

A Caduceus History of Chico High School

Compiled from the volumes of the Chico High Caduceus

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An examination of the many past volumes of the Caduceus, Chico High School's Annual Yearbook, reveals a great deal about the character of Chico High School as it displays our school's history through the 20th Century and into the new Millennium. It does not take long for a reader to realize that certain themes, values and traits soon emerged in the history of Chico High School, which gave shape to a school that would be adorned by continuing successes throughout its long history.

As we page through the volumes of the Caduceus, we regularly see the names of those who figure prominently in the Chico of yesterday and today. We see the names of those who have left Chico to assume important roles in other parts of our state and nation. We also see the hopes, dreams and aspirations of generation after generation of young Chicoans unfold in an inspiring and optimistic pattern. It is clear, from this reflection on our nearly 100 years of yearbooks that Chico High School has developed a history of achievement that has continually improved through the ages.

From its earliest days Chico High School was a place where its students were a high priority. It carries forth a legacy where the educational program is created and reshaped to constantly serve student needs. Chico High School has always been a place where students have participated in the important decision-making, and where the educational community was formed as an integral part of Chico and the surrounding area. This is clearly a history of an unusual educational institution, with its students, administration, faculty, and staff very much involved in various aspects of their community, state and country as they live out their daily lives as an important part of the educational community known as Chico High.

Building The Foundation

The earliest attempts to establish a high school for the Chico School District were made in 1875 and 1893. When two special bond issues were called, both in 1896, to raise funds for construction of a new high school, they failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority vote. In the meantime, a privately financed high school class was being conducted at the old Oakdale School. Then, in 1898, a ninth grade program was added to the public schools curriculum, which further generated interest in higher education. So on April 19, 1902, a highly successful special election was held in the district whereby Chico High School was established. Plans then progressed rapidly, and William M. Mackay was selected to serve as the school's first principal.

Chico High School began its first session on September 2, 1902, when its principal, William M. Mackay, introduced himself and his faculty to the 46 students. The new school was visited four months later, in January of 1903, by a University of California "examiner" who congratulated the Chico community for "the intelligent efforts that are being put forth to make a first-class High School". He predicted that Chico would soon have "one of the best schools in the commonwealth." The examiner's prediction quickly began to be fulfilled, as Chico High School students soon developed a record and tradition of academic excellence and athletic championships.

For its first few years the classes temporarily met on the third floor of the Oakdale School Building. In April, 1905 Chico High School moved to its first "permanent" building -- an elegant Grecian style edifice, surrounded by grand old cherry trees on three and a half acres purchased out of the famed Bidwell cherry orchard.

The school's yearbook, the Caduceus, first appeared with the first graduating class at the end of the second year, in 1904. It recounts some of the important events that had occurred during that time. The first Caduceus was dedicated to Mr. Mackay, the school's principal, who "has been not only chief of our faculty but also a wise friend and a companion to each pupil."

The name "Caduceus" was selected by a special committee of students, harkening back to the rod carried by the Greek god Hermes which, while "signifying power, was entwined with serpents, denoting wisdom, and adorned with wings of activity." It was the students' hope in the naming of their annual publication with this symbol "to bring strength, to furnish wholesome amusement, and to stir the great activities of our friends and fellow students." The typical Caduceus of that period included poems, essays and other literary writings by its students, along with its record of the year's educational and extracurricular events.

The introduction to the 1904 Caduceus covers the founding and brief history of the school, from which most of these notes are taken. After giving appropriate thanks for the creation of the school to the community and its elected board of trustees, the section ends with the following words, which proved to be accurately prophetic. "If the community will continue to give the High School its enthusiastic support, there is no reason why it should not have one of the foremost secondary schools in the state." In addition to a century filled with honors and outstanding achievements by its students, Chico High School is one of only a few high schools to have twice received the California Distinguished School designation from the California Department of Education, and to have been twice recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

In August of 1903 the school's second year began with the enrollment having grown to 72 students. During the first year of school there had been three teachers, one of which taught part-time. Another three teachers were added by the end of the school year in 1904. This was due to a large influx of new students, some of whom were of advanced standing, bringing the student body to over 100. It also allowed for the first graduating class of six students, whose commencement took place in the Chico Opera House.

