

ELK GROVE CITIZEN
HISTORY HAPPENED HERE
The History of Our Schools, part 4
EGUSD – ABOUT TO CELEBRATE ITS 50TH
April 11, 2008
by Elizabeth Pinkerton

EGUSD, part 4 – Schools of the 1960s and 1970s, including Valley High School

This is the fourth in a series of articles covering the history of our schools in the Elk Grove Unified School District. You read about our very first schools during the days of gold and the schools the local farmers started in the second part of the 19th century (including Elk Grove High School of 1893). You read about the schools built to meet the demands of the huge population growth of the post World War II years in Florin and Elk Grove. You also read about the beginnings of the new unified school district in 1959 and the elementary and secondary school changes in the 1960s—from K-8 to K-6 in 1964, grades 7-9 in junior highs, and Elk Grove Senior High with grades 10-12.

Although the Adult Education program was started in 1966, it has never been looked upon as a separate school—although it probably should have a name of its own. The program, now housed at the Gerber Road site of the school district, continues to have classes for adults as it has since its beginning days more than 40 years ago. The first classes in 1966 were for two groups of parents and community members—adults who needed to learn English and parents of preschool children. Today's parent participation preschool is still operated by Adult Education, and classes for adults who are learning English as a second language continue as well. The program is extremely diverse in 2008 and includes career and technology training as well as family literacy and academic support for passing various tests.

Today we continue with the school growth of the 1960s and 1970s, and included in that time frame is Elk Grove's second high school Valley High School in 1977.

1966 - Charles Mack Elementary School was the school to open west of Highway 99 in the area we now refer to as Valley Hi. The land where the school is located (north of Mack Road and east of Franklin Boulevard) was the ranch of Charles Mack. Three generations of the family lived at that site, beginning with Charles Edwin Mack who crossed the plains to head for the gold fields in 1849. It is likely that most of the residents of that area do not know that the Macks had more than 40 varieties of olives on those acres, and many of them were rare species that were imported from Italy. It is possible that some of those trees might still be bearing fruit in the backyards of the Mack families. Another item that the residents may not know is that the housing development across from the school was known as the Olive Orchard.

1966 - David Reese Elementary School was also built in 1966. This is when the name of Reese was removed from Pleasant Grove-Reese where it had been placed when the original Reese School on Bradshaw Road was closed. The Reese family was prominent in the development of Florin's fruit industry, and David Reese was one of the founders of the Florin Fruit Growers Association. He was also the sheriff of Sacramento County in 1902.

1966 - William Daylor High School was not a new school in 1966, but it was a very new type of program. It was the fledgling Elk Grove district's first continuation high school designed to prevent dropouts by paying attention to the needs of high risk youth and keeping them in school. Located in the original Isabelle Jackson elementary school, the program began with 15 and 16 year old

students who were could not function appropriately in the large and comprehensive high school. The site was also used by Elk Grove's first Head Start classes for preschoolers. William Daylor had been a partner with Jared Dixon Sheldon in the Omochumnes Land Grant. His name was well suited for a continuation school as he left his ship in Monterey in the 1840s and refocused his life to become both a gold miner and a farmer/entrepreneur at Sloughhouse. His untimely death of cholera in 1851 ended his early day California career.

1972 - Herman Leimbach Elementary School in the Valley Hi area began as a great experiment in differentiated staffing with a combination of credentialed teachers and teacher interns. The design of the school used open classrooms along with team teaching, two popular innovations of the early 1970s. Herman Leimbach was an early California pioneer who came west searching for gold and stayed to farm the good soil south of Sacramento. The Leimbachs' Pioneer Ranch stood at what are now Highway 99 and Mack Road, and the ranch hosted many Sacramento visitors. Herman's son, Albert, was a teacher at the original Prairie School.

1977 - Valley High School was Elk Grove's second comprehensive and traditional high school. For the first time in the 84 years of high school existence, there were two high schools for Elk Grove students in 1977. The new school was built to serve the northern part of the huge 320 square mile district which covered a large portion of South Sacramento, and the school was in the city of Sacramento. The name chosen for the high school was intended to reflect the Valley Hi community, then one of the newer subdivisions in the south area. It was also chosen to remind us of the great Sacramento Valley and the vast meadowlands that once covered south Sacramento. In 1977 when Valley High opened, Elk Grove secondary education went back to its original plan of 9-12 high schools instead of the 10-12 high school and the 7-9 junior high.

Happy Birthday, Valley High School! You are 30 years old!

1978 - Florence Markofer Elementary School in Elk Grove was named for Florence Markofer, an active community person and a local historian who had also been a teacher. Florence Polhemus Markofer was a graduate of Elk Grove Union High School, and she lived her entire life in the community of Elk Grove. She was a dedicated person who gave unselfishly of her time and energy to assist others. Although previous Elk Grove schools had been named for living persons (Anna Kirchgater and Isabelle Jackson, for example), this was the first time the unified school district named a school to recognize the contributions of a living person. It was a trend that would continue for many years.

1978 - Prairie Elementary School, the present school on Valley Hi Drive was named for the 1858 Prairie School, the one-room school in the community of Union House on what is now Franklin Boulevard. Prairie School started out in a group of portable buildings on Bamford Drive where Rio Cazadero High School is today. The school was named John Reith at first, but after two years, it was determined that a permanent building would be needed farther south and west. That is where the school is today. It was renamed Prairie at that time, and the entire staff and students moved over there. It was several years later before a permanent school was named for John Reith.

To be continued next week

Notes:

1. Happy Birthday to three Wilton-Alta Mesa area residents who celebrated special birthdays last week: Ralph Nix, 101; Joe Lopes, 99, and Alice Jenkins, 97. Happy Birthday!!!
2. Tomorrow is the big Alexander Hamilton Willard event sponsored by the Lewis & Clark Heritage Foundation and the Elk Grove Historical Society. The place is the Wackford Center, the time is 9-2, and it's free—but bring a dish for the potluck.

1. History Happened Here, Book 1-River, Oaks, Gold.

2. History Happened Here, Book 2-Fields, Farms, Schools

3. Images of America-ELK GROVE

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