

A HISTORY OF EUREKA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT



I. BEGINNINGS

Inkwells, wooden desks, slate blackboards and a wood-burning stove greeted students at the first schoolhouse in what later became the Eureka Union School District. Excelsior School was constructed in 1868 by a man named Oaks, who tore down an old building for lumber to build the new school. It was located about one-half mile west of the present Eureka School site on the old Sacramento-Auburn wagon road.

Children walking to school in those days stayed clear of the heavily loaded freight wagons headed up the dusty road towards Auburn with cords of fire wood for the railroad workers or sacks of wheat for the flour mills. They came from surrounding farms and ranches, carrying school books and lunch pails and clay marbles or a homemade string ball to play with at recess. Behind the one-room schoolhouse was an outhouse with seats of various sizes to accommodate the students.

The school bell could be heard all over town and it not only called children to classes, but also families to community parties, religious services or town meetings held at the schoolhouse. (ColumbiaCalifornia.com/historicstructures)

The first teacher was Miss Burke, who taught for three months and then resigned. She was succeeded by Miss S. V. Boles, who assumed the teaching responsibilities for the ten students enrolled that first year.

During the winter, the boys cut wood for the stove to heat the class-room. The students either “roasted or froze, depending on where they sat.”
(ColumbiaCalifornia.com/historicstructures)

A typical school day in the 1800's included the 3 R's (readin', 'ritin' and 'rithmetic). The oldest children in the class went first. They read aloud to the teacher at the recitation bench while the other groups worked at their desks. The next oldest age group read a poem and memorized a stanza or two and then recited it to the teacher from memory. Lunch time games included “Hide the Thimble” or “catch” with a ball made from spare string wrapped around a rock or marble and covered with fabric. Other popular games were “Kick the Can” and “Fetch the Bacon.” The teacher rang the bell to signify the end of lunch. After lunch, the teacher wrote arithmetic problems on the blackboard for the children to copy on their slate boards. The day ended with penmanship and memorization of spelling words, culminating in a spelling bee. (www.cednu.niu.edu/blackwell)

In **1864**, the Central Pacific Railroad expanded eastward from Sacramento to become part of the first intercontinental railroad. The rails intersected with those of the California Central, a small local line that connected the budding towns of Folsom and Lincoln. On railroad maps, the place where the two joined was designated simply as "Junction." It was around Junction that the town later known as Roseville would emerge.

On **February 5, 1868**, a group of citizens formed the **Excelsior School District**, which lay between the Dry Creek and Franklin districts. In **1875**, just seven years later, growth forced the fledgling Excelsior School District to build a new school one-half mile closer to Roseville. The school furniture was handmade and the room was large enough for 35 children. By **1881**, even the new facilities became crowded because there were 40 students enrolled that year.

When Southern Pacific moved the railroad roundhouse and repair facilities from Rocklin to Roseville between **1906** and **1908**, the once small agricultural center of 250 people became a "railroad town" and grew to be the county's most populous city with around three thousand inhabitants. (PCOE web site)

DAYS GONE BY



Clearing the grounds for construction began to take place in 1906 for the Roseville Heights subdivision, one of the first to be established in Roseville. The residential neighborhood still exists today.

During the "Big Move" of 1906-08, the Southern Pacific Railroad moved its round house and other terminal facilities from Rocklin to Roseville. This marked the rise of Roseville as an important railroad center, while reducing Rocklin's significance.

Accompanying this move was a rapid growth in the

then small village of Roseville, which saw its population swell from about 250 residents in 1905 to 3,000 by 1909.

To house the mushrooming population increase, many new subdivisions were built, seemingly overnight. They included the Theile Addition, Cherry Glen and the Sierra Vista tract. Roseville Heights, which

extended from Church Street to Atkinson Street, was one of the first subdivisions.

The ground clearing operations for Roseville Heights began in 1906. Over 98 years since the groundbreaking, the Roseville Heights subdivision remains a quiet residential area.

— Photo and story courtesy of Roseville historian Duke Davis.



Excelsior School (circa 1909)

During the first decade of the 1900's, 76 million Americans lived in 46 states. There were 8,000 cars and ten miles of paved roads. The average worker made \$12.98 per week for 59 hours. Life expectancy was 47.3 years for females and 46.3 years for males.

([Http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/decade00.html](http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/decade00.html))

The Excelsior District existed for 39 years. In **1908**, due to feuding families, the school district was divided in two, forming the **Excelsior** and **Rosedale** districts.



Rosedale School

(from top) Charlie Mariana, Grace Nettles, Angie Mariana, Lela Cavitt, Vera Pirini, Bessie Cavitt (Avery) - teacher, Verna Nettles, Jean Way, Johnny Nettles, James Cavitt, Jerry Cavitt, Roy Nettles, William Cavitt and George Yantis.

The **Rosedale School** was located on property later owned by Emiel Rodgers near the corner of Douglas and Joe Rodgers Road. The construction and appearance of the Rosedale School was very similar to the 1875 Excelsior School.