Along with the principal, who taught Latin and mathematics, by the fall of 1904 the five additional teachers taught English, German, Latin, Science, Drawing, History, and Commerce. That year the school newspaper, The Red and Gold was first published. A school orchestra performed regularly, and the Alumni Association was formed. Clubs and social activities were a vital part of campus life. Among the most popular were the Mandolin Club, Girls' Glee Club, and Orchestra.

While proud that the school had won the '03 baseball championship, the '04 basketball championship, and the '03-'04 football championship, the editors of the Caduceus were careful to point out that "at no time has the school work been sacrificed for athletics." They note that students were taken from the various teams when the principal found their schoolwork to be unsatisfactory.

The Caduceus of '05 carried forward a broad view of the Chico High student's place in the world, along with a bright outlook that was also evident in the yearbook of '04. The volume was dedicated to their teacher, Miss Gertrude Berg "whose untiring zeal and devotion to her work has made our English department well known throughout the state for its efficiency." In

this yearbook there shines a vision of the students of something much larger than the local area. In the foreword the editors state that they have been guided by the precedent of the first Caduceus. And they add a new goal for their publication, desiring it to be "a medium by which our High School will establish itself among the High Schools of the State as a strictly modern educational institution."

A sense of historical awareness is present as the Caduceus editors muse on the image of their graduates, years hence, leafing through the yearbook pages and recall their years at Chico High School as "one of the most important periods of their lives, a period of which, while yet under the influence of home, they were being daily prepared for their future tasks in life." A picture of their new high school building on First Street appears near the front of the book, and considerable space is devoted to proudly describing this graceful structure with Grecian outlines, "surrounded by the grand old cherry trees of the Bidwell orchard," and commanding a view of the "whole length of High Street (formerly Hazel)." Among its noted features was a library with a folding wall that opens to an assembly hall with a seating capacity for more than 300. In a recounting of its brief history, it is noted that the first Student Government was formed in January 1903, and Kenneth Jones was elected to serve as president. In the fall of '03 Elbert Porter was elected as the second in a long line of student body presidents, while in January of '04 Miss Erle Woods became the first female and third president of the associated students of Chico High, establishing an early tradition of egalitarianism for the school.

Among the new sections of the '05 Caduceus is "Exchanges", in which comments and critiques are made on the publications exchanged with other high schools of California. These ranged from Los Angeles and San Bernardino in the southern area of the state, to Corning and Sacramento in the North. In the "Organizations" section, a picture entitled "Brewing of the Hell Broth" is shown with two-dozen people in cowled robes, taken during an initiation ceremony of the Skull and Owl Club (which is described as a secret society.) The yearbook carefully notes that the club is "not a 'frat' or clique, but a society open to each and every boy who conforms to its regulations." On June 16, 1905 Chico High School ended its third year, with graduation taking place in the assembly room of the brand new school building. Total enrollment was 150 that year, with an average daily attendance of 125.

The 1906 Caduceus was proudly dedicated to the 31 members of "The Class of '06". The decision was made by the student body in order to honor the first graduating class "whose secondary work has been done entirely in the Chico High School." Pride in their relatively new school building is evident by their inclusion of three pictures that show the Assembly Hall with folding doors opened to the library, plus a view of the main corridor, and picture of the entire building taken from across First Street. It was noted that the small number of pictures and graphics in this year's Caduceus was due to the destruction of many printing establishments in the San Francisco earthquake and fire earlier that year.

Many improvements were made during the year, including the hiring of two new teachers, and expansion of the curriculum to include courses in Photography and Physiography in the Science Department, Geometric Drawing in the Drawing department, and a course in Commercial Spelling and Correspondence. Many improvements to the building that year were described, such as the completion of the recitation room and a dark room for photography, and plumbing was installed in the science labs. A fire occurred just after the start of the school year caused damage to an office and walls of the hallways, but were quickly repaired without disruption to the schedule. The grounds were landscaped with palms, pecans, European sycamores and walnut trees, along with cement walkways to the entrances. It was also pointed

out that formation that year of the "Skull and Owl" band made Chico High "the only school in the state having a High School Band."

