

In order to understand the history of Valley Home School you must first understand the history of Valley Home itself.

"Valley Home was originally included in a land grant given to Alfrás Basil Thompson by the territorial Governor Pio Pico in 1846."¹ Due to hostile indians Thompson was unable to occupy the land, "so it was given over to grazing land for whatever animals roamed the area."²

In 1871 a railroad from Stockton to Valley Home and Oakdale was completed. "At this time Valley Home served as a flagstop for the railroad and was known as Clyde."³ In 1903 a German from Nebraska, F.D. Volkman, moved his family to Clyde. He planted orchards, vineyards, and alfalfa, and soon persuaded the railroad to build a depot. He also built the first store and hotel which gave Clyde the closeness a new town needed.

The German settlers that moved to Clyde sent letters home telling of the land that could be purchased there for a reasonable price. More Germans fled to this small valley and Clyde soon became a prosperous, German colony. Because of the increase in Germans in this area and because there was already another town named Clyde in Merced County, it was decided to change the town's name to Thalheim.

During the World War I period, a terrible hatred towards Germans was created. Around 1918 the town's name was changed again. This time it was changed to Valley Home which is the ~~english~~ english translation of Thalheim and that's what it has been ever since.

As more families moved into the area the idea of schooling for the children became stronger. The kids needed an education, but first they needed a school.

Up until 1903 the children of Thalheim attended school in Oakdale. But that was only a possibility for the kids who were able to find transportation from Thalheim to Oakdale which was approximately 12 miles.

"A misunderstanding between the Board of Trustees of the Oakdale school district and the citizens of a German colony north of the Stanislaus River led to the forming of a school district in that colony."⁴ What seems to have happened is that "the impression had been created by people of the proposed district that they intended to cut loose from Oakdale school district and thereby avoid the existing bonded indebtedness."⁵ It's not known for sure that this was the case, but what is known in fact is that "the Oakdale Board of Trustees met with Mr. Schilling, the colony representative, at Modesto and the matter was settled without a dissenting voice on either side."⁶

The agreement made was that "the colony was to increase the number of school age children from 25 to 37 in 3 weeks, the colony was to furnish a school building, and the Oakdale school district was to furnish a teacher and the upper grades to attend Oakdale High School."⁷ The Thalheim school was to be open for the fall term of 1903, until then the pupils could attend the Oakdale school if they wished. This was the beginning of the Valley Home school district with a two room building of primary grades.

The first school building was located on Lone Tree road. "It was condemned for use in the late 1940's."⁸ Around the same time the school building had to be shut down, Edward "Eddie" Schultz, was concerned about Valley Home keeping its school district. "He went door to door with a necessary school age census."⁹ As a result a new school was built and ready for classes in 1948.

This new school was built on Texas Avenue. It included four classrooms, student restrooms, faculty restrooms, an office, and a room for the nurse. More people moved to Valley Home and "due to escalating enrollment an additional school building was built across the street from the clubhouse in 1975."¹⁰ This new school was located on Pioneer Avenue. It contained more classrooms, restrooms, and a future office.

This all new Valley Home School educated grades kindergarten through eighth grade with an average enrollment of 170. Today it is a small country school that holds its own eighth grade graduation ceremonies, track meets, school plays, and much more.

Due to the lack of housing and property for sale for new families in the Valley Home area, the school today has a declining enrollment of 160. The two school buildings still stand and are in use, but because of lack of funds two classrooms in the newer building remain unfinished.

The current administrator, principal, and seventh-eighth grade teacher is Harold Pope. He's been at the school since

1954. "The first year he arrived at Valley Home school he taught the fifth-sixth combined class in the one schoolhouse school district. One year later he became principal, a post he's held ever since."¹¹ The Stanislaus County Department of Education has him classified as "the longest serving administrator at the same school site."¹² Harold Pope's hard work and dedication of about forty years has kept a unique, rural school surviving in a time when many people believe that bigger is better.

"Today Valley Home School and it's loyal parents and students face the battle of resisting unification with the Oakdale school district. These parents, much like the parents of this district in 1903, have chosen a lifestyle for their children and hope that they will have the freedom to keep Valley Home School the way it was years ago and remains today."¹³

What does the future hold for Valley Home School, will it survive or will it come full circle and once again be governed by the Oakdale School district?

FOOTNOTES

1. Unpublished documentation property of McHenry Public Library.
2. Newspaper article property of McHenry Public Library.
3. Unpublished documentation, property of Valley Home Library
4. Valley Home Community Cookbook, p. 167
5. Oakdale Leader, March 13, 1903
6. IBID
7. Valley Home Community Cookbook, p. 167
8. IBID
9. IBID
10. IBID
11. Oakdale Leader, November 6, 1985
12. IBID
13. Tina Jensen, Valley Home School Trustee-nine years

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary and secondary sources:

1. County Recorder's Office, Modesto, Ca
2. Escalon Branch Library
3. McHenry Public Library
4. Oakdale Leader
5. Oakdale Branch Library
6. Stanislaus County Weekly News, Feb. 17, 1911
7. Valley Home Branch Library
8. Valley Home Community Cookbook
9. Valley Home School

Oral sources:

1. Harold Pope, principal of Valley Home School
2. Tina Jensen, