



In 1897 Visalia's first high school was built here. When Visalia High School (now Redwood High) opened in 1911, this school became Lincoln Elementary School. The first kindergartens – a new idea in the 1910s – were at Lincoln and at Washington schools. In 1922 Lincoln School was declared unsafe and was torn down.

Stop for a bite to eat at a unique spot – Ofelia's. Ofelia has been serving tacos through her window since the 1970s. After eating, stroll part way around the oval to NE Third Street. Note the nicely cared for old homes at 109 and 117. An Incense Cedar in the front yard of 117 gives constant greenery plus a nice odor.

The stores here show the varied ethnicity of this area. Brothers Oriental Market serves the Laotian immigrants, while La Fiesta market deals in Mexican specialties. This area around the oval has always been racially mixed. One block over (on NE Fourth Street) was the first school in Visalia for African-Americans, known as the "Visalia Colored School."

Opened in 1873, it served the African-American and Mexican-American communities plus any Native Americans in the area. The teacher, Mr. Daniel Scott, was paid by the Visalia Unified School District. The school building was little more than a shack, with a pen and garden area outside for students to learn farming. The bathrooms were also outside.



The "Visalia Colored School" ca. 1875

Some nearby districts sent their “Negro” children to this school in Visalia, but if the distance was over five miles in those days few children of any color went to school. Many small school districts in Tulare County allowed children of color to attend the same school as white children, but Visalia did not.

In 1888 Arthur Wysinger, a 16-year-old, applied for admission to Visalia Public High School. He had graduated from the highest class available in the “colored” school. He was denied admittance on the basis of his race – he was African-American. The Wysingers brought suit and lost in the local courts. But in January of 1890 the Supreme Court of California reversed the lower courts. The case was the first school segregation lawsuit in California and one of the first in the United States. The Wysinger family had moved to Oakland by the time it was decided.

Turn left on Grape Street and notice the large red-barked eucalyptus tree at the edge of a vacant lot. These trees withstand drought and abuse yet remain strong. Note the dense rounded crown casting much needed shade. Although the story is that the first eucalyptus were brought here by mistake – Aussies would not give away any good timber varieties – these hardy trees are successful here.

Head back to Court Street on NE Fifth Street. Here the yards are beautifully cared for, with many large trees – magnolias, oaks, pines, ash, eucalyptus, acacia, and others. There is not much fancy here, just people proudly caring for their own property.

Specialty Beverages operated three bottling lines in the run-down building on the corner of Court and NW Fifth Street until 1991 5. The factory

operations moved out to the winery near Orosi on Highway 63 then, but this eyesore remains.

Wittman Village

Jog south on Court to Pearl, past the Wittman Village Center and Village Park 6. This community center is run by a non-profit corporation that was established with the help from the city of Visalia. Sports coaching, classes, and a study hall are provided. Breakfast and lunch are provided for school-age children who are on vacation.

Where the diagonal streets meet the North-South East-West grid, there are some interesting triangles. These make pleasant little parks that often contain large trees and interesting flowers. They are cared for by the city and by the people in the neighborhoods around them.



Triangle Park

Mixed housing uses in this area make the single family homes less desirable, yet most of the homes are proudly cared for. On the corner of NW Second Street, the owner has tied together two mulberries to make a green arch over the front walkway.

Pearl dead-ends into NE First Street under a grove of sycamores. Jog right to Floral and head south.

Thick buttresses and wide eave boards distinguish the Harry J. Hays house at 829 N. Floral. This shingle-sided Craftsman bungalow was built about 1910 for Hays, who was a director of the Mt. Whitney Power Company.

Before the corner of Floral and Grove **7**, you will pass under one of the largest Chinaberry Trees in Visalia. The large violet flower clusters in May are followed by copious quantities of hard yellow berries. The berries can be poisonous if enough are eaten, but birds like them.



First Cadillac in Town

Looking to your left, the structure at 208 West Grove is the Spalding Carriage House **7**. It was built as a garage for the Spalding House, which is the large colonial revival home at 631 N. Encina. William Spalding owned a lumber company and evidently did very well. He had one of the first automobiles in town – a

Reo Roadster. His wife had the first electric car in Visalia, a Baker. In 1907 Mr. Spalding bought a new Cadillac, which he protected by remodeling this garage to accept automobiles.

At the corner of Floral and Race, the Queen Anne cottage with a corner porch covered by a flared roof was built by C.J. Giddings in 1905. Giddings was a banker and the treasurer of Visalia. The George Deppler Smith house is across the street – a large shingled Craftsman bungalow from 1910.

The Silver Maples along Floral here cast a nice shade and seem to do well in the valley even though they are native to the Eastern U.S. where they are considered little better than trash trees. Silver Maples grow fast and are well shaped, but the branches break easily and the leaves turn a dull brown in the fall (unlike the bright reds of the Sugar Maple, which does not grow well here). The Silver Maple is named for the gray bark and silvery underside of the leaves.

Many of the old houses in this area are being turned into offices. The Colonial Revival house at 403 N. Floral **8** is now law offices; in 1902 it was built as a wedding gift for J. E. Combs and his wife, paid for by the bride's father, S. C. Brown. The clinker brick and the shingles show the influence of the new Craftsman style,



Tulare

AND FRESNO



Record

EXAMINER.

VOLUME I.

VISALIA, CALIFORNIA: SATURDAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1859.

NUMBER 3.

while the symmetrical design and the details of the roof overhangs emphasize the Colonial style.

The *Times-Delta* Newspaper claims its 150th year in 2011, but that claim is a little arbitrary. The first paper published here was the weekly *Tulare County Record and Fresno Examiner*, in June 1859. The offices and press were in the basement of the county courthouse. After two months of publication, it was purchased by John Shannon, who was a Democrat and southern sympathizer. He changed the name of the paper to the *Weekly Delta*. In September 1860, William Gouvneur Morris started the *Visalia Sun*, which supported Republican causes and President Lincoln. In November of that year Morris and Shannon met in a duel over editorials. Morris shot and killed Shannon. He was acquitted on the grounds that Shannon was the instigator.

On his deathbed, Shannon asked his attorney, L.O. Sterns, to take over the *Weekly Delta*. Sterns soon sold it to two men who changed its policy to support the Union cause, and by the end of the year the *Delta* had absorbed the *Sun*.

Visalia was not a one-paper town for long. *The Equal Rights Expositor* started in September 1862. This weekly strongly supported secession and southern causes.

In March of 1863 Union troops from Fort Visalia entered the office and threw the presses into the street in protest of an anti-Lincoln editorial.

In 1865 another weekly started, the *Tulare Times*. This paper was also successful, but it was not until 1892, under the leadership of owner Ben Maddox, that it became a daily paper, delivered in the afternoon. On the same day, the *Delta* started publishing daily in the morning. On March 1, 1928 the two papers merged, creating the *Visalia Times-Delta*. In 1967 the press moved from the corner of Acequia and Court to this block with the offices fronting on West Street.

Turn left on School and return to the library. At the corner of Floral and School is an Eastlake style Victorian cottage built in 1896. The owners are repairing it to its former beauty. The spindle decoration on the porches and the curved brackets over the windows are hallmarks of this style.

Head back to Main Street where we started. There are lots of places near here to get a bite to eat after your 2.5 mile walk.