The Alumni Notes of the 1907 Caduceus listed the whereabouts of the members of its three graduating classes, as a way to "gauge the work of our school". Six were attending the University of California, two were at Stanford University, and eight were attending Chico Normal School (now called Chico State.) Several were employed with good jobs in Chico businesses, while several had left the area for work, including the principalship of a school in Amador County.

A tradition of community awareness and service emerged in 1906 when much of the students' extra-curricular energies were dedicated to sending help to victims of the Great San Francisco Earthquake. By spring of 1907 C.H.S. was a member of two athletic leagues, and had won at least one championship in each of the sports in which its teams participated. In 1910 Chico High School stunned the sports world when its team of six men won the annual Stanford University Invitational Track Meet. This competition invited "the best high school athletes of California, Oregon and Washington."

By 1910, 21 championships had been won in four major sports. The 1911 Caduceus commented that the reasons for C.H.S. successes were due to "the fact that every student is filled with an enthusiastic school spirit, which has always been manifested by the members of the Chico High School." Among the most popular sports of this era were: track, football, baseball, basketball and tennis.

When fire destroyed the original C.H.S. building in January, 1911, the captain of the football team and several other boys rescued the school records and thirteen trophies. Classes met in the Presbyterian Church for the remainder of the school year. A new building was completed in July of the same year, and included space for the first C.H.S. library. In 1914 a popular event was the annual Thanksgiving football game against archrival Normal High, prefaced with a bonfire rally and parade through downtown Chico the night before. Chico High's first Principal, Mr. Mackay, served his thirteenth and last year at Chico High in 1915, the second longest of any principal (exceeded only by Mr. Roger Williams, the current principal.)

In 1917 a new tradition of service was begun when a number of C.H.S. students left to serve in the U.S. military services fighting the World War in Europe. Most of the school activities were given over to fundraising and social events dedicated to supporting the war effort during those years. In 1918 the first C.H.S. band was formed, and the orchestra became a jazz band. There were 500 students in attendance, with 20 faculty members, and a graduating class of 66.

Postwar Growth Moves C.H.S. to the Esplanade Site

Extra excitement was added to the 1920 school year when construction began on a new C.H.S. campus (its current site) located on former Bidwell Mansion grounds, 300 feet back from The Esplanade. The laying of the cornerstone was accompanied by ceremonies and celebration on October 1, 1920. That year the annual "Jazz Party" was inaugurated. This event featured orchestral selections, singing, and a series of boxing matches. That year a student court was started, the only one in northern California, in which students selected by their peers conducted discipline hearings and meted out punishment "without faculty interference". A "most momentous event" occurred on April 28, 1922 when the entire student body and faculty moved from the old campus to the newly completed site.

By 1922 there were over 1,000 students enrolled in C.H.S., with extension campuses being provided at Paradise and Stirling City. Students who attended their 9-10th grades there would spend their 11-12th grades attending the Chico campus. By 1923 there were 200 attending the Night School program for adults and day students, as well as 90 in the program for part-time attendees. The regular C.H.S. curriculum included classes in Wireless Radio. The Automobile Repair Class was taught in a school shop that was "the most modern and best equipped north of Oakland."

The Agriculture Club was organized, and a few years later changed its name to Future Farmers of America. In 1925 the Carpentry Class began, and the class project was to build "a five room bungalow equipped with modern plumbing and electrical fixtures" in Chico. That same year the Forum players presented regular Monday night broadcasts of plays over radio station KFWH, "the only H.S. west of Boise to broadcast its own shows." Color appeared in the Caduceus for the first time.

Golf was added as a team sport in 1926. In the 1927-28 school year a Boys Cooking Class was added, and one boy won a cake-baking contest "in which over 100 Chico housewives also competed." A photography club was started that year, and the next year saw the beginning of the Aviation Club, Foreign Correspondence, Science Club, Stagecraft, Stamp Club, and the Studio Club for artists. The Alumni Association was reestablished in 1929, with the Caduceus noting that it counted 1,554 graduates from the 25 graduating classes.

