including the parcel that is now the campus of Reedley College. The Reeds built a home on this property in the same year, and thus established what was to be their "Home Ranch." Two more children were born to the Reeds, Imogene and Dollie.

In 1888, the Southern Pacific Railroad was building a branch line through the area heading south to Porterville. Reed deeded a half-interest in a 360-acre town site to the Pacific Improvement Company, a Southern Pacific subsidiary, and in return they established a depot along the new rail line. A depot near his farming operations would mean Reed would no longer have to haul his harvested wheat grain 15 miles to Traver, which was then the nearest rail stop. Another benefit would be an increase in property values as settlers began to populate the town that would grow up around the depot. Reed could profit by selling town lots and 5- and 10-acre colony lots adjacent to the townsite.

Thus, in 1888, a new town was created, named "Reedley" by the railroad. Soon, buildings and streets grew amid the wheat fields that paralleled the railroad tracks. T. L. Reed built and owned the town's first hotel, livery stable, and blacksmith shop. He established the first warehouse using a 500-foot long building hauled in from Traver. He donated land and helped establish the area's first school. He helped build the first church and helped furnish a second. Reed was a founding director of the Alta Irrigation District (which assumed control of the canal system of the 76 Company) and was among the first to lobby for the building of a dam on the Kings River.

Reed farmed 15,000 acres in the 76 Country and another 14,000 acres in the Chowchilla area at the peak of his farming activities. Pioneer historian, John McCubbin, who knew and worked with Reed, wrote that Reed "was known as one of the wheat barons of California."

Unfortunately, financial security was never a sure thing for pioneers. The Reeds suffered great losses when the wheat market collapsed during the economic depression known as the Panic of 1893. It was during this period that the Reeds, along with many other farmers in Fresno County, turned their focus to permanent crops. The Reeds were also able to recoup some of their losses by investing in the new-found oil fields of the Bakersfield area.

The prosperity that the Reeds enjoyed did not seem to alter their lifestyle or character. Hard work was the rule and neighborliness the practice. McCubbin wrote that when fellow settlers "needed seed, feed, or provisions, they would go to T. L. Reed, who never refused them. He never made a book account of such loans but trusted to their honesty and never dunned them. He would never take a cent of interest. There was nothing in the way of arrogance or egotism in the nature of Reed. He would stop to chat . . . with the most humble man in a group." Amantha Reed was known as always ready to spend days or nights with neighbors in childbirth or suffering illnesses.

T. L. Reed died in 1911 at the age of 64. Amantha Reed died five years later. Both are buried in the Reedley District Cemetery.

The exact location of the original Reed home on the ranch property is uncertain. There is some evidence and belief that it was very near, if not adjacent to their later home. This is contradicted by two grandsons of Reed who, when interviewed in 1991, contended that the original farmhouse was some distance southwest of the later house. These events would have occurred before the birth of one of these grandsons and while the other an infant.

Sometime likely in the mid to late 1890s the Reeds planted a series of California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) along the Reed and Manning Avenue property lines of the ranch. These are commonly called border trees. It is estimated that 125 palms were a part of the original planting.

The second Reed home on the property was built in 1908. There were several other buildings at this home site including a barn, two-story labor bunk house, and a tank house. The two-story house had a river rock foundation. Front yard landscaping included at least two Canary Island date palms. Following the deaths of T. L. and Amantha Reed, son Edmond Reed and family occupied the home. The house remained existent on the college property until the 1970s when it was demolished.

Acquisition of the site by Reedley College

Reedley College was established in 1926 by the Reedley Joint Union High School District. Classes were first held on the high school campus. In 1936 a separate Junior College building was constructed on the high school campus. By the 1940s the governing board determined that the college needed its own campus and identity. In June 1954 voters approved a bond measure to purchase a tract of land on the northwest corner of Reed and Manning Avenues that had once been part of the Thomas Law Reed Ranch, then owned by the Mard Peloian family. The site was purchased in January 1955. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the construction of the college's first buildings on the site occurred on January 12, 1956. The *Reedley Exponent* reported that a crowd of over 2,000 attended the event. The college later acquired the balance of the Peloian property.

