

Weedville Historical Research Report



Prepared for the City of Peoria

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Weedville Historical Research Report

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Introduction

This report describes the development of an area within the northwest Salt River Valley commonly referred to as Weedville. The purpose of this report is to provide guidance in the preservation of historic resources in Weedville by establishing an appropriate historic context for determining the eligibility of properties to the National Register of Historic Places. This report supports the goals and objectives of the *City of Peoria Historic Preservation Master Plan*.¹

The name Weedville is derived from the name of religious leader Ora Rush Weed, who brought members of his Old Paths congregation to the area from the Midwest in the second decade of the twentieth century. Reverend Weed and his acolytes began the Old Paths Bible School shortly after they arrived in 1912, and the ecclesiastic institution served student adherents until 1951. According to W. Harold McKisson, the Director of the Peoria Arizona Historical Society and a descendant of Old Paths neighbors and sometime attendees, the name Weedville is a local sobriquet and was not used by members of the Weed family or other Old Paths members.²

Weedville is located in the southeast portion of the City of Peoria, near that city's eastern boundary with the City of Glendale. The boundaries of Weedville coincide with those of the southwest quarter of Section 12, Township 3 North, Range 1 East, Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian. This quarter section covers approximately 160 acres and can be visually delineated by Acoma Drive on the north, Thunderbird Road on the south, 71st Avenue on the east, and 75th Avenue on the west. Approximately 40 percent of Weedville is within the City of Peoria, with the remainder in an unincorporated Maricopa County island.

Unlike the late twentieth century residential development that surrounds it, Weedville is primarily made up of agriculture-related lots of varying sizes, many of which retain a historic look and feel. However, the more recent residential developments of Redfield Estates (1988) in the southeast quarter of the quarter section and Tramonto Bello (2009) in the southwest quarter, as well as the light commercial area developed at the corner of 75th Avenue and Thunderbird Road during the late 1990s have had an impact on Weedville's bucolic setting. During the 1990s, a Methodist preschool was also built in the northwest quarter, but it retains an active agricultural component to the rear of its property.³

¹ *City of Peoria Historic Preservation Master Plan* (City of Peoria, 2005), 14.

² Conversation with W. Harold McKisson, 2 June 2012.

³ William D. Childs, *An Amended Final Plat for Redfield Estates: A Subdivision of a Part of Section 12, T. 3 N., R. 1 E., G. & S. R. B. & M.* (Phoenix: Polaris Engineering, Inc., 1985); Robert J. Blake, *Final Plat for "Taramonto Bello": A Subdivision of a Portion of the Southwest Quarter of Section 12, Township 3 North, Range 1 East of the Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian, Maricopa County, Arizona* (Phoenix: D & S Properties, 2009), 2.

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Figure 1. Weedville. Edited from Maricopa County Assessor's Office.

The original Old Paths Bible School grounds are currently owned by World Gospel Mission and are the location of the Southwest Indian Ministries Center. The World Gospel Mission (originally called the National Holiness Missionary Society), acquired the Old Paths Bible School through the Christian Workers Missionary Society in 1951. Since acquiring the property, the World Gospel Mission has expanded their holdings in Weedville, adding property on the north, west, and south. The Old Paths Bible School evolved into the present Phoenix Christian Unified Schools.⁴

⁴ *Docket* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1981), 14978:476; "Provision of the Facilities of Phoenix Christian Unified Schools," from <http://www.phoenixchristian.org/content/3/11> accessed 3 April 2012.

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Methodology

Utilizing primary and secondary sources, including public records, ownership maps, private accounts, local histories, and newspaper articles, this report provides a history of the southwest quarter of Section 12, a.k.a. Weedville, chronicling its transformation from public lands through the end of the Old Paths Bible School. This time period is the most significant in Weedville's development from open desert to bucolic hamlet. In some instances, the records are contradictory and require supposition on the part of the historian. These inconsistencies are acknowledged within the narrative.

Historical Narrative

Weedville is included within the boundaries of the 1891 homestead patent of Finla L. McClure, a prominent businessman from Elgin, Illinois, and one of a number of extended family members who speculated on land in the Salt River Valley during the late 1880s. McClure's patent covered approximately 600 acres of Section 12, specifically, the west half, southeast quarter, and the west half and southeast quarter of the northeast quarter (see figure 2). After McClure died in 1900, W. J. Murphy acquired the property by way of the Phoenix Land Company, Murphy Company, Ltd., and Glendale Land Company.⁵

W. J. Murphy came to the Salt River Valley in 1883 under contract to manage construction of the Arizona Canal, a vast irrigation project spanning the north Salt River Valley. Subsequent to the canal's completion in 1885, Murphy, through various companies such as those mentioned, promoted development of communities irrigated from the canal and funded by investors from California and the Midwest. These communities included Alhambra, Glendale, Ingleside, Marionette, and Peoria. While research has yet to discover a connection, it is quite possible McClure who was active in Elgin, Illinois' development, was affiliated with one of these companies.⁶

In 1907, Murphy divided the McClure property (see figure 2), selling the west half and northeast portion of the section to William Raymond Green, a district judge from Audubon, Iowa. The remaining southeast quarter section was sold to David L. Houston, a cattleman from Dow City, which is also in Iowa. Houston was also the treasurer of the

⁵ *Document 165*, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) number AZAZAA 013429; *Document 186*, BLM number AZAZAA 013431; *Document 204*, BLM number AZAZAA 013106 (Phoenix: Bureau of Land Management); *Book of Mortgages* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1887), 4:529-531; *Arizona Republican*, 24 May 1900; H. F. Robinson, *Plats of the Salt River Valley: Prepared by H. F. Robinson from the Records of the County Assessor of Maricopa County, Arizona and Brought Down to July 1903* (Phoenix: Blue and White Printing, 1903), T3NR1E, note: the map shows the McClure property to be owned by W. J. Murphy; *Book of Deeds* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1902), 55:424-427.

⁶ Earl Zarbin, *Two Side of the River: Salt River Project Canals, 1867-1902* (Phoenix: Salt River Project, 1997), 86 and 109.