Depression and Hard Times Were A Challenge Accepted

In 1930-31 the Royal Russian Chorus and Band performed at C.H.S. A Parliamentary Law club was formed, as well as a Debating Club, along with the Commercial Achievement Club and Home Economics Club. The next year the Radio and Aviation Clubs joined to become the Engineers Club. It was very common for the Caduceus to note that one or more of the sports teams had captured the league championship for the third, fourth or fifth year in a row, and it earlier stopped keeping track of the totals. The mascot during this period was the "Golden Panther". During the 1930s a new gymnasium was built, and the Boys and Girls Glee Clubs regularly performed for KHSL radio programs. Girls' athletic teams were, for the most part, intramural by this time. The Dianas and Albatross teams engaged in competing in several sports after school, and at occasionally other schools were invited to "Playdays".

By the end of the decade a Cadet Corps of 140 boys had been formed. They wore uniforms, drilled together, and had a competitive rifle team. Many of its members were also in the National Guard. The Spanish language had by now been taught for a number of years, and many of its students formed the popular Pan American Forum (years later changing its name to the Spanish Club.) The largest club on campus was the Junior Classic League, with 150 members dedicated to the study of Latin and "handing on the torch of classical civilization in the modern world." It was the second largest such club in the U.S.

Chico High Responds To Another World Challenge

The 1942 Caduceus was dedicated to the "men and women in the armed services". Its forward addressed the issues of War and Peace, while its pages noted that the school shop went on 24-hour schedule to train workers for the war industries. Basketball competitions and track meets were canceled due to the shortage of gasoline and rubber for tires. Parents provided the transportation for what few athletic events occurred that year. In 1942 it was noted that pictures were missing since many students had left for the armed forces. A "Victory Corps" training

program was begun to provide pre-induction technical training. The emphasis in all classes was support of the war effort. Funds were raised to purchase six jeeps for donation to the U.S. Army.

The 1945 Caduceus pictured the football team back in action for the full season, capturing the league championship. An English Club was formed, as well as the Win the Peace Club, "to study causes of war, present and post-war problems." They held debates, forums, and discussions.

During the latter part of the Forties a new athletic field was dedicated. The largest clubs were the Junior Classic League, Pan American Forum, Home Economics, and the Future Farmers of America. The Ski Club was organized in 1947. The C.H.S. band and orchestra took many awards, performing at the State Music Festival in Berkeley, while the choir regularly performed over the radio and before many Chico clubs and civic organizations. The Pep Club put on many pre-game rallies, which featured stunts, skits and yells.

Expansion and Growth With Post-War Prosperity

The Fifties saw a major change at C.H.S., with the move of the Ninth Grade to the new Junior High School in the fall of 1953. For the very first time there were only 10th through 12th grades at C.S.H.S. Yet the student population was over 1,300, with 61 faculty members. For the month of September, the C.H.S. campus used double sessions to host the 1,200 J.H.S. students, who were unable to occupy their new campus due to construction delays. This 10-12 grade arrangement lasted another forty years.

The Fifties indeed appear to be "Happy Days" for the school. The French Club began in 1950. The Vocal Quintet won First Place at the State Music Festival in Berkeley, with both the Band and Choir taking high honors. By 1952-53 the C.H.S. Band was rated as one of the best in northern California, and performed at halftime during the California-Missouri football game. In 1957 they played for the Cal-Oregon game, and took First Place in the Berkeley Band Day competition. The C.H.S. band was one of three chosen to perform for the National Music Educators' Conference in Berkeley, winning many other honors. Boxing was becoming a popular sport, and the traditional "Jazz Party" was still an annual happening, now allowing girls to attend. Latin continued being taught, and the Junior Classic League was noted as consistently being one of the largest clubs of its kind in the U.S. over the span of fifteen years.

The FFA was very active in district and state meetings, gaining national recognition, with one student invited to the National Convention in Kansas City in 1955. During the 1956-57 year the Red and Gold editors were honored to represent Chico High at journalism conferences at The University of Washington, and Northwestern University in Illinois. As usual, the athletic teams won many league and conference championships. The Girls Student League contributed many volunteer hours, organizing such activities as parties for the children of the Cerebral Palsy School, and acted as Big Sisters during Orientation. The Quill and Scroll Society was a very active club, which made field trips to the major newspaper, radio, and TV stations in the Bay Area.