In 1963 voters approved the separation of Reedley College and Fresno City College from their local public school districts to form the State Center Junior College District, later renamed the State Center Community College District.

The Site Today

The property today is the campus of Reedley College. The south end is highly developed with several dozen academic, technical education, student support, and administrative buildings; and athletic facilities and fields. The north end is the Agriculture Department farm. The only clearly visible evidence of the Reed Home Ranch era are 61 California fan palm trees that border the eastern side of the property and the southern edge along the former alignment of Manning Avenue, and a lone Canary Island date palm that stood in the front yard of the second, and last, Reed home on the property. With some searching, but not visible from any road, one also can find stones from the second house foundation scattered in the orchard that now occupies the home site.

Historical Markers on the Site

On March 8, 1992, the Reedley Historical Society placed and dedicated a marker on the Reedley College campus commemorating the establishment of the T. L. Reed Ranch on that site. The marker is located near the flagpole in front of the college's Administration Building.

On September 16, 2000, the El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust placed and dedicated a plaque on the surviving Canary Island date palm as a "living monument" to the establishment of the Reed Ranch Headquarters at that place.

21. Main theme of the historic resource: (If more than one is checked, number in order of importance.)

Architecture ___

Arts & Leisure ___

Economic /Industrial _2_

Exploration/Settlement _1_

Government ___

Military ___

Social/Education ___

Religion ___

22. Sources (List books, documents, surveys, personal interviews and their dates).

Allen, Mary B. *The Immigrants, George Read/Reed and Sarah Rayson; The Pioneers, Thomas Law Reed and Amantha Ann Smith*. Sonora, CA: M. B. Allen, 1995.

McCubbin, John C. *The McCubbin Papers: An Account of the Early History of Reedley and Vicinity*. Ed. Kenneth Zech. Reedley: Reedley Historical Society, 1988.

Nickel, Katharine, ed. *Beginning in the Reedley Area: A Treasury of Historical Accounts 'Till 1913*. Reedley: K. Nickel, 1961.

Reed, Samuel Lester, and Thomas Law Reed. Interview by Kenneth Zech and Norman Zech, Reedley, 29 October 1991.

"Reed: The New Town Now Being Surveyed On Kings River," *Traver Advocate*, 26 May 1888, p. 1.

[Zech, Kenneth]. *Reedley Historical Society: Dedication of a monument commemorating the establishment of the historic T. L. Reed Ranch*. Reedley: Reedley Historical Society, 8 March 1992.

#349 Reed Ranch

source: Reedley College website

[The preceding was authored by Keneth Zech and is based on the writings of pioneer historian, John C. McCubbin, and those of Mary B. Allen, granddaughter of T. L. Reed. All photographs provided courtesy of the Reedley Historical Society.]

Reedley College was established in May, 1926, as Reedley Junior College. Institutional doors were opened in September 1926, with a total of 30 students and six course offerings. In 1936, a separate building on the Reedley High School campus was built to house the junior college administration and provide additional classrooms. On July 1, 1946, the college recognized its role as a total community college.

By the late 1940s the governing board decided the time was right for the college to develop a separate campus and a separate identity. Thus, the board began negotiation to purchase the current campus site at Reed and Manning Avenues, once part of the historic Thomas Law Reed Ranch.

In September 1956, the college moved to its present site where it has continued to grow and expand. It now encompasses 420 acres, including the school's 300 acre farm adjacent to the main campus.

In 1963, the college became a member of the State Center Community College District, combining the resources of two of the oldest community colleges in the state. Reflecting the expanded area covered by the influence of the college, Reedley College officially became Kings River Community College in 1980. In accordance with the surrounding communities' wishes, the name Reedley College was restored in July, 1998.

In the fall of 2001, more than 11,147 students registered at Reedley College (RC campus, South Centers and North Centers). The college offers associate degree programs, the first two years of a transfer program, and short-term career training programs.