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United States Land, Title, and Legacy Company, a Phoenix-based land speculation firm similar to Murphy's various operations, though not nearly as successful.⁷

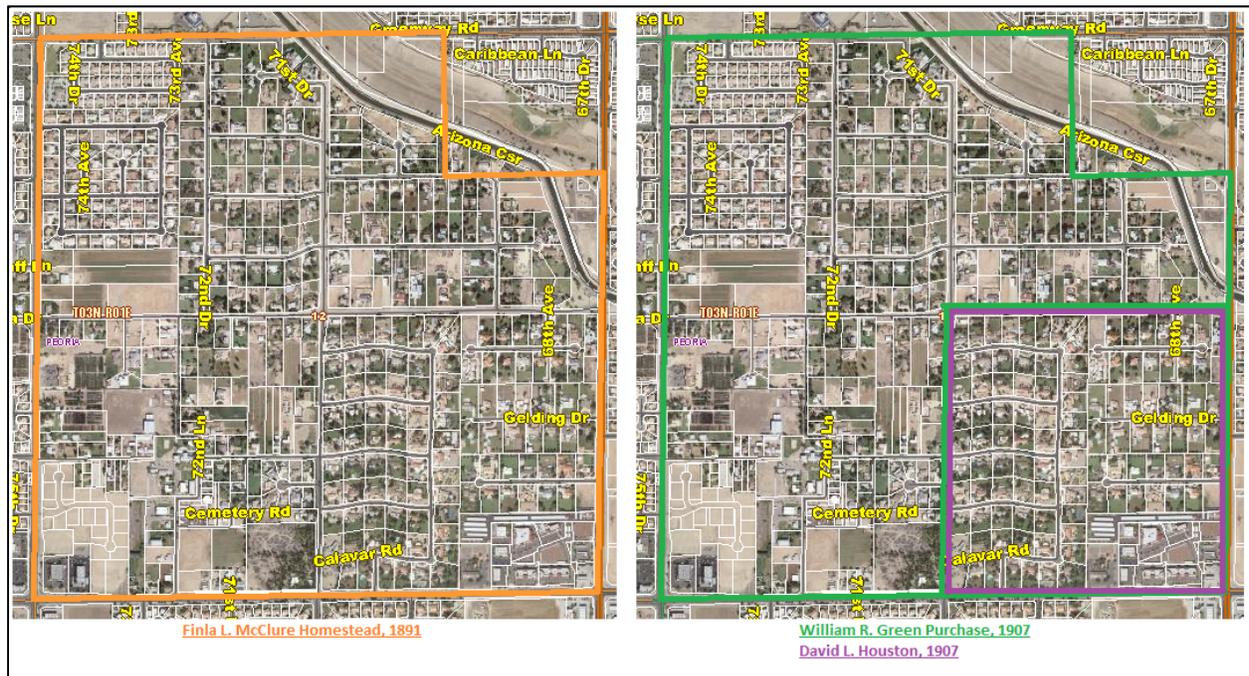


Figure 2. Land Ownership Change, 1891-1907. Edited from Maricopa County Assessor's Office.

Two years after purchasing the property from Murphy, Judge Green subdivided his property, selling the northern portion (the northwest quarter and south half and northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 12) to Orval E. Mabee, a real estate agent from Winfield, Kansas. In December 1911, Green sold 120 acres (the south half and northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of the section) to Ora Rush Weed, a farmer from Liberty Township, Coffey County, also in Kansas. At the same time, Green also sold the remaining forty acres in the quarter section to Nebraska minister Arthur R. Wood and his brother Lem (see figure 3).⁸

Weed and the Woods were associated through the Old Paths congregation, which was a byproduct of the nineteenth century holiness movement in American Methodism. Just one of many Pentecostal associations created during this time in South and Midwest, the Old Paths was a non-denominational missionary organization, centered on a Christianity-based education, and comprised of a broad base of acolytes. It followed the essential characteristics of the holiness movement such as seeking the same religious perfection of early Christians through a return to the tenets of perceived Old and New

⁷ *Book of Deeds* (1907), 74:618-619; *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900); *Book of Assignment of Mortgages* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1908), 3:239-241; *Book of Mortgages* (1907), 56:55; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (1920); *Book of Articles of Incorporation* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1906), 41:59.

⁸ *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (1910); *Book of Deeds* (1909, 1912), 85:372, 97:335-336.

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Testament standards—the *old paths*—and an interest in eschatological issues. It is quite likely that the Old Paths was modeled on the work of Charles Parham, who published a newsletter, opened a bible school, was anti-denominational, and was quite active in the rural areas of Kansas at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Phebe Weed, Ora's wife, the community began as a newspaper.⁹

In 1904, the *Old Paths* newspaper started in Eskridge, Kansas in the home of R. A. French where the Weed children were enrolled in a bible school. Two years later, the Weeds moved with the newspaper to a farm near Gridley (Kansas) and started their own school. Weed was a devout, evangelical Christian and the school was immersed in biblical teaching. By 1911, the decision was made to move to Arizona and Weed, followed by an extended family and other members of his Old Paths congregation, settled in the southwest quarter of Section 12.¹⁰

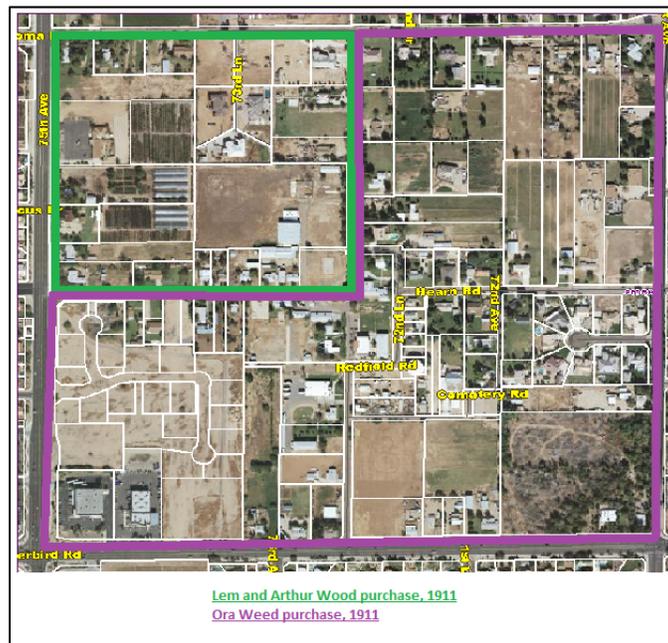


Figure 3. The Weed and Woods' purchases, 1907. Edited from Maricopa County Assessor's Office.

