HISTORY OF FARMERSVILLE, CALIFORNIA

EXETER SUN, 7 FEB, 1979

Members of the Exeter Historical Society heard a highly interesting account of early Farmersville and its leading pioneer merchant, THOMAS J. BRUNDAGE, on Sunday given by his grand daughter Josephine Brundage Pinkman. Mrs. Pimkham is the wife of the Tulare County Historical Society's new president, Eben Pinkham of Exeter. Mrs. Pinkham is the daughter of the late Oscar Brundage, son of Thomas, who took over his father's store and operated it for many years before becoming a developer of residential subdivisions. Mrs. Pinkham quoted from her grandfather's diary regarding incidents in his life.

Thomas J. Brundage was a member of a 100 wagon train that went to Virginia City, Montana, in 1864. The train members encountered many hardships, including a daylong battle with Indians on the Powder River. He returned to his home in McCutchanville, Ohio in the winter of that year. They traveled down the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers and again enduring many difficulties.

In 1865 Thomas and his brother, Ben, came to California, crossing Nicaragua to the Pacific and taking passage to San Francisco in the ship Moses Taylor. Thomas came to Farmersville and taught at the Deep Creek School, which stood just east of the present cemetery. In 1868 he purchased the general merchandise store, which was opened just two years before, by Merrill Jasper and his brother-in-law John Crowley. Brundage became the Post Master and is credited with having the community named Farmersville by the post office department.

The store stood near the old Los Angeles-Stockton road, it not only served the people in the area but also a trading center for residents of Yokohl Valley, and the mountains to the east. Brundage freighted his merchandise from Crow's Landing before the advent of the Union Pacific Railroad. He also had a pack train freighting business to Owens Valley mining towns.

He married Rosamond Crowley, daughter of Greenbury Crowley, and they raised a family of three daughters and four sons. The T. J. Brundage family lived in a two-story home situated on the northeast corner of the present "four-corners". The Landscaped property was a show place in the area. The original store was just east of the Brundage home and to the east of it was the Brown Hotel. To the west was a blacksmith shop and on the south corner was a two-story community building, which they used for school, church, fraternal, and social purposes.

Across the street from the store was the Brundage lumber yard, which burned when Mrs. Pinkham was a small child. When her father, Oscar took over the store, he built a brick structure across the street in 1910 and 1911. His home was also across the street from the old store. The store was subject to burglaries and holdups, once a pair of

men whom Brundage believed to be Chris Evans and John Santag. The money that they took they returned it later with a thank you note.

J. T. Brundage was also a justice of the peace in Farmersville, (he married Frederick Jordan and his wife). Mrs. Pinkham told of many amusing incidents, including one in which Brundage was invited to a chicken dinner, featuring his own prize flock, which had been steadily disappearing for many days. Brundage missed a saddle from his store and, in the once-a-year billing, which was the custom in those days, he included a bill for the saddle. All but one customer protested, and that one paid the bill with no questions asked.

Oscar and his brother Frank took over the store from their father. Oscar was a graduate of the old Visalia Normal School and attended business collage in Santa Cruz. He was the first agent for the Southern Pacific when it built its line to Farmersville. Farmersville students who attended Exeter Union High School traveled for a time by train but later in what was called a "the Jitney".

Thomas Brundage's brother, Ben, went to Havilah, then the Kern County seat, and became the county's first superior court judge. A well known thoroughfare in the Bakersfield area, Brundage Lane was named for him.