The College Campus: Site of the Historic T. L. Reed Ranch

Reedley College was established in 1926 by the Reedley Joint Union High School District. For its first thirty years, the college shared facilities with the high school. In 1954, voters of the high school district overwhelmingly passed a bond issue to purchase the site of the historic T. L. Reed Ranch for a permanent campus. Two years later, in 1956, the new campus opened.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE T. L. REED RANCH

Thomas Law Reed came to California in the summer of 1876. His apparent motivation in coming west was to investigate the prospects for farming. Interestingly, Reed's father, George, had also come west twenty-seven years earlier in a search for gold. For reasons still unknown today, George Reed never returned home. We may never know whether the elder Reed ever found his gold. But Thomas found his. T. L. Reed was born in Ohio in 1847. With his father missing, times were difficult for Reed's mother and his five siblings. Necessity dictated that the Reed children learn about hard work at an early age.

During the Civil War, Reed's two older brothers joined the Union Army. As the oldest son remaining at home, the fourteen-year-old Reed bore many family responsibilities. But T. L. yearned to join the army like his brothers. Brother John tried to persuade T. L. not to enlist by

telling him that his mother needed him at home and that the horrors of war were something he prayed his younger brother would never have to experience. Reed was unconvinced. In 1864, at age seventeen, he volunteered to be drafted as a substitute for another man. Reed hoped that the extra money that he got for being a substitute would help make life a bit easier for his mother. T. L. sustained a shoulder wound nine months later. Before his wound could completely heal, the war ended and he was discharged from the army. The veteran of Sherman's march to the sea and other battles was able to return home. His brother, Daniel, wasn't so lucky. He died of wounds at Bentonville.

Reed married Amantha Ann Smith in 1868. They made their first home in Chester Cross Roads, Ohio, and engaged in farming. Later, the Reeds lived in Michigan while T. L. was in the cheese making business.

The trip to California in 1876 had revealed opportunities for farming in the Woodland area of Yolo County. It was here that Reed's family joined him in late 1876. By then the family included three children, Horace, Nina, and Edmund. The Reeds' first-born son, Daniel, had died at age three.

While in Yolo County, the Reeds rented land and grew wheat and barley. Among those from whom he rented land were officers of the 76 Land and Water Company, the entity that was selling land and building an irrigation system for some 30,000 acres in southern Fresno County and northern Tulare County, east of the Kings River. Reed's landlords encouraged him to consider moving to the "76 Country" to farm. In 1883, Reed traveled south to get a first-hand look at what this new area had to offer. What he saw made him enthusiastic. In March of 1884, Reed made his move to what was then known as Smith's Ferry, Fresno County, to begin farming. Popular accounts say that he came with "eleven head of horses and mules, and \$1,000 of borrowed money." With these few resources, Reed immediately went to work plowing and planting wheat seed on 200 acres of land. He returned to Yolo County in the summer to harvest his last crop there. Then, in the fall of 1884, the Reeds moved permanently to Fresno County.

The Reed family - now one member larger with the birth of daughter Jessie (another daughter, Sarah, had died soon after birth) - established their residence in the old Smith's Ferry Hotel building, near the present Olson Avenue bridge over the Kings River. The ferry and hotel had ceased operating in about 1874. The deserted property was acquired by the 76 Company in 1882.

T. L. Reed began a steady expansion of his farming operation. In 1886, he purchased over 1,200 acres, including the parcel that is now the college campus. The Reeds built a home on this property in the same year, and thus established what was to be their "Home Ranch." Two more children were born to the Reeds, Imogene and Dollie.

In 1888, the Southern Pacific Railroad was building a branch line through the area heading south to Porterville. Reed deeded a half-interest in a 360-acre town site to the Pacific Improvement Company, a Southern Pacific subsidiary, and in return they established a depot. This new town needed a name, and the railroad determined that it should be "Reedley." Soon, buildings and streets grew amid the wheat fields that paralleled the railroad tracks. Reed built and owned the town's first hotel, livery stable and blacksmith shop. He established the first warehouse using a 500-foot long building hauled in from Traver. He donated land and helped establish the area's first school. He helped build the first church, and helped furnish a second. Reed was a founding director of the Alta Irrigation District (which assumed control of the canal system of the 76 Company), and was among the first to lobby for the building of a dam on the Kings River.