According to Willma Cavitt's brief history of the District, Bessie Cavitt was a teacher in some of Iowa's one-room schools. Since she had grown up listening to her father tell about the wonderful state of California, she boarded a train and headed west about 1905. She stayed with an uncle in Truckee and got her California teaching certificate. She later taught at Rosedale School.

Hiram B. Allen was one of the first school board members of this community over 100 years ago.

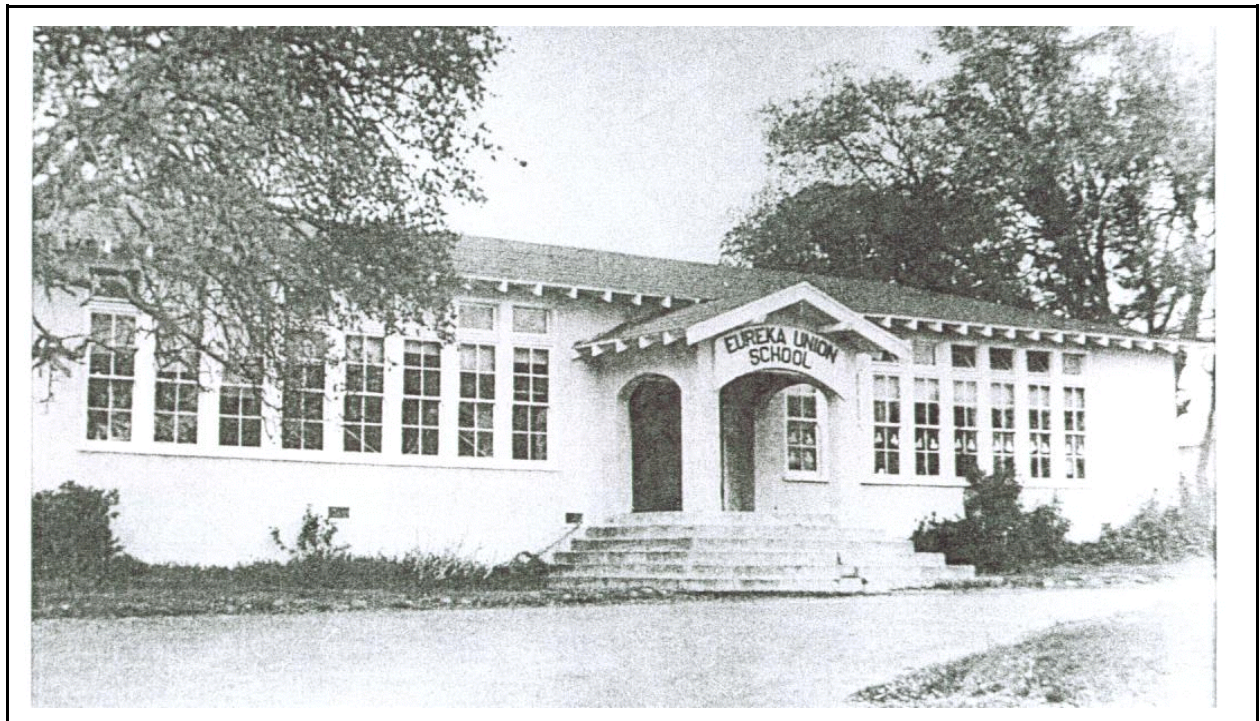
Hiram B. Allen was born in New Hampshire April 6, 1829 and was a farmer in his native state until he came to California in 1855. He mined at different locations until his wife arrived in 1863 (married in 1853) and they settled on property purchased from the Central Pacific Railroad in Placer County. "Mr. Allen prospered and at length obtained an aggregate of 420 acres of fine land, seven miles from Roseville Junction and about the same distance from Rocklin. He was one of the first to manufacture wine and brandy in Placer County, in 1861. He was regarded as one of the most enterprising farmers of the county, being a member of the School Board several years. He died February 6, 1890, leaving a highly respected family and many friends to mourn his irreparable loss."
Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California, Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1891.

Smaller Districts Unite

As time passed, the family feud was forgotten and a growing segment of the community felt that if the two smaller districts would unite and form a union district, their children could receive a better education. The community also felt that they needed a new name for the union district. This concept led to the **1925** election and the formation of the **Eureka Union Elementary School District**. The District was named by Mrs. Irene Burns, who was Placer County Superintendent of Schools at that time. The present **Eureka School** site was obtained, and in the summer of **1925**, the two old one-room school houses were moved to the Eureka site.

The first two teachers in this school were Mrs. Celia Santini and Miss Estelle Waller, who later became Mrs. Cruickshank. Mrs. Santini worked with grades 1-4 and Mrs. Cruickshank with grades 5-8. Because of increased enrollment, the first room of a new two-room school was built in front of the old buildings. When school opened in September 1926, another room was added.

