

E. T. Bell in Yreka

James T. Smith
smith@math.sfsu.edu

1. *Who was Eric Temple Bell?*
 - a. He lived 1883–1960, a
 - b. long-time Prof. of Mathematics at Cal Tech,
 - c. noted researcher and
 - d. author of well-known popular books, such as *Men of Mathematics*, and
 - e. under a pseudonym, a noted writer of science fiction.
 - f. Reid, Constance. 1993. *The Search for Eric Temple Bell, also Known as John Taine*. Washington: Mathematical Association of America.
2. *Young Bell*
 - a. Reared in Great Britain and California, he earned the
 - b. BA—Stanford 1907—and MA—U. Washington 1908,
 - c. taught mathematics at Yreka High School, 1909–1911,
 - d. married here,
 - e. quickly earned a PhD at Columbia,
 - f. and started a university career.



Mr. B. (describing how the surface of a liquid would look if magnified until the atoms were visible):

“And the rocket’s red glare,
Bombs bursting in air,
Gives proof through the night
That the atoms are there.”

(Reid, 131, from a 1909–1910 yearbook)

3. *Why Yreka?*
 - a. Prosperity and optimism reigned.
 - b. The high school graduated about 10 per year, half college bound,
 - c. its curriculum more demanding than my own in 1950s Ohio.
 - d. Principal Fred. Liddeke had even more ambitious plans.
 - e. He was recruiting teachers with very substantial backgrounds

How did that school culture emerge from local politics, and to what extent did it succeed?

Would someone more knowledgeable about Siskiyou County, and interested in its schools, like to join me in continuing the search for E. T. Bell?