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Unfortunately, financial security was never a sure thing for pioneers. The Reeds suffered great losses when the wheat market began to collapse in the early 1890s. An interest in the new-found oil fields of the Bakersfield area helped the Reeds recoup some of those losses, as did diversification into the farming of grapes and tree fruit.

The prosperity that the Reeds enjoyed did not seem to alter their life style or character. Hard work was the rule and neighborliness the practice. McCubbin wrote that when fellow settlers "needed seed, feed, or provisions, they would go to T. L. Reed, who never refused them. He never made a book account of such loans, but trusted to their honesty and never dunned them. He would never take a cent of interest. There was nothing in the way of arrogance or egotism in the nature of Reed. He would stop to chat . . . with the most humble man in a group." Amantha Reed was known as always ready to spend days or nights with neighbors in childbirth or suffering illnesses.

T. L. Reed died in 1911 at the age of sixty-four. Amantha died five years later. Both are buried in the Reedley District Cemetery.

SITE IS COMMEMORATED

On March 8, 1992, the Reedley Historical Society installed and dedicated a granite monument commemorating the establishment of the historic T. L. Reed Ranch.

The monument is located near the corner of Reed and Manning Avenues, a few feet from the college flagpole.



Attachment: Photos, Maps, Illustrations, and Newspaper clippings

REED

The New Town, Now Being Surveyed On Kings River.

Last Saturday the surveyors began work on the townsite of Reed, located within a half mile of Smith's Ferry, on the free bridge over Kings River. There are two gangs of surveyors at work and the stakes are set rapidly. A header is at work on the townsite, clearing off a crop of volunteer wheat. There is a section of this wheat, which will average a goodly number of sacks to the acre. The stalks are of good height and the heads well filled.

The new east branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad runs diagonally through the section on which the town of Reed is located. A prettier location for a town could not be selected. The noble Kings River sweeps by the town on its way to the lake, its borders fringed with willows and oaks, presenting a most inviting appearance. To the east, distant not many miles, the Sierras Nevada Mountains rear their snow-clad peaks. Broad fields of ripening wheat stretch away on every side, as far as eye can reach, while occasionally a header, with its busy crew of men and horses, is visible, gathering in the golden grain. Neat farm houses, surrounded with green verdure in the way of fruit trees, vines and alfalfa, are seen at the corner of nearly every quarter section for a long distance to the north of the town—houses which speak of health, peace and prosperity. The town will be well supplied with irrigating ditches and an abundance of water from the famous 78 Canal, a ten-foot branch of said canal running on the north and west side of the town. The soil is of the white ash variety, capable of producing good grain, alfalfa, raisins and small fruits, stone fruits of all kinds, vegetables, etc.—in fact almost any kind of cereals or fruit adapted to this climate.

The depot is located, as usual in all railroad towns, on the east side of the track and facing the river. About 40 blocks will be surveyed as a commencement and other blocks will be surveyed as soon as needed. The Pacific Improvement Company is interested in the townsite and they will hold a public auction of lots as soon as practicable after the survey.

The vicinity is well supplied with county roads, running in all directions. The handsome suspension bridge over Kings River, where formerly meandered the ferry boat of James Smith way back in the 50's, is well patronized and there is a large travel over it. The railroad company built to the high bluffs on either side of the river and then built a shoofly, a little to the south of the public bridge, for transient use. The building of the permanent railroad bridge across the river will be a large undertaking, as Kings River at this point is of good width, although not near so broad here as at some other points along its course.

T. L. Reed, from whom the townsite was purchased and who owns a large amount of land surrounding the town, is going to have 600 acres of land surrounding the town divided up into colony tracts, from 5 to 40 acres in size. The townsite will be faced on the north and east by 5-acre colony tracts. In the rear of the strip of 5-acre colony lots to the north of the town will be located a strip of 10-acre colony lots, the two tracts being separated by a ditch large enough to irrigate the two tracts. There is quite a body of land between the townsite and the river, on the west, which will also be divided into colonies.

Negotiations are in progress for the erection in the town of a \$15,000 brick hotel as soon as the lots are sold, and it is believed that the hotel will be secured. With such a structure, with fine stores underneath, the whole building to be let rent free, for one year, to parties who will put in a stipulated amount of goods, the town is bound to grow and prosper.