In the 1920's, the illiteracy rate dipped to a low of 6% of the population. The average worker in America earned \$1236 a year, but teachers received an annual salary of only \$970. (Kingwood College Library website)



1926-27 Eureka School

During the 1930's, unemployment rose to 25%. “..Money was scarce because of the depression, so people did what they could to make their lives happy. Movies were hot, parlor games and board games were popular. People gathered around radios to listen to the Yankees. Young people danced to the big bands. Franklin Roosevelt influenced Americans with his Fireside Chats.

The price of milk was 56 cents a gallon, 9 cents for a loaf of bread and 42 cents for a pound of round steak.” (Kingwood College Library website)

Jean Kesti, a student in the 30's, remembers a coat closet at each end of the classroom where they would hang their jackets. They had a wood-burning stove and two outhouses—one for the boys and one for the girls. At recess, they would play jump rope, hop scotch and ollee-ollee-oxen-free (where they would throw a tennis ball over the roof of the school, catch it and run around to the other side and get someone “out” by hitting them with the ball).

Margaret Miller taught 1st through 4th grades. Mrs. Kesti remembered Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter plays and how they would build a stage in the classroom. The children would wait in the coat closet before they went on.

There was a pear ranch where the fire station is now on Eureka Road. Douglas Boulevard was called Rocky Ridge back then. There were sheep in pastures on both sides of Johnson Ranch Road and Folsom Lake was just a river.

She remembers that when Mrs. Cruikshank got angry at students, she would discipline them with a buggy whip. One day “Charlie” misbehaved and she used the buggy whip across his back. Afterwards he said, “Thanks for dusting off my jacket!”

Miss Willma Tescher, a graduate of Chico Normal School, was the third teacher added to the staff. Willma taught the third, fourth and fifth grades for two years before she became Mrs. Cavitt. She left regular teaching temporarily to raise her own family, but home-taught three handicapped children three mornings a week during this time. Following the completion of the new school in **1927**, the old **Excelsior School** was torn down and the **Rosedale** facility was used as a storage room until **1936**.

Enrollment in the District dropped for a few years but started growing rapidly in the late forties. In 1946, Willma Cavitt was asked to substitute for two weeks in the first and second grade class. The teacher never returned and Willma stayed for fourteen years! She was Principal of Eureka Union School for the last eight of those fourteen years (1951-1959). While she was teacher and Principal, she also served as Secretary to the Board of Trustees for four years. (from Willma Cavitt, "This is Your Life" presentation at the dedication of Cavitt Jr. High)

"The 1940's were dominated by World War II. Women were needed to replace men who had gone off to war, and so the first great exodus of women from the home to the workplace began. Rationing affected the food we ate, the clothes we wore, the toys with which children played. After the war, the men returned, having seen the rest of the world. No longer was the family farm an ideal.. The GI Bill allowed more men than ever before to get a college education."

The average salary was \$1,299. Teachers got \$1,441. Minimum wage was \$.43 per hour. Life expectancy rose to 68.2 for females and 60.8 for males.

(Kingwood College Library website)

Janice Freeman of the Granite Bay View, wrote an article about Willma Tescher Cavitt, entitled "Local Teacher Offered More Than 3 R's, Willma Cavitt gave students common sense and warm soup."

"During an interview, before her passing in 1993, Willma Cavitt, at the age of 85, said, "All you need to teach is a piece of chalk, a chalkboard and an eraser."

Was this an oversimplified statement of a complex mission, or words of wisdom from a Twentieth Century teacher? They were probably a little of both.

In 1926, Willma Cavitt began teaching first and second graders at Eureka School, a four-room school-house complete with wood-burning stove and outhouse.

Recalling the wood-burning stove and outhouse, Willma laughed and said, "We didn't know we were



Willma Elizabeth Cavitt

experiencing hardships.”

Willma’s philosophy of teaching was heavily laced with common sense and compassion. Grandparents of today’s local children remember that Mrs. Cavitt always kept a few cans of soup to warm up for students who either forgot their lunches or couldn’t afford them.

“Kids can’t learn on an empty stomach. It wasn’t any trouble,” she said. It didn’t appear to be any trouble to her to keep extra clothes on hand in case of “accidents,” either.

In the early **1940’s**, crowded conditions again led the Board and community to seek additional classroom space. In **1944**, planning began on the building that holds the **Eureka School** office and the former space for the **Eureka Union Elementary School District** office. In **1947**, there were 86 students attending the Eureka District and the new building was opened. It housed the first and second grades in one room and the seventh and eighth grades in another room and also had a small library. These two rooms were located just behind the two rooms that were built in the late 1920’s.

Enrollment grew to 138 by **1956**, which surpassed the space of the available four classrooms. The school trustees, with community support, volunteered their time and labor and built a one-room temporary classroom, which was used for two years. “Now we had six teachers with two in one room.”

My Dear Sybil,

True friends - like diamonds,
Are precious and rare;
False friends - like autumn leaves,
Are found everywhere.