Judge Green sold the quarter section for \$10,400. The Woods paid Judge Green \$2,600 for their forty acres, and Weed paid \$7,800 for his 120. Green held a mortgage on the Woods' property for \$1,600 and on Weed's acreage in the amount of \$2,686. These amounts were either the balance of what was owed or seed money to develop the open desert into useful farmland. In Weed's case, a portion of the money may have been used to purchase two and half tons of broom corn which he procured from M.

⁹ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 32, 54; Jean Gelbart, "The Pentecostal Movement—A Kansas Original" (n.p., 1994), 7-10; *Old Paths* April 1912 and November 1942.

¹⁰ *Old Paths* April 1912 and November 1942.

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Silverstone of Glendale shortly after their arrival, In addition to being a preacher, educator, and farmer, Weed was a broom maker, a skill that, when combined with other agricultural pursuits, would subsidize the bible school.¹¹

The new community was located in open, roadless desert, two miles north and one mile east of the then-town of Peoria. However, the Old Paths' post office was Glendale, since the community was closer to that town's Rural Free Delivery postal route. In his first newspaper produced from Arizona, Reverend Weed claimed the property was divided up into eight, twenty-acre parcels and owned by Ora and Phebe Weed, the aforementioned Woods, Phebe's brother Wilbur J. Pomeroy, Phebe's sister Sadie and her husband Free Methodist Minister Parkhurst J. Postlewait, Everett and Maude Claudson, Ms. M. F. Sharp, and Calvin and Dorothea Calhoun. However, this subdivision of the quarter section was not recorded with Maricopa County. Outside of the original two deeds between Judge Green and Weed and the Wood brothers, the first recorded real estate transaction in Weedville was in 1914 when the Woods sold the northeast quarter of their parcel (ten acres) to Kansan Charles M. Edwards and the northwest quarter (also ten acres) to Frank. L. Merdick, a son-in-law of the Postlewaits.¹²

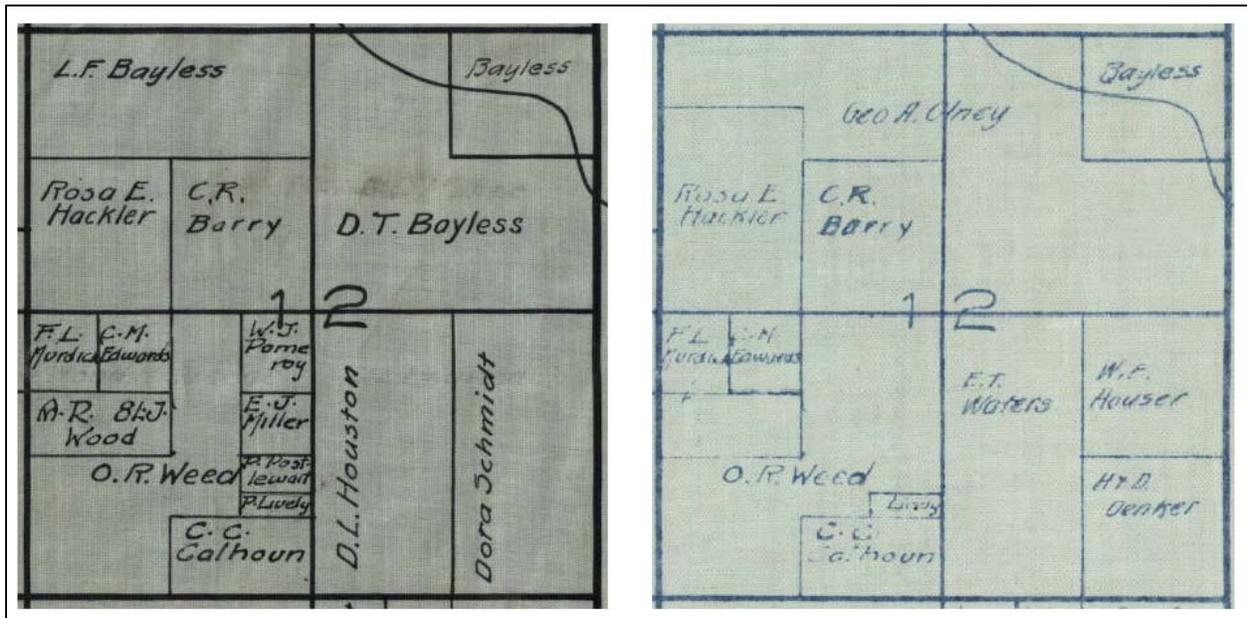


Figure 4. Township 3 North, Range 1 East, Section 12 Ownership Maps for the Years 1914 (left) and 1917 (right). Edited from the Maricopa County Land Ownership Plat Maps for those years.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, November 1942; *Book of Deeds* (1912), 97:336; *Book of Mortgages* (1912), 78:271-272; *Book of Miscellaneous* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1912), 14:638-639; *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900* (1900); *Allen County Directory* (St. Louis: Chittenden Directory Company, 1901), 52.

¹² *Old Paths*, April 1912; *Book of Deeds* (1914), 109:27 and 297; *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880* (1880); *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (1920).