A New Perspective Emerges During the Cold War

In the Sixties the international perspective at C.H.S. expanded even more when the American Field Service program of exchange students was inaugurated, and the first exchange student came here from Argentina. Over the Cold War years many foreign students lived and learned in the C.H.S. community. In 1962, twenty C.H.S. Spanish students made a trip to Mexico. During the 1962-63 year, over 1,600 students were attending C.H.S. The campus was

also closed. For the first time in the school's history lunch times and assemblies were staggered. This overpopulation was relieved in the latter part of the decade when a new high school was built. Oroville was replaced as the traditional athletic rival by Pleasant Valley Senior High School. But the biggest event of the decade was when the new Chico High School buildings were constructed in the interest of earthquake safety, replacing the building that stood for over forty years.

During this decade sports rallies were reduced in number, and car parades were canceled due to traffic problems. Wrestling was added as a school sport, with three students making it to the state championship meet. The Panther Booster Club for parents was begun. The English Department introduced the Reading Center to emphasize the improvement of reading skills. Automation was introduced to the Business Department through the installation of an IBM data processing system. More than two-thirds of all students took classes in that department. The Hootenanny became a regular event, and a student protest of the school cafeteria was noted in 1967-68. Guest speakers from the John Birch Society and student representatives from the Student Strike at San Francisco State visited the campus, as well as an Olympic medallist who gained fame through his Black power salute on the victory stand.

The International Perspective Blossoms

Flexible scheduling and an open campus greeted the students at the beginning of the Seventies. The first annual Almond Bowl was won by the Chico High Varsity Football Team, and a new floor was installed in the gymnasium. The music department accepted an invitation to perform at the First Annual International Youth Festival in Berlin, Germany, raising the money necessary to take 170 musicians there. The Caduceus printed what might be their greatest understatement with the line: "By placing first in every division of music at the Berlin Music Festival, they are noted as one of the better music departments around." Indeed!

The student radio station KCHS was started in November of 1973, staffed by members of the Electronic Communications Class. A Career Center was established to assist students prepare for and enter the world of work. The Black Student Union became a student club, and became quite active in many areas. The end of the decade was marked by the visit of the Kapaa, Hawaii H.S. basketball team, which also brought its Hawaiian spirit of music and dancing for demonstration. Photo Journalism Class also started at that time, along with a Peer Counseling program.

Accepting the Challenge of Innovation and Technology

As C.H.S. moved into and through the Eighties, computers, microfiche readers, and other educational technology regularly made their appearance in the images and articles of the Caduceus. The library introduced its efficient, automated circulation system, and later an online catalog, replacing the traditional card catalog. A Video Club was formed, and soon a Video Yearbook was being produced. A satellite dish was installed to pick up educational programs from around the world. The Psychology class began its tradition of visits to Sonoma State Hospital. Work Experience Class was instituted which placed students in part-time jobs and aided in their preparation for work. A student survey showed that 88% of Chico High students planned to go to college after graduation; 72% played a sport, and 45% played a musical instrument.

Girls' Powder Puff Football was a feature of the fall sports and activity season. Chico High won the Almond Bowl in 1984 with a score of 2-0. That same year the FFA sent two

students to the Nationals in Kansas City, and then on to visit Washington, D.C. By 1988-89 there were 25 student clubs and organizations. The Caduceus noted that "Rivalry between Chico High and Pleasant Valley went to many more extremes this year than in the past." Yet the Key Club, with a membership of over 100 students, continued in the C.H.S. helping spirit as they collected canned food at Christmas for poor families, made sure orphans received gifts with donations to the Christmas Gift Tree, volunteered at the Salvation Army soup kitchen, and assisted at the blood drives.

The Nineties opened an Era of Diversity at Chico High. The MEChA club was formed to study and celebrate the Latino culture, an American Indian Club and the Asian Youth Awareness Club were formed for similar purposes related to their respective culture. Multi-cultural rallies and assemblies were held, and a new Culture Club was started. In the 1993-94 year the Ninth Grade class returned to the Chico High School, after an absence of forty years. Educational innovation was also marked mid-decade by the formation of new programs and the Schools-Within-A-School concept being adopted. Some of the programs that offered C.H.S. students a wide variety of choices were: Chico High West; the Academy for Communications and Technology; Humanities, Arts and Ideas; and the Butte College Connection. The student population topped 1,700 by 1996-97, and was up to 1950 during the 2000-01 school year.