Your teacher,
Estelle Cruickshank



Mrs. Estelle Cruickshank



Jackie Lewis

Jackie Lewis was a school bus driver in the early 1940’s. She was energetic, great with kids and always had a smile. Jackie was a great storyteller. She played pranks on people and loved cards. She lived in a house that is now under Folsom Lake and then in a house by the quarry pond (Joe Rogers Road). When she was a child, Pancho Villa stopped by a café she and her mom were eating at and her mom shoved her under the table. (Landa Dubose)

Remembrances of Sybil Wicks (Eureka Union School 1938-1948)

The first years I went to Eureka Union School, we had two classrooms, two outside toilets, no school buses and a little well for drinking water. Inside the school we had a big kerosene stove for our heat. The two classrooms were divided by a little hallway where there was a small drinking fountain. The children would line up to get a drink of water. The children carried a little tin lunch pail or a paper sack to bring lunch from home.

I was five years old and I lived about four miles from the school. The older children walked so fast, I could not keep up with them so I learned to run fast. I didn't know the way to school if I didn't follow them. My teacher was Mrs. Estelle Cruickshank. She lived in Folsom. She was a caring teacher and always tried to help the students with personal problems. She was the principal teacher before Mrs. Cavitt was hired. Mrs. Cruickshank taught the sixth, seventh and eighth grade. Mrs. Cavitt taught the younger grades.

One day the school went for a school outing. We walked about one mile over a field that had some large pits. The pits were made by miners who at one time looked for gold. When we came to the pit, we looked in and saw about two hundred rattlesnakes. It was very scary. The teacher said, "Do not get too close to the rim of the pit. You could fall in."

On the outside of the eaves on the roof of the school building were several hundred black bats. The boys would catch the bats and chase the girls to make them scream. During recess and play time, the children learned to find ways to create things to do. The girls would play a game called hop scotch and a game with a ball and jacks. The boys had two basketballs and a bat and several balls. There were two swings but this was the total of all the outside games.

A very terrifying event at the school in 1941—the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The children were told to hide under their desks several times a day for practice. Our country was at war. We were very scared. My best friend, Dorothy, was Japanese/American. The big men came to our school to get her to take to the concentration camp. We grabbed each other and I told the men, "You can't take my friend. She is not a bad girl. She is a good girl. You can't take her away." How little did we young children know about war.

It is always interesting when I hear about the students who I graduated with. June, the other girl in my class, remains a dearest friend and was my bridesmaid at my wedding. One of the boys has passed away. He was my brother-in-law. Two others live in the local area and one in Sacramento. Many of the students were from poor families and times were hard. Most of the children worked in the orchards during school vacation. There were beautiful orchards all around the area and a big turkey ranch where children could work. Eureka Union School was like a big family, caring for each other. Eureka Union School will always be a happy memory for me.

About September, 1935:

Eureka Union School was a two-room building with a building in back, joined by an awning between. That building was the original one-room school house. By 1935 it was used for a storage house. There were two outside toilets, a basketball court, and four swings. Mrs. Miller, who lived in Sylvan Corners, was teacher of the grades one through fourth. Mrs. Estelle Cruickshank was teacher and principal of fifth through eighth grades. There was a coat room at the end of each room and a porch in front of the school.

Mrs. Cruickshank taught many things: regular history, arithmetic, music. Also, music of various kinds - piano, guitar, harmonica, accordion and singing. On rainy days we would do crocheting. That was a real learning experience during recess. We brought old sheets and other material and we would cut them in narrow strips. She brought sticks for us to whittle crochet hooks. We made rugs and pot holders. I can still remember the notes on the guitar and how to hold my tongue on the harmonica.

We had art classes that I enjoyed most: water colors, crayons, pencils and oil. We used cardboard, wood, paper or whatever we could find at our home. I have used that knowledge all my life since those days. Just before the World's Fair on Treasure Island Cliff in San Francisco Bay, we sent some art work for display. That was 1939. I was very disappointed that we never got the art work back.

The thing we learned about our health was how important it was to brush our teeth. We did not have toothpaste to use, so we used baking soda. The School Board that I have good reason to remember was Alice Bahrs and her daughter, Lilly Bahrs. Lilly became my step-mother later. She was a very big part of my life. She was a wonderful lady.

Mrs. Cruickshank lived in Folsom and drove over to school, which was quite a drive every day. She cared a lot about her students and helped us in many ways we probably did not appreciate at the time. I learned many things that I have used in my life time that I would not have had the opportunity to learn somewhere else. That little country school gave me a lot more than I realized at the time. Some of the boys, especially Charlie Beard, did a lot of things to our teacher, like putting a snake in her desk, but she was always a good sport about the pranks. One of the students that I remember was Mysiuki Isahara. He came there when he was 16 from Japan to live with his mother on a ranch nearby. He went through eight grades in three years. Pete and Mike Presty were Italian boys that were twins. They also lived on a ranch. Mary and George Sakato live in the same house today.