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An examination of the county property maps of 1914 and 1917 (see figure 4) also does not reflect Weed's distribution of the land within the quarter section. The 1914 map, developed by Maricopa County shows the ownership of the northwest quarter consistent with the recorded documents. However, it places Wilbur Pomeroy with ten acres in the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter, Elmer J. Miller with ten acres in the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter, and the Calhoons with twenty acres in the south half of the southeast quarter. The remaining ten acres in the northeast corner of the southeast corner are split between the Postlewaits (six acres) and beekeeper Page Lively (four acres).¹³

Subsequent county records also provide a different story. The Calhoons, who Weed claimed held twenty acres in 1912, purchased ten acres in the southeast quarter—not the southern half—of the southeast quarter from Ora and Phebe Weed in 1916 for \$666.25, 1/16th of the purchase price of the quarter section. In this transaction, the deed provided right-of-way access along the north (Hearn Road) and east (71st Avenue) sides of the quarter section. Unlike the 1914 Woods transactions, Weed's deed to the Calhoons came with restrictions for the new owner, specifically prohibiting immoral activities, the sale of tobacco or alcohol, and the operation of a piggery.¹⁴

The county ownership map for 1917 shows the Calhoons retaining their twenty acres. However, the Pomeroy, Postlewaits, and Millers' acreage is no longer evident, apparently having reverted back to Weed. While Merdick and Edwards' parcels remained on the map, the ownership of the Woods' twenty acres appears unknown. Census records show the Postlewaits and Pomeroy had returned to Kansas and the Wood brothers to Nebraska. Documents recorded with the county show that one year after purchasing his ten acres from Weed, Calvin Calhoon, a clergyman from Nebraska, deeded his ten-acre property to Charles R. Hill, an Oklahoma truck farmer. Around the same time, Edwards deeded his ten acres to Wallace B. Harrison, who also came from Oklahoma with wife Addie and needed experience in working with concrete. The Weeds sold 7.5 acres of the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter to Walton T. Burris, a carpenter from Kansas, and his wife Ella. This last transaction also included a twenty-foot right-of-way on the north line (Hearn Road) and the requisite limits on activities. In 1916, the remaining 2.5-acre parcel on the south of Burris parcel was sold to local beekeeper Lively, sans a right-of-way on the south line.¹⁵

¹³ Maricopa County, Arizona Land Ownership Plat Maps: North Townships and East Ranges (Phoenix: Maricopa County, 1914), 15.

¹⁴ *Book of Deeds* (1916), 118:254-255.

¹⁵ F. N. Holmquist, *Maricopa County Land Ownership Plat Maps* (Phoenix: Maricopa County, 1917), T3N R1E; *Book of Deeds* (1917), 122:165, 472-473 and 592-593, 124:285 and 127: 356; *Book of Agreements* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1917), 8:347-348; *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (1910)

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The right-of-way easements were important. According to Phebe Weed, when she and her family arrived in 1912, there were no roads within three miles of their property. To facilitate travel and commerce in and out of the community, in 1917 the subdivision of the southwest quarter of Section 12 included right of ways for “public highways” such as the ones Weed provided the county along the west (75th Avenue) and south (Thunderbird Road) of his southwest quarter.¹⁶

Sometime before 1917, Frank Merdick and his wife Mary gained control of the Woods’ twenty acres in the south half of the northwest quarter of the quarter section. They then sold an acre at the southeast corner to the Weeds. Just to the north of this parcel, the Merdicks also sold a 420’ x 210’ lot (approximately two acres) to Paris Lee Smith, leaving a remaining seven-acre parcel in the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter.¹⁷

Smith, a farmer from Sparta, Tennessee, came to Arizona in 1913 and purchased a forty-acre parcel approximately two miles south of the Old Paths community from Steele Porter. The following year, Paris and his wife Allie sold the parcel to the Weeds, who in turn mortgaged their forty acres in the southwest quarter of the quarter section to the Smiths. Then, in 1917, the Smiths bought the west half of the northeast quarter—minus a one-acre parcel in the southwest corner—from the Weeds. The Merdicks then deeded seven more acres in the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter to the Smiths. This made the Smiths the second largest property owners in Weedville.¹⁸

The following year, Ora Weed consolidated a four-acre parcel in the middle of the quarter section and deeded it to the trustees of the Old Paths Bible School—Ora, Phebe, daughter Huldah, Phebe’s sister Alzina Boone, and Charles Hill—to be used for a new school. Built directly in the precise center of this new parcel, and thus in the center of the quarter section, was a new facility. Prior to this time, and since shortly after their arrival in 1912, the Old Paths Bible School operated from a small school house on Weed’s forty-acre parcel. On July 4, 1918, a new, “large cement building” with four school rooms on the bottom floor and a chapel above was dedicated.¹⁹

While the new school was under construction, Frank and Mary Merdick were selling their remaining twenty acres in Weedville to Myrtle and Lincoln Delp, Addie Harrison’s sister and brother-in-law. Iowan Elmer J. Miller, who was on the county property map of 1914, but not 1917 version, purchased the twenty acres on the east half of the northeast quarter from the Weeds. Lodging with Miller were Old Paths teachers Lottie Sargent and Bessie Harold and broom maker R. C. Wallace. In addition to operating a private

¹⁶ *Book of Deeds* (1917), 122:323.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122:319-320 and 123:139.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (1913, 1914, 1917), 82:19-20, 103:369-370, 110:505, 119:319, 124:251, 131:144; *Book of Mortgages* (1914), 82:19-20.

¹⁹ *Book of Deeds* (1918), 130:77; *Old Paths*, November 1942.

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Christian school, the community was also making and selling brooms through the Old Paths Broom Company.²⁰