To summarize: The town of Reed is well situated as regards location, as it will command the trade of a large farming district, the river forming a natural boundary for its trade on the west and the foothills to the north and east. Good drainage is assured, as there is a gradual slope from the west side of the townsite to the river, and in some places it is quite abrupt. Water power will also prove a great advantage to the town. A long double switch affords ample warehouse room on either side of the main track. The colonies to be laid out about the town will materially aid its growth and assist in the permanent growth of Reed.

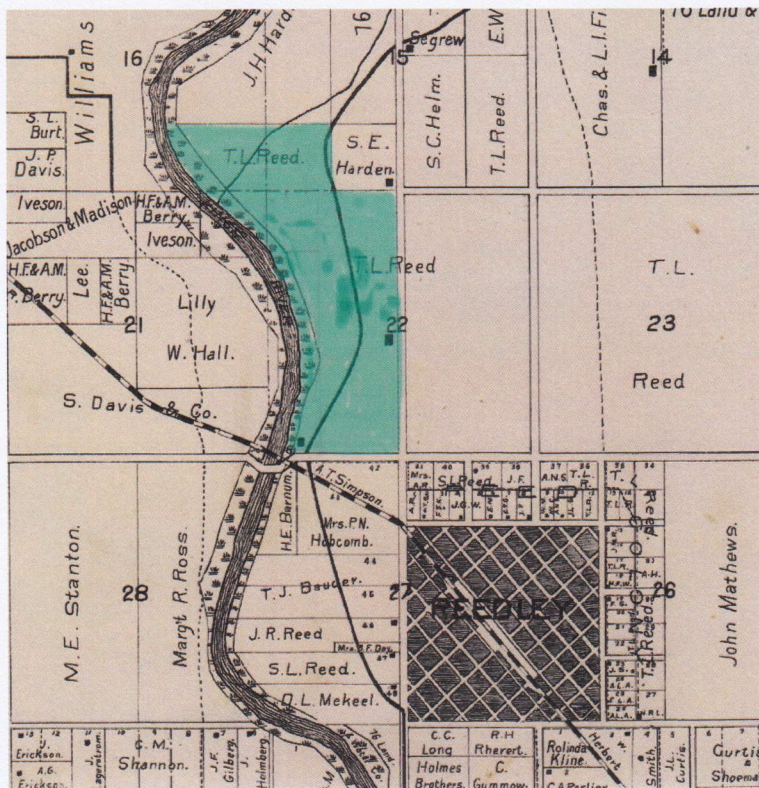
Article from *The Traver Advocate* newspaper, May 26, 1888



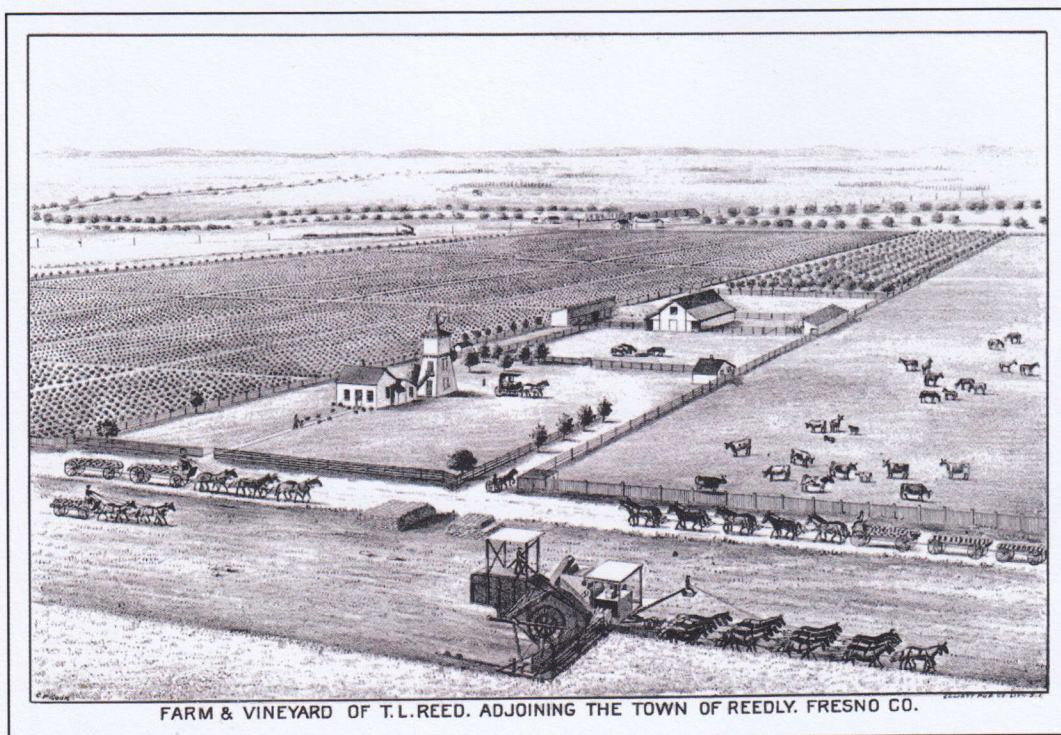
Thomas Law Reed family, circa 1892. L to R., top, Jessie, Horace, Nina, Edmond; bottom, Dollie, Amantha, T. L., Imogene.