Some other students that were in the school were Irene Crell, Thelma Robbins, Lola Robbins, Bonnie Robbins and Nellie Robbins. They were my cousins. Joan, Max and Johnny Rankin were also my cousins. There were also six foster children who were being cared for by a family by the name of Banduccia. When I graduated from eighth grade, there were eight students who graduated with me. It was a wonderful learning experience in my life and I am glad to share it.

Stella Rankin Nichols

The boundaries of the **Eureka Union School District** remained unchanged for 32 years until, in **1957**, **Hidden Valley** seceded to join the **Franklin District** (now part of the Loomis Union School District). This withdrawal mitigated the crowded conditions for a short period. The voters of the Eureka Union School District voted to sell bonds and to apply for a State loan.

In the fall of **1959**, the initial wing of what is now **Eureka School** was used for the first time. With the additional six new classrooms in the east wing, the Eureka District added a Kindergarten program. Constructed along with the **1959** east wing was a large portion of the multi-purpose complex. The **1958-59** school year saw the last classroom use of the **1926-27** building. The two rooms were moved away.

The average salary in the 1950's was \$2,992. The ratio of male to female in the labor force was 5:2. A loaf of bread cost \$0.14. "The end of World War II brought thousands of young servicemen back to America to pick up their lives and start new families in new homes with new jobs." Growth was evident everywhere and the baby boom was under way.

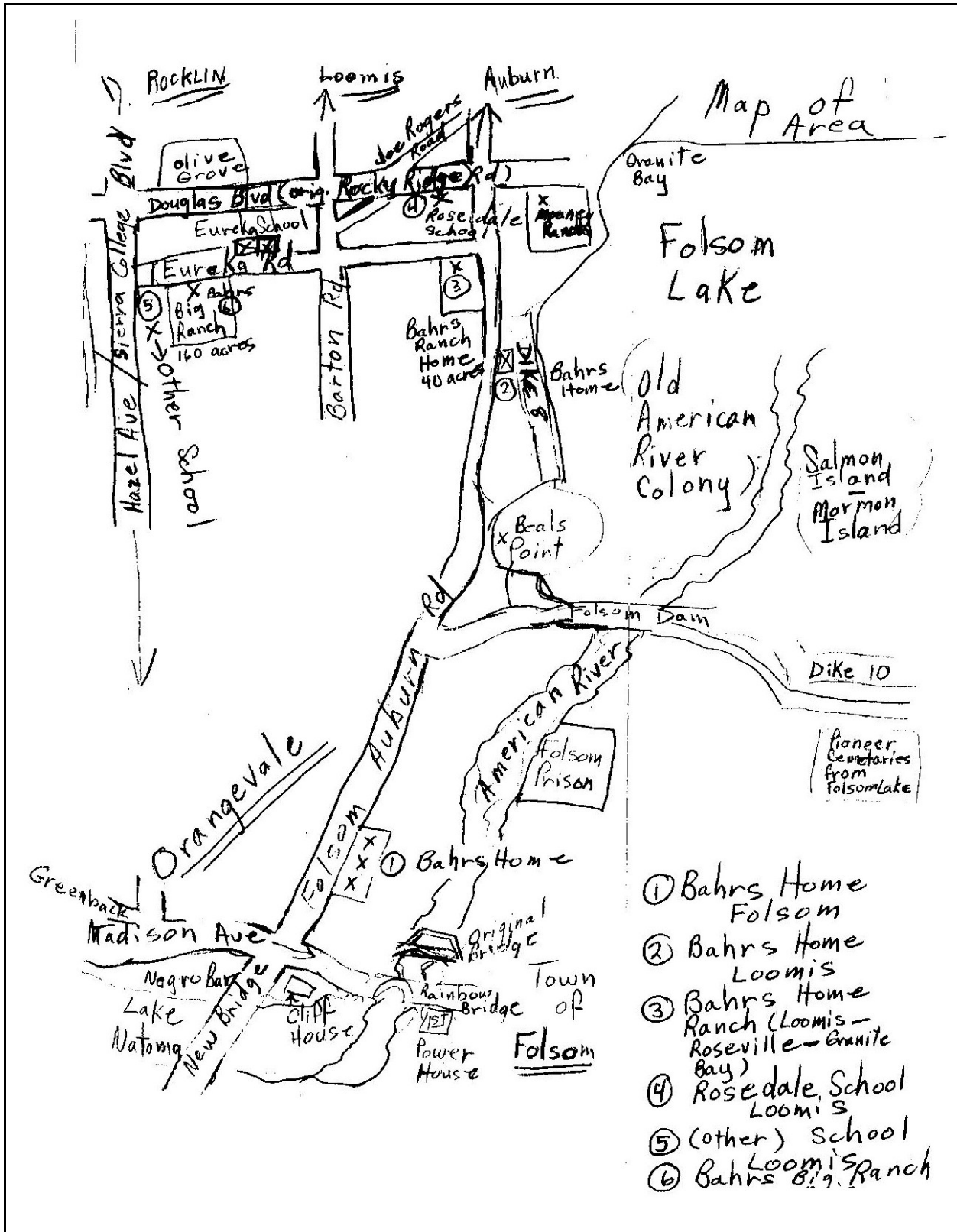
I Love Lucy, Father Knows Best, and The Ed Sullivan Show were popular TV shows. Some well-known entertainers from this era were Rosemary Clooney, Perry Como, Buddy Holly and the Rock 'n' Roll king, Elvis Presley. This was the age of transistor radios and colored TV's, hoola hoops and Disneyland, American Bandstand and Barbie dolls, Davy Crockett coon skin hats and silly putty. Ray Bradbury's, "The Martian Chronicles" was on the best seller list.