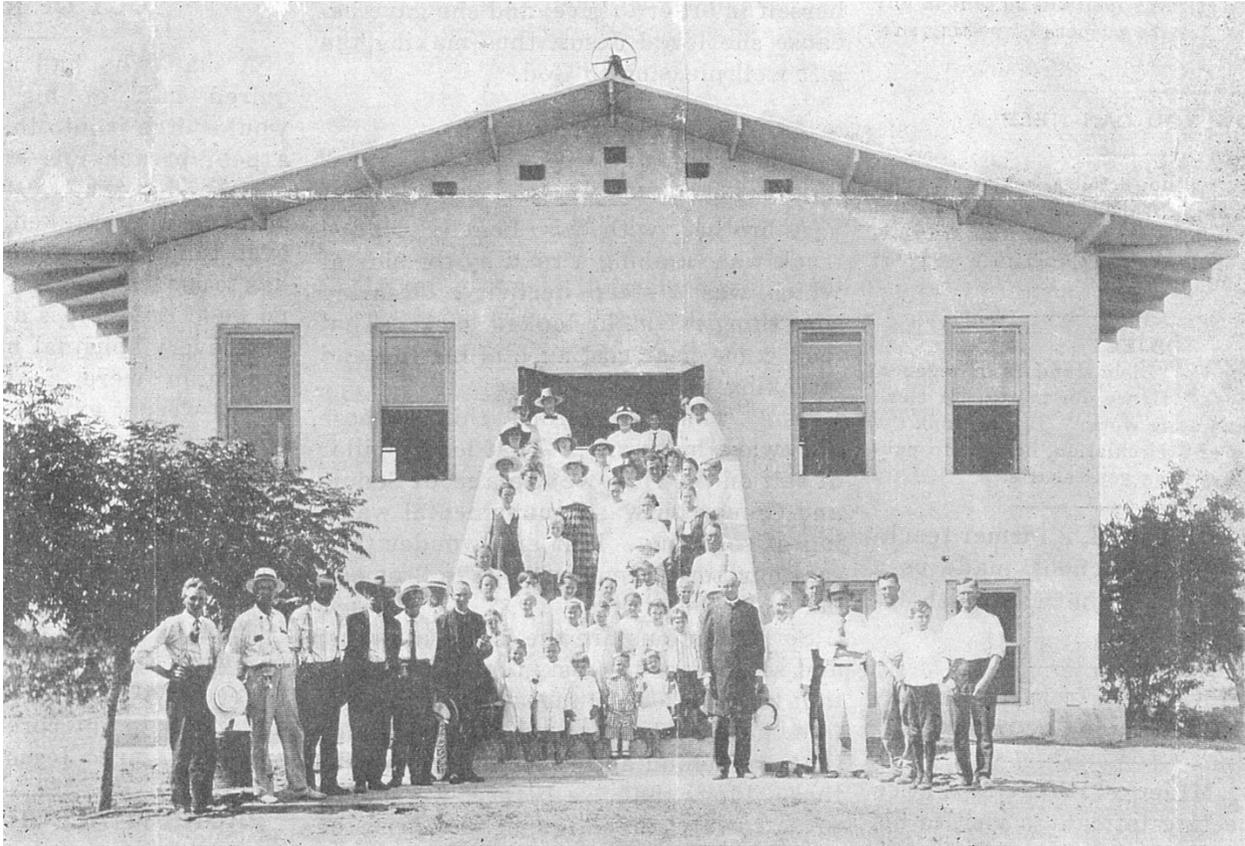


Figure 5. The new school and chapel building, ca. 1918. Courtesy of the Peoria Arizona Historical Society.

Paris and Allie Smith were attracted to the area by the weather and the religious educational and economic opportunities offered by Weed through the Old Paths Bible School; benefits often promoted by the reverend in his *Old Paths* newspaper. However, according to his granddaughter, Weed was nondenominational, while others were Free Methodist or of a similar holiness-based belief system. Since their religious views shared similarities, everyone got along. Even though Paris Smith and Charles Hill set off and started Peoria's Church of the Nazarene in 1919, the Smiths still remained close friends of the Weed family.²¹

During the early 1920s, more land transfers and subdividing occurred in Weedville, usually with friends or family from the Midwest and always with people of similar faith. Though Ora Weed continued to reserve thirty-nine acres in the southwest quarter of the

²⁰ *Book of Agreements* (1918), 9:12-13; *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (1910); *Book of Deeds* (1919), 135:59-60; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (1920).

²¹ Conversation with Melva Burgemon, 23 July 2012; *Book of Articles of Incorporation* (1919), 82:187-188; *Book of Deeds* (1920), 155:34.

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quarter section for his family's use, in 1920, the Harrisons sold their ten acres to Myrtle Delp's mother, Virginia C. Frees, who allowed them to stay when she moved to the community with her daughter and grandson. The following year, the Weeds sold the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter to William and Anna Hill, the parents of Charles. This is the same lot sold previously to the Burrises, who may have defaulted on the mortgage. In 1922, the Smiths also sold the two acres originally purchased from the Merdicks to Charles S. Mason, a minister from Indiana who had come to Arizona via Wisconsin and Iowa.²²

Mason had actually been living in the community since at least 1920 and in 1921 suffered the loss of his youngest child, Ralph, who died at the age of three. The toddler's death certificate stated that he died of measles, pneumonia, and a lack of medical attention. Mason, like Weed, preferred ministerial prayer to medical practice and Ralph became the first resident of a new cemetery laid out for Old Paths members.²³