T. L. Reed home and ranch, circa 1891



Detail from Thompson's 1891 Fresno County atlas, T15S R23E,
with Reed Home Ranch shaded



Idealized illustration of Reed Home Ranch, from
California Homes & Industries: Fresno Illustrated, 1891



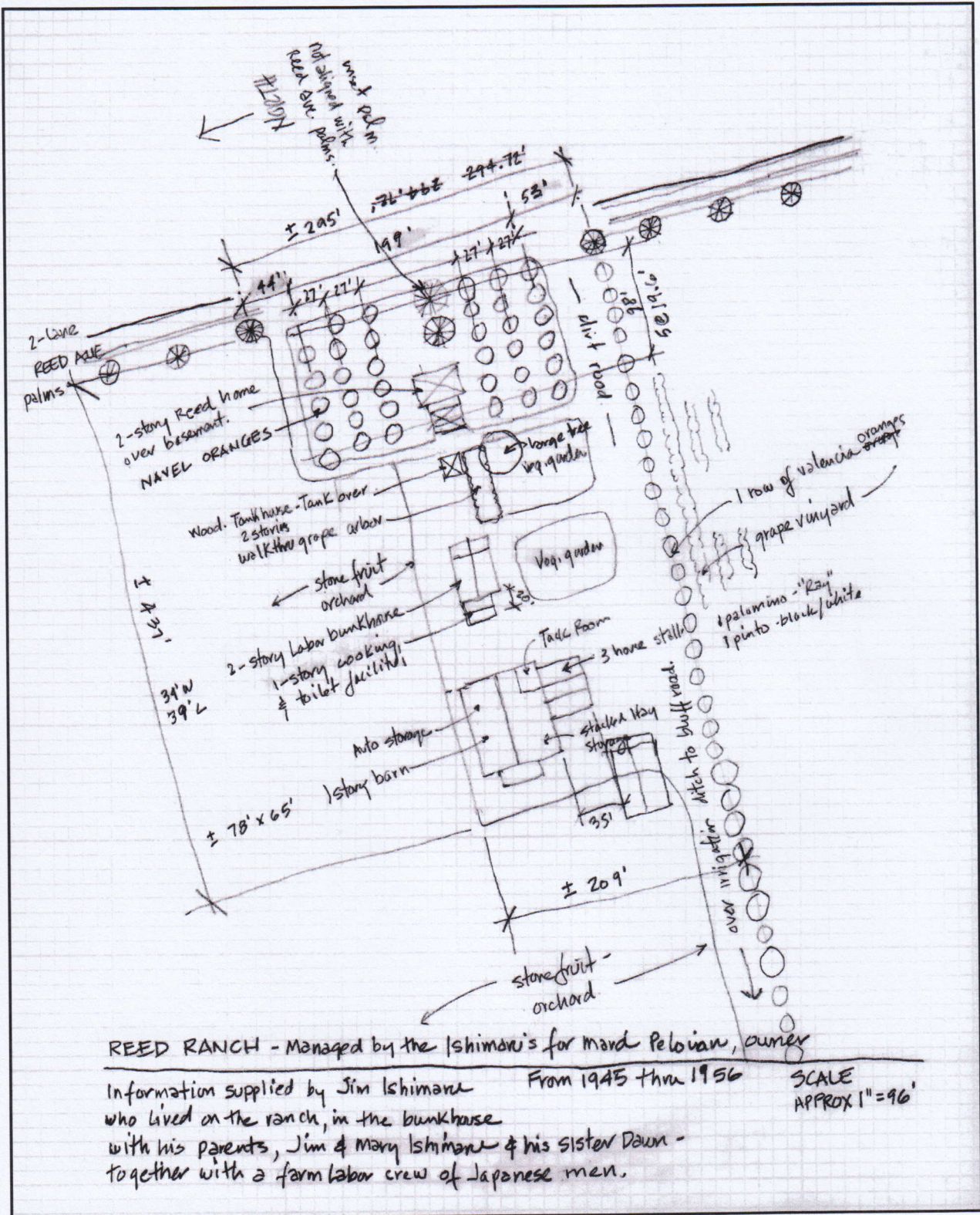
Harvest morning on the T. L. Reed ranch, August 15, 1892.
T. L. and Amantha Reed in buggy.