The 1950's were characterized by a strong element of conservatism and anti-communist feeling. Fashions included blue jeans, poodle skirts, pony tails for girls and flat tops and crew cuts for guys

(Kingwood College Library web site)

With the opening of the **1959** facilities, **Mr. Dale Bartell** became the principal and 8th grade teacher. **Mrs. Willma Cavitt**, who had served as teacher/principal for eight prior years, continued teaching first and second grades. The attendance that year was **232** students.

HISTORICAL MAP OF THE AREA
drawn by a former student



Reflections and memories of how Eureka Union School came to be - from some of the families who helped make it so.

My grandparents were born in Europe (Scotland and Sweden). Louis Bahrs met Mathilda Johnson in Sacramento, CA. They married and started a family. After their two daughters were born, they moved to Folsom, CA. Later they moved to a house located at the north end of Dike 8, next to the Folsom/Auburn Road. About 1910, he bought and built a big bungalow-type house on Eureka Road. (It's still standing at the same location, which is west of the fire house.) It was finished about 1915 and became the headquarters for his two fruit ranches. (40 acres) (home; 16 acres, 1 mile west on Eureka Road) He planted fruit trees (plums, pears and other types). These fruit were then packed and sold to the packing sheds in Loomis, CA.

As the girls, Alice and Lillie, grew, it was important to think about their education. Their first school was called Rosedale School (a one-room school located near or about a mile from the Bahr's home). There were two one-room school houses in the area..Rosedale School, near Joe Rogers Road. The other school (can't remember its name) was located a mile further west of the current Eureka School. It was located on the south side of Eureka Road, across from the Buddecke Ranch, up on the hill, surrounded by Big Digger Pines. Much later during the late 1940's, early 1950's, a family named Montgomery lived there, if my memory is correct.

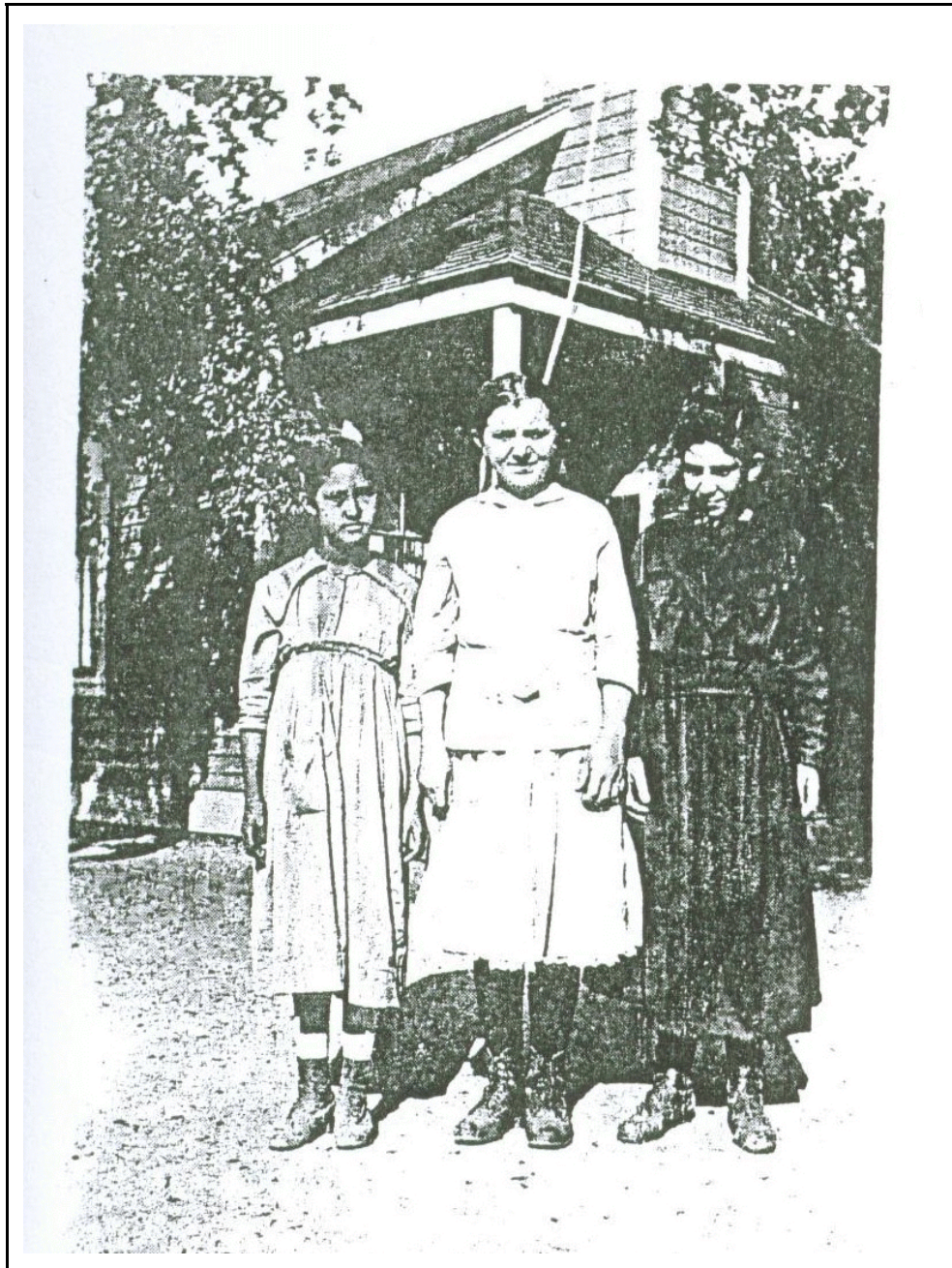
Enter time for the Bahr's girl's education. Alice Bahrs started school at age 9 in 1910. Her sister Lillie started at age 8 in 1913. As time went on, many other children joined them. (Mooney, Purdy, Nishimoto, etc.) Many were early families in the area.