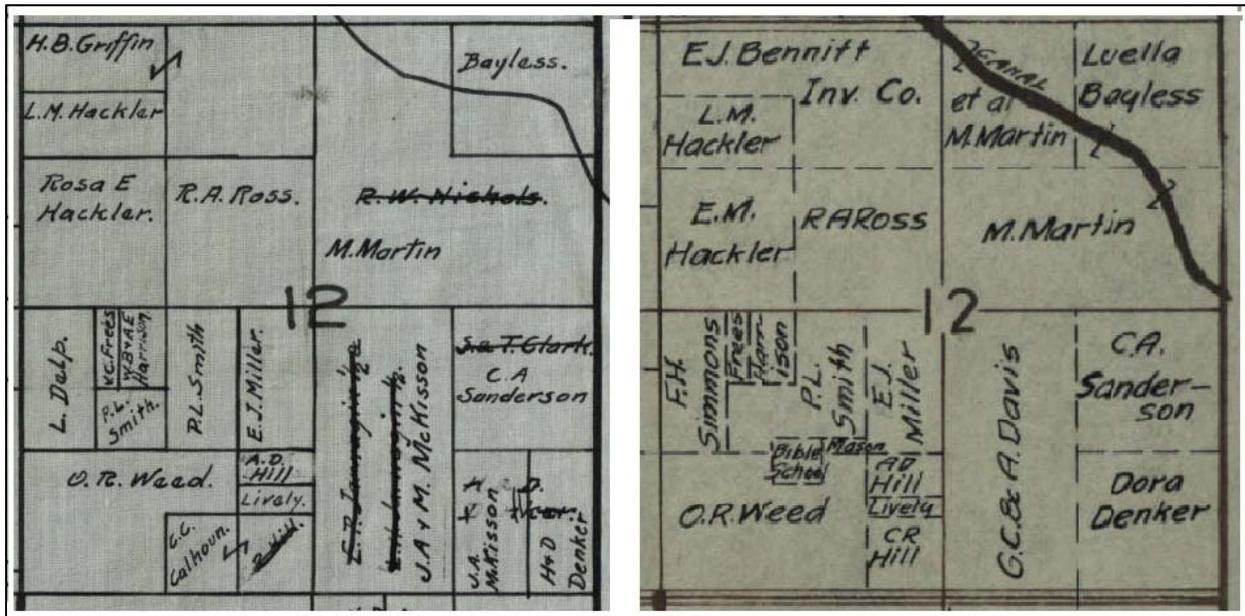


Figure 6. Section 12 Ownership Maps for the Years 1923 (left) and 1926 (right). Edited from the Maricopa County Land Ownership Plat Maps for those years.

The Delps paid off their mortgage in 1921 and sold their land, the west half of the northwest quarter, to Frank H. Simmons in 1922. Simmons then leased the property, first to W. E. Harper then to J. O. Doran, before mortgaging the property to the State

²² *Book of Deeds* (1920, 1921, and 1922), 154:19, 161:461-462, and 165:313; *Book of Mortgages* (1921), 142:164.

²³ *Original Certificate of Death* (Phoenix: Arizona State Board of Health, 1921), 220; conversation with Melba Burgemann.

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Land Commission in 1933 to finance improvements. The land was sold to Jean Sinclair Kendrick the following year to pay off the debt.²⁴

Again, many of these transactions do not appear on the 1923 county property map (see figure 6). Instead, the map shows Calvin Calhoon in possession of the south half of the southeast quarter, though he only purchased ten acres in 1916 and sold that to Charles Hill. According to his World War I draft card, Calhoon was living in Yavapai County in 1918 and the 1920 census puts him and his family in Yakima, Washington. Mason's property is also absent from the map, but the remainder of the map is accurate, except for the missing four-acre lot carved out in the center for the Old Paths Bible School.²⁵

In 1924, the Weeds mortgaged the southwest quarter from Federal Farm Loan Amortization Company, a component of the Federal Farm Loan Act. They then deeded the south four acres of the west half of their parcel to gardener Harvey A. Gillespie and his wife, Ida Mae. In addition to the typical restrictions, the sale included new stipulations on the growing of tobacco and the leasing of the property for the raising of swine. These new stipulations may have been spurred by a community member's attempt to find a loophole in the customary deed restrictions.²⁶

In the second half of the decade, smaller lots were created, typically in the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter of the quarter section. This reduction in lot size began in 1926 with the sale of a 2/3-acre lot between Ora and Phebe Weed and son Ezra and his wife Clemma. Then the elder Weeds and the school trustees—now consisting of the Weeds, daughter Rachel, Elmer Miller, and Lottie Sargent—deeded the southeast quarter back and forth to add exemptions for rights-of-way for roads, transmission lines, and irrigation laterals. Other lot divisions followed including lots for the apiary and cemetery.²⁷

Neither the public recording at Maricopa County nor the property maps detail the growth that had taken place in Weedville by 1930. The school grounds were occupied by the Reverend Ora, Phebe, daughter Rachel, son James, and grandson Daniel. Four orphans also lived with the Weeds along with five lodgers who were employed as teachers or farm laborers. It is likely that the orphans, as well as the Weed family, lived in a dormitory built in 1926. On Weed (Hearn) Road, William Smith and Frank Edwards were employed as broom makers for the Old Paths Broom Company and Enoch Weed

²⁴ *Book of Deeds* (1921, 1926, and 1934), 155:168, 197:514, 280:101 and 281:182; *Book of Leases* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1923 and 1927), 8:112-113 and 9:351-352; *Book of Mortgages* (1934), 274:183-184; *Book of Miscellaneous* (1934), 48:320-321.

²⁵ *1923 Maricopa County, Arizona Land Ownership Plat Maps* (Phoenix: Maricopa County, 1923), 3N 1E; *Book of Deeds* (1923), 175:215-216; *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1918); *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (1920).

²⁶ *Book of Mortgages* (1924), 171:11-12; *Book of Agreements* (1924), 22:26-28.

²⁷ *Book of Deeds* (1927, 1928, and 1929), 210:304, 223:233-234, and 238:436-437 and 242:75-76.

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worked as broom salesman. Elmer Miller farmed as did Charles Mason and Louis Orrell. Paris Smith worked as a bookkeeper for local cotton farmers and Page Lively managed the community apiary. Including family members and laborers, the population of Weedville probably exceeded forty people.²⁸