In the 1998 Caduceus the "Goals For '98" section noted that their survey of the plans for the graduating class indicated that 89% were headed for college. A new feature of the yearbook was a colorful, 16 page section with images and descriptions of world events, newsmakers, entertainers and scientific achievements. The trend in these yearbooks is to include lots and lots of pictures of students enjoying themselves, along with quotations, predictions, humor, and comments on their everyday life. Much space is devoted to clubs, class and school activities and events such as games, dances, assemblies and rallies.

Students participated and often triumphed in academic and extra-curricular activities such as the Academic Decathlon, Challenge of the Minds, and Brain Brawl sponsored by the California Scholastic Federation. In the Close-Up program groups of students visited our national seat of government in Washington, D.C. The Achievement Builds Choice program was instituted to give rewards and encouragement to students who improved or excelled in their academic performance. The Paper Whispers creative writing and publication club was reestablished. The Competition Cheerleading Squad made it to the Nationals four years in a row. In athletics many league and section championships were won, often several years in a row in a given sport. In 1999 Carousel was the school's first musical produced in 25 years, and over 130 students were taking classes at Chico State for a cost of \$7.00 per class. Over 15 clubs are featured.

In 2001 CHS once again passed its accreditation review with strong positive comments from our evaluators, and the school district is moving forward to renovate and expand the gymnasium for the first time since it was built in 1936. Building on a recent grant for service learning, Principal Roger Williams travels to Denver in April of 2001 to accept national recognition of CHS as California's only National Service-Learning Leader School, which was awarded for Chico High School's record of combining service to the community with classroom studies. In 1998, CHS was one of the first schools in California awarded a Digital High School Installation Grant that has allowed CHS to connect all classrooms together through a high-speed, fiber optic network and train teachers in the use of computer technology. At least one computer with Internet access is now in each classroom, bringing the school's number of computers to 558 in by 2001.

The Art Department's new computerized classroom is used to offer five periods of introductory and advanced classes in Computer Art and Design, one of the first such programs in California. In January 2000, the Academy for Communications and technology (ACT) became a funded California Partnership Academy. The funding carries with it requirements that cement the school/business partnerships and school-to-career connections that ACT has always had. In collaboration with the Butte County School to Career Consortium, Pleasant Valley High, and the Chico Chamber of Commerce's Educational Committee, Chico High implemented an employability card in the fall of 2000. The major goal of this joint venture was to encourage students to recognize the importance of workplace skills and that what they do in school directly impacts their success in the real work world.

The Industrial Technology Department is offering introductory and advanced classes in Engineering Drawing and Architectural Design in its modern Computer Assisted Design Classroom. The Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA) have consistently brought home top awards at state and national conferences. The CHS Library received the *Web Page of the Year* award from the International Association of School Librarians, and for the third time in a decade was designated as one of three Good Ideas School Libraries by the California School Library Association. The A Capella Choir, with its 30+ members travels to Australia for a Spring Break tour, with a performance before Parliament House, another at the Royal Easter Show and a joint performance with the Australian Girls Choir.

Twin Crowns of Success and Excellence and Into the New Millennium

The 1999 Caduceus introduction notes with much the same optimism that characterized the very first school yearbooks, that in our near 100 year history "Chico High has burned down, been torn down, and rebuilt twice. It is now ready to breakthrough into the year 2000 and take on whatever the 21st century has in store." Thus we close this brief history with the observation that Chico High was recognized in the late Eighties and again in the Nineties as a National School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education. It was again recognized for its excellence in that same period by the California Department of Education in 1996. Such awards are rarely given, and only to schools that are carefully examined and considered highly successful in all its areas of responsibility, over an extended period of time. Thus the prediction of the visit by the "examiner" from U.C. Berkeley in 1903 was indeed fulfilled. The long tradition of academic excellence is upheld over the span of America's great Twentieth Century, and appears to have sharpened even more during its crossover into the new Millennium.