Alice Bahrs graduated in 1917; Lillie in 1920. Alice and Lillie continued their education at Roseville High School in Roseville, CA. Alice Bahrs then went on to college at U.C. Berkeley. She taught college in Portland, Oregon. With the onset of WWII, the majority of men doctors were being drafted to fight in the war. Alice had the educational background, so she entered into medical school in Oregon. She became a medical doctor and practiced medicine in Corvallis, Oregon for the next 32 years!

Lillie Bahr's education was cut short after her freshman year. Her father died at age 50 in 1922. Lillie and her mother became a partnership and a strong team. They ran two fruit ranches, totaling 200 acres, using horses and hired help. They kept the ranches together during the time leading up to the Great Depression (1929) and the sad times after. In 1938, Lillie met Joseph Rankin, whom she would later marry in 1939. They raised three children: Blenda (Rankin) Hoskins, Mathilda ('Tillie' Rankin) Kraft and Thomas Rankin. All three attended and graduated from Eureka Union School, going on and finishing their high school education at Roseville High School, also.

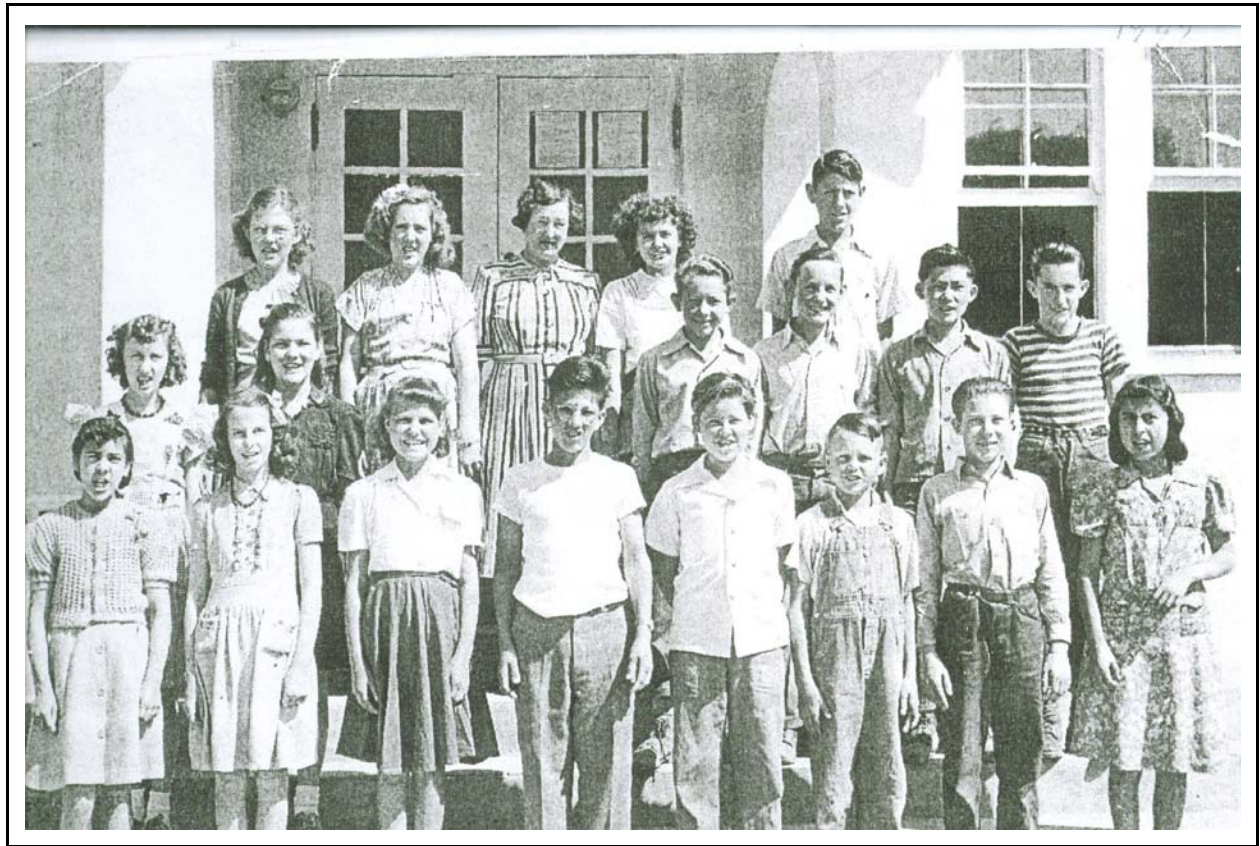
Back to the two one-room schools. Some time after 1921, the two schools were combined. Eureka Union School was then born. (It was halfway between the two schools, built somewhere in the 1930's. The buildings had many qualities of the style of that era.) It had two rooms connected with a hallway between. Each room had an oil heating stove. School had its own water well! And even squeaky wooden floors!

