

ELK GROVE CITIZEN  
HISTORY HAPPENED HERE  
The History of Our Schools, part 6  
EGUSD – ABOUT TO CELEBRATE ITS 50<sup>TH</sup>  
GOLDEN 50 -- # 1 AND # 2 !!!  
May 16, 2008  
by Elizabeth Pinkerton

Before we go on with part 6 in this series of school history, here is important announcement from last week's Spotlight on Excellence, the scholarship event of the Elk Grove Community Foundation.

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**The first two scholarships of the Golden 50 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Elk Grove Community Foundation have been funded at \$10,000 each.**

- # 1 -- Mary, Al, and Marielle Tsukamoto Scholarship – by Marielle Tsukamoto**
- # 2 -- Timothy C. Pinkerton Memorial Scholarship –by the Pinkerton Family**

**This means that there are only 48 left!! I have leads on several more, so let's see if we can get the TOP TEN in the coming weeks!! Let me know if you need an application.**

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Now, to continue with the schools built in the 1990s. There were so many of them that I cannot get them all into one article, so we will have to focus on a five year period. However, within that time period we have high school # 4 – Laguna Creek High School.

**1990 - John Reith Elementary School** is in the northwestern part of the school district, and it has an interesting story. Mr. Reith was a legend in educational circles, for he served as trustee of the old Prairie school district for 30 years. He was a Scotsman who came to California to mine gold. After a stint in search of the glittery metal, he decided to become a farmer and settled on 320 acres near where the present school is located. His post office was Union House, and the original Reith home stood alone in an empty field west of Franklin Boulevard until the late 1990s.

**1991 - Arthur Butler School** has had two openings, but the first site was a portable school that opened in 1991 in Vintage Park where Robert Fite School is now. Mr. Butler was a long time Florin resident who spent most of his life involved in schools. He was a trustee of both the Florin district and that of Elk Grove Union High School. Also a custodian and a bus driver, he was truly a caretaker of public schools. Mr. Butler celebrated his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday at the school that bore his name in 1995 He died two years later in 1997. Environmental problems related to protected vernal pools halted both housing and school facility construction in the area around the school site. The students of the first Arthur Butler school were moved to the newly constructed Maeola Beitzel Elementary in 1996. The environmental issues were later resolved, but in 1998 the new Arthur Butler School was opened on Brown Road where it is today. *(Note: The students of the school are preparing a documentary on Arthur Butler, so if anyone has information about this dedicated gentleman, let me know.)*

**1991 - Samuel Jackman Middle School** is the feeder school for Valley High School, so when it opened the students of the Valley region no longer had to travel out of the area for their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years. Samuel Jackman School had the distinction of having been named 26 years before the school was built. The original Elk Grove School Names Committee of 1965 selected

Professor Jackman as a person for whom a school ought to be named. He had been the superintendent of schools in Sacramento County in the 1870s and was a leading figure in educational circles of the late 1800s.

**1991 - Calvine High School** gets its name from the California Vineyard Company, a huge grape growing enterprise of the early 1900s that was located east of Bradshaw Road. Calvine Road was the road that led from what is now Highway 99 to the huge property that belonged to the company. Two small high schools were closed when Calvine opened as a third continuation high school in the district. They were Omochumnes, with its Miwok Indian name located near what is now the Robert Trigg Education Center, and Pioneer that had been at two different sites during its short life.

**1991 - John Ehrhardt Elementary School** is located north of Laguna Boulevard, and not far from the Ehrhardt ranch of long ago. Mr. Ehrhardt was a sheep rancher who crossed the plains in 1852 to come to California. Later, he was a driving force in the early agricultural days of northern California. He was a friend and companion of many early day Californians including the famed trapper and guide, Kit Carson. It is said that Ehrhardt met Kit Carson at Slough House in 1853 where he obtained from him two fine sheep dogs that were instrumental in his later success as a sheep rancher.

**1992 - Mary Tsukamoto Elementary School** is north of Calvine Road and west of Elk Grove-Florin Road. A resident of Florin and a graduate of local schools, Mary Tsukamoto was an Elk Grove teacher who made many contributions to protect the civil liberties of citizens. She was recognized by local, state, and national organizations for her patriotism, her educational endeavors and her historical perseverance to uphold the United States Constitution. She was featured in a comprehensive exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. that was established in 1987 to celebrate the Constitution's 200th anniversary. The exhibit, called "And Justice For All," focused on the internment of Japanese Americans, including those who were citizens, during World War II. (*Note: Mary Tsukamoto and I wrote We the People, A Story of Internment in America in 1987, and the book will soon be reprinted.*)

**1994 - Laguna Creek High School** was Elk Grove's fourth comprehensive high school. It opened as an innovative high school of the future with block scheduling and a fast paced curriculum. The school received its name from what at that time was the relatively new community of Laguna Creek and the waters that drain a large part of south Sacramento County. Gabriel Moraga, Spanish explorer of the early 1800s, gave the name to the area noting the great swamplands and the waterways of the Cosumnes River and its tributaries.

**1994 - Harriet Eddy Middle School** opened as the feeder school for Laguna Creek High School. The school was named for a legendary principal of Elk Grove Union High School who served from 1907 to 1909. Harriet Eddy was a dynamic woman who got the high school accredited with the formation of the first rural library in California. She went on to create libraries all over the state and in other countries.

**1994 - Elitha Donner Elementary School**, also in the Laguna area, was named in honor of twelve-year-old Elitha, daughter of George Donner. The young girl was one of the fortunate survivors of the Donner Party tragedy of the Sierra in the winter of 1846-47. Elitha Cumi Donner Wilder lived the rest of her life in the Elk Grove area and is buried in the Elk Grove Cemetery. She is Elk Grove's golden link to the early settlement of California and a symbol of hope for children everywhere. A new permanent set of buildings was constructed at the Elitha Donner site in 1996 to supplement the portable buildings that were used for the beginning of the school.

*Next week – More about the incredible 1990s and the construction of even more schools in EGUSD – and high school # 5 – Sheldon HS.*

- 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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