Second, and last, T. L. Reed home, built on the Home Ranch in 1908.



Reed Ranch house and farm buildings circa 1950s.



Site map of Reed Ranch home and farm buildings, drawn by Jim Ishimaru, resident of property from 1945 through 1956



Satellite view of south end of Reedley College campus and former Reed Ranch Home Ranch, Google Earth Pro, April 2020. Site of home and farm buildings marked with rectangle on right side, right circle is location of Canary Island date palm, left circle is location of historical society marker.



Dedication of Reed Ranch historic marker with Reed family descendants, March 8, 1992



Dedication of marker on surviving Canary Island date palm,
El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust, September 16, 2000



Reed Ranch palm trees along Reed Avenue, August 2020



Reed Ranch palm trees along former alignment of Manning Avenue, August 2020

Photos courtesy of the Reedley Historical Society and Kenneth Zech



LANDMARK #349 Reed Ranch (1886) 955 N. Reed Ave., Reedley

The site of the Thomas Law Reed Home Farm is a historically significant place in the city of Reedley relative to the city's founding. Reed was an early area settler and owner of the property that came to be the Reedley town site. His agreement to deed over a portion of his property to the Pacific Improvement Company in return for the establishment of a Southern Pacific Railroad depot resulted in the town's founding. His subsequent activities in selling land, building businesses, and supporting community development assured the success of the new town of Reedley.

FROM THE FRESNO COUNTY HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND RECORDS ADVISORY COMMISSION



Board Agenda Item 4

DATE: May 11, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Raman Bath, County Librarian
David Rodriguez, Chair, Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission

SUBJECT: Historic Landmark - Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch Site

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

- 1. Approve designation and placement of the Site of the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch on the County's Register of Historic Places; and**
- 2. Authorize the Chairman to execute the certificate for an Historic Place.**

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions. Approval of the first recommended action will allow the Site of the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch to be placed on the County's List of Historic Places. The Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission recommends historic and prehistoric sites and structures to be listed on the Fresno County's List of Historic Places. Approval of the second recommended action will allow for the Board chairman to execute the certificate for a Historic Place. Approval by the Board of Supervisors encourages preservation of the County's history. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Your Board could choose to not approve these actions, which would result in the Site of the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch not being placed on the County's Register of Historic Places at this time.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions.

DISCUSSION:

The Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission, with the support of Dr. Jerry L. Buckley, President of Reedley College is recommending your Board approve the application to add the Site of the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch to the County's List of Historic Places.

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Reed Family and Settlement on the Site

Thomas Law "T. L." Reed was born in Ohio in 1847 and served in the United States Civil War. Reed married Amantha Ann Smith in 1868. Reed came to California in the summer of 1876 to investigate the prospects for farming. He originally found opportunity in the Woodland area of Yolo County. It was here that Reed's wife and children joined him in late 1876.