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|---------|---|
| 1947-49 | Mrs. Cavitt taught 1 st and 2 nd grades. Here we learned to write and read. Remember the "Dick, Jane and Spot" books? |
| 1949-51 | Miss Orr taught 3 rd and 4 th grades. These were exciting times, California celebrating the 100 years after the California Gold Rush of 1849. |
| 1951-53 | Mrs. Webker taught 5 th and 6 th grades. We studied about the United States and what made each state special. Multiplication ('Times Tables') and long division were added to our list of things to learn. |
| 1953-54 | Mr. Farrell taught 7 th grade. Besides English, spelling and math, we studied a lot about U.S. History, becoming a nation. The Constitution, Bill of Rights and what made the USA what it is, and how our democracy works. Plus getting prepared to graduate and go on to high school. |



Students from Rosedale School (picture, about 1917)

Left: May Nishimura, age 10.
Middle: Lilly (Bahrs) Rankin, age 12.
Right: Millie M. Coons, age 10.



1947 Class Picture, Eureka Union School

6th, 7th and 8th grades

Back Row:

1. Muriel Woodie
2. Sybil Rankin
3. Mrs. Estelle Cruickshank
4. June Kuykendall
5. John Wicks

Middle Row:

1. Mary Murrey
2. Janine Lambert
3. Maurice Licktiy
4. Gene Brock
5. Ray Nishimura
6. Leorn Johnson

Front Row:

1. Emma Lee August
2. Dolorse Murrey
3. Lou Ella Wicks
4. Leroy Costello
5. Tim Bell
6. Tommy Wicks
7. James Poland
8. Dolorse Garcia



Eureka Union School Class of 1953
5th and 6th grade: (Left to Right)

1st Row: Aaron Lambert, J.T. Ellis, Jimmy Rankin, Virgil Bradford, Gary Mathany, Jimmy Poland, Richard Smith, Linville Smart, Rose Presti, Blenda Rankin, Nita Murray, Kathleen Moore, Charlotte Poland, Barbara Rodgers, Jerreldean Roberts.

2nd Row: Tomas Harlowe, Paul Williams, Bill Roberts, Wayne Weiss, Shirley Singley, Margaret Sphan, Naomi Lambert, Dorothy Daniel, Hazel Wicks, Neva Lussan, Dianne Hellum, Carin Cheff.

3rd Row: Joe Poole, David Rodgers.

Teacher: Mrs. Webber



Eureka Union Class of 1955
7th and 8th grade: (Left to Right)

1st Row: Kathleen Moore, Dianne Hellum, Gale Bender, Donna Reed, Neva Lussan, Rose Presti, Jerreldean Roberts.

2nd Row: Verna Dalton, Hazel Wicks, Blenda Rankin, Shirley Singley, Georgian Hudson, Carin Cheff, Nita Murray.

3rd Row: Barbara Rodgers, Margaret Spahn, Bill Roberts, C. Rhea, Joe Poole, Richard Smith, Tommy Harlow.

Back Row: Wayne Weiss, David Rodgers, Ted Banducci, Jim Poland, Paul Williams, J.T. Ellis.

Teacher: Mr. Murphy