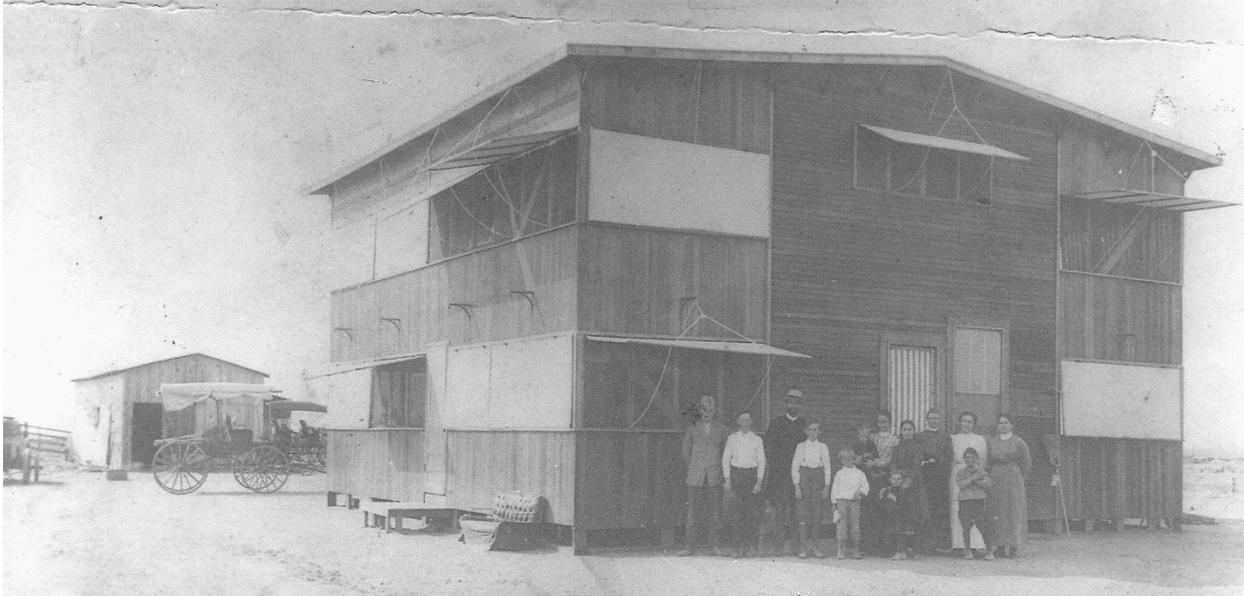


Figure 7. Prior to 1926, this structure likely provided dormitory living for students and members of the congregation. Courtesy of the Peoria Arizona Historical Society.

Absent from the roles were Ora's two sons Ezra and Jesse, who had moved to Mesa with their wives and started a short-lived Hudson-Essex dealership. During the 1930s, the Weeds, like many others during the Great Depression, started having financial problems. In 1930, they sold the south half of their southwest quarter to Lillie T. and Joseph P. Bartlett. In this agreement and many others, if the buyers defaulted, the land would revert back to the Weeds, which it did. The school trustees also deeded the east half of the northeast quarter to Elmer Miller, and the Weeds quit claimed the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter to same.²⁹

It is difficult to say if these land transfers were to quiet a title, resolve a boundary, provide for right-of-way, or to avoid creditors because the Weeds' financial problems continued. They had taken a mortgage out on the southwest quarter and faced foreclosure when they defaulted. Elmer Miller stayed afloat by selling portions of his holdings and mortgaging others. It is likely that some of the funds generated by these transactions assisted the Weeds in keeping their property.³⁰

²⁸ *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930* (1930).

²⁹ *Book of Agreements* (1930), 34:258-260.

³⁰ *Book of Lis Pens* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1933), 5:103; *Book of Mortgages* (1930), 244:264-265; *Book of Sherriff Foreclosures* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1933), 3:17; *Book of Deeds* (1931, 1934, 1936, 1939, and 1940), 258:313, 271:260, 295:429, 330:85, and 346:62.

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On May 4, 1942, Ora Rush Weed passed away. Perhaps aware of his pending expiration, just a few months before, Ora and Phebe began the process of subdividing the family's thirty-nine acres in the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 12. They deeded the west one-half of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter, nineteen acres, to their six children. Son Jesse received an additional 3.25-acre parcel southwest of the school grounds, as did brothers James, Harry, Ezra, and Enoch. Daughter Rachel received an acre at the southwest corner of 75th Avenue and Thunderbird Road, where the store was located. The school also received additional acreage including the apiary, cemetery, and three acres where the Weeds owned a house, barn, and other structures just southwest of the grounds.³¹

Elmer Miller and his wife Edna moved to California in 1943, selling the remaining portions of the east half of northeast quarter and property they owned in the northwest quarter of southeast quarter. Ezra and James Weed had already departed the community and were both living in Phoenix. In 1946, Enoch Weed and wife Izora sold a portion of their property setting off a series of sales lasting to the end of the decade. As part of this cycle, Jesse Weed sued his family members to remove his father's sales restrictions from the west half of the southwest quarter section. Eventually, the family deeded this property to him, except for Rachel's one-acre corner lot.³²

In 1946, the Smiths deeded 2.3 acres west of the school grounds to evangelist minister Deward Schoolcraft and his wife Polly who wanted to continue the Bible school. The Smiths then deeded their property in the west half of the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter—except for the southern 210 feet—to son Percy and his wife Jacqueline. Shortly thereafter, Paris and Allie died from injuries received in a car accident and Percy inherited the two- and seven-acre lots (minus the Schoolcraft acreage) his parents had purchased from the Merdicks three decades before. The following year, Percy and Jacqueline deeded the west half of the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter and the Merdick lots to the Schoolcrafts. Within a short time, the Schoolcrafts possessed a large amount of the Smiths and Millers' former properties.³³

The following year, fourteen individuals incorporated the Old Paths Christian High School including Phebe Weed, daughter Rachel Weed Spurling, and sons Enoch and Ezra. An effort was made at this time to consolidate Old Paths properties through various deeds and quit claims. This included a transfer of ownership from the Schoolcrafts to Ezra Weed. The trustees decided that the current site was too far from

³¹ *Standard Certificate of Death 160* (Phoenix: Arizona Department of Health, 1942), 4 May 1942; *Book of Deeds* (1942), 370:175-179, 372:451-452 and 545-547, and 374:39.

³² *Book of Agreements* (1943 and 1945), 57:188-189 and 69:189-190; *Book of Deeds* (1944, 1945, and 1947), 401:465, 409:561 and 564, 424:251, 441:303-304, and 573:577-578; *Docket* (1947 and 1949), 108:207-208 and 368:160-161; *Book of Miscellaneous* (1944), 67:27-29.

³³ *Book of Deeds* (MCRO, 1946 and 1947), 494:245-246 and 501:31-32, and 582:283-284; *Standard Certificate of Death file nos. 325 and 326* (1946); *Docket* (1948 and 1949), 118:451-458 and 128:231-232, and 386:310-313.

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the urban area to be suitable for the needs of the high school, so in 1951, Old Paths Christian High School sold the old school property to the Christian Workers Missionary Society, Inc. for \$10,000. The funds were used to purchase land near 15th Avenue and Indian School Road and the school was eventually renamed Phoenix Christian High School.³⁴

With the departure of the Old Paths Bible School, the Weedville community ceased to exist. Eventually, most of the land around the school grounds was sold off by the children of Ora and Phebe, and other Old Paths supporters, some of it purchased by the Southwest Indian Ministries.

