

Growing Population of Porterville

By late 1861, a store and stopping place along the Emigrant Trail was established by Royal Porter Putnam at what today is the northeast corner of Main and Oak Street in Porterville. Americans continued to fill the county. By 1874, there were three general merchandise stores in Porterville, one hotel, two restaurants, two blacksmith shops and several saloons, and a population of nearly 300 settlers.

Ranching had been the primary occupation of the settlers, but serious farming was made possible by passage of the no-fence law in the state legislature of 1872-1873.

The farmers came in rapidly and settled in Tulare, Kern and the San Joaquin counties, as stockmen were required to herd their stock and protect the crops of the farmer, who had no fences. Lack of fences had been a problem on the reservation, as reported by the agent in 1870: "The corn, potatoes, pumpkins, squashes, beans, melons, grapes, etc., were nearly destroyed by several hundred hogs belonging to white men in the neighborhood of the reservation." The government in Washington would not authorize funds to replace the brush fences built by the Indians with more effective protection for their crops.

The settlers began to make demands for removal of the Tule River Farm to a more distant location. Several Indian agents clamored to provide the Indians with a more permanent home. Some also argued the need to separate the Indians from unscrupulous individuals who entered the reservation to entice the Indians to buy cheap liquor. These liquor sellers were sometimes caught, but it was impossible to get a jury to convict them.