In March of 1884, Reed made his move to what was then known as Smith's Ferry, Fresno County where he began a steady expansion of his farming operation. In 1886, he purchased over 1,200 acres, including the parcel that is now the campus of Reedley College. The Reeds built a home on this property in the same year, and thus established what was to be their "Home Ranch."

In 1888, the Southern Pacific Railroad was building a branch line through the area heading south to Porterville. Reed deeded a half-interest in a 360-acre town site to the Pacific Improvement Company, a Southern Pacific subsidiary, and in return they established a depot along the new rail line.

Settlers began to populate the town that would grow up around the depot and Reed sold town lots and 5- and 10-acre colony lots adjacent to the townsite. Thus, in 1888, a new town was created, named "Reedley" by the railroad. Soon, buildings and streets grew amid the wheat fields that paralleled the railroad tracks. T. L. Reed built and owned the town's first hotel, livery stable, and blacksmith shop. He established the first warehouse using a 500-foot long building hauled in from Traver. He donated land and helped establish the area's first school. He helped build the first church and helped furnish a second. Reed was a founding director of the Alta Irrigation District (which assumed control of the existing canal system) and was among the first to lobby for the building of a dam on the Kings River.

Reed farmed 15,000 acres in the area and another 14,000 acres in the Chowchilla area at the peak of his farming activities. Pioneer historian, John McCubbin, who knew and worked with Reed, wrote that Reed "was known as one of the wheat barons of California." The Reeds suffered great losses when the wheat market collapsed during the economic depression known as the Panic of 1893. It was during this period that the Reeds, along with many other farmers in Fresno County, turned their focus to permanent crops.

Sometime in the mid to late 1890s the Reeds planted a series of California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) along the Reed and Manning Avenue property lines of the ranch. These are commonly called border trees. It is estimated that 125 palms were a part of the original planting. The second Reed home on the property was built in 1908. There were several other buildings at this home site including a barn, two-story labor bunk house, and a tank house. The two-story house had a river rock foundation. Front yard landscaping included at least two Canary Island date palms.

T. L. Reed died in 1911 at the age of 64. Amantha Reed died five years later. Both are buried in the Reedley District Cemetery. Following the deaths of T. L. and Amantha Reed, son Edmond Reed and family occupied the home. The exact location of the original Reed home on the ranch property is uncertain. The house remained existent on the college property until the 1970s when it was demolished.

The Site Today

The 420-acre site retains little evidence of its historic use as the Thomas Law Reed Home Ranch. The site now serves as the campus of Reedley College. The southern portion of the site is developed with numerous buildings. The northern portion serves as the college's Agriculture Department farm.

The only clearly visible evidence of the Reed Home Ranch era are 61 California fan palm trees that border the eastern side of the property and the southern edge along the former alignment of Manning Avenue, and a lone Canary Island date palm that stood in the front yard of the second, and last, Reed home on the property. With some searching, but not visible from any road, one can find stones from the second house foundation scattered in the orchard that now occupies the home site.

Historical Markers on the Site

On March 8, 1992, the Reedley Historical Society placed and dedicated a marker on the Reedley College campus commemorating the establishment of the T. L. Reed Ranch on that site. The marker is located near the flagpole in front of the college's Administration Building.

On September 16, 2000, the El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust placed and dedicated a plaque on the surviving Canary Island date palm as a "living monument" to the establishment of the Reed Ranch Headquarters at that place.

The Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission first reviewed information on this location during its 3/18/21 meeting and unanimously voted to recommend that the location be listed on the Fresno County's List of Historic Places.

OTHER REVIEWING AGENCIES:

Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - Historic Place Certificate

CAO ANALYST:

Raul Guerra

FRESNO COUNTY HISTORICAL LANDMARK

BY ACTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SITE OF THE THOMAS LAW REED HOME RANCH

IS DESIGNATED AS A HISTORICAL LANDMARK



CHAIR, FRESNO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

CHAIR, HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND RECORDS COMMISSION

MAY 11, 2021

DATE