Historic Resources

From his arrival in 1912, it is likely that Ora Rush Weed, as a leader of the community, retained control of the majority of the real estate in the quarter section, retaining land records and not recording transactions with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office. This would explain the unusual and somewhat inconsistent series of transactions which created an obscured chain of title. This record of property ownership was not completely resolved until years after his death. Currently, additional research in the form of an inventory of properties within Weedville is required to detail the extant historic resources related to the life of the community. While specific historic properties have yet to be identified, with the exception of a small number of contemporary developments and newer construction, much of the southwest quarter of Section 12 has retained its rural setting.

Irrigation laterals in the Salt River Valley were once ubiquitous to the landscape, providing water to agricultural properties. Urbanization and modernization of the irrigation system has led to the removal of some laterals and the tiling (piping) of others. Weedville retains a number of its historic water delivery features and open irrigation laterals are found along Acoma Drive, Hearn Road, Watson Lane, and 71st, 72nd, and 73rd avenues, as well as between various parcels within the quarter section. While Salt River Project acknowledges the historic significance of some of the laterals, others are likely privately developed and require additional research, in the form of an inventory, to evaluate the historic association of the components of the irrigation system. Based upon the layout of the system, it is likely most of the privately developed components were constructed by Weedville community members.

While the historic residential properties associated with the history of Weedville have not been identified within this report, some assistance can be found with two previously

³⁴ *Books of Articles of Incorporation* (1947), 112:398-408; *Docket* (1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951), 6:274-275, 216:423-426, 233:367, 243:462, 248:446-447, 297:465-466, 368:284-285, 435:100-101, 657:522-523, 658:208-209, 747:127-128, and 765:25-27.

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developed reports for the preservation of historic properties. The first report, *Peoria, Arizona: Historic Resource Survey*, was prepared by Robert Carriker and Melanie Sturgeon in 1997 and focused primarily on historic residential properties within the original town boundaries (between 87th and Grand avenues and Washington and Monroe streets). Since the Carriker-Sturgeon report was developed in 1997, the survey's date range ended at 1947, allowing for the National Register's fifty-year age requirement. The historic buildings evaluated were primarily designed in the National Folk or bungalow style, with cost given the greatest consideration. Wood framing was ubiquitous, with clapboard or stucco sheathing. Gable fronts were also popular.³⁵



Figure 8. The Maricopa County Assessor's Office lists 1938 as the construction date for this home, making it a likely candidate for National Register eligibility. Photograph by Vincent Murray.

In 2006, Jodey Elsner wrote the second report entitled *City of Peoria Historic Property Survey Update*. As its title suggests, Elsner updated and expanded on the 1997 report, offering suggestions for the conservation of the downtown area and adding to the inventory of National Register eligible properties several properties previously ineligible under the 1997 report.³⁶

Though this report does not focus on Peoria's historic urban core, Weedville's period of significance, 1912 to 1951, falls with the historic period of the two aforementioned reports, and it is likely that there is similarity in residential building designs. The two Peoria surveys also covered commercial buildings, churches and club houses, and prefabricated and moved structures. Weedville once possessed a similar list of building types, but the commercial building—a store where brooms, honey, and other items were

³⁵ Robert Carriker and Melanie Sturgeon, *Peoria, Arizona: Historic Resource Survey* (Phoenix: Arizona State Parks, State Historic Preservation Office, 1997), 36.

³⁶ Jodey Elsner, *Historic Resource Survey Update: Peoria, Arizona* (City of Peoria, 2006), 1-8.

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sold—that was located on the northeast corner of 75th Avenue and Thunderbird Road, no longer exists. A broom making facility that was once located on the Weed property is also no longer extant. The Old Paths Bible School 1926 dormitory was demolished by the current owners, though they have retained the original 1918 schoolhouse-chapel. Lastly, while there are prefabricated buildings within Weedville, it is very likely they do not date to the historic period.



Figure 9. This is one of three houses grouped together and potentially built in 1940, according to the Assessor's Office. Its date and location adjacent to the Old Paths school grounds, makes this property potentially eligible for the National Register.

Lacking a survey of properties and based on a potential historic context of community planning and development, since the Weedville agricultural community developed in association with the Old Paths Bible School, the associated property types likely to qualify for the National Register of Historic Places are school buildings, residences related to the school, farmsteads, irrigation works, and streetscapes. These property types would be significant on the local level for their association with the development of a unique community in the Salt River Valley. Since the Old Paths Bible School was an educational and religious institution, these two perspectives may also be suitable as historic contexts, though additional research may be necessary.

Registration Requirements

For buildings and structures within Weedville to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, they must have been constructed during the time

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period 1912 and 1951 and be located within the boundaries of Section 12, Township 3 North, Range 1 East. The buildings and structures must have been specifically associated with the Old Paths Bible School or used for agricultural pursuits related to the Weedville community.

Many of the buildings and structures associated with both the Old Paths Bible School and the Weedville community are no longer extant and the setting for the small number remaining may have changed, i.e., lots may have been reduced and the boundaries may have changed since the historic period. Hence, there might only be the schoolhouse building, a few residential buildings, outbuildings, irrigation structures, and streetscapes on which the aspects of integrity can be applied.



Figure 10. While the adjacent residential development has undergone change, this streetscape retains many of its historic features. Photograph by Vincent Murray.

For buildings and structures to be eligible under Criterion A in the area of significance of “Community Planning and Development,” they must retain the essential physical features that made up their character or appearance during the period 1912-1951. To qualify, the integrity requirements for buildings and structures with important historic associations may be less stringent than those nominated for their architectural significance alone; however, they must possess features that convey the location, materials, feeling, and the requisite association.

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Under this criterion, setting may be less important to convey the feeling and association, though the buildings and structures must be in their original locations. Properties may also display evidence of historical function, such as outbuildings or irrigation structures. The original fabric and texture of buildings and structures must be evident as should significant features of original design.

If the property has been rehabilitated, the historic materials and significant features must have been preserved; it must be the actual resource and not a re-creation. A building or structure that has been significantly altered by incompatible additions, the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which they were constructed, or the removal of significant architectural details is excluded from eligibility under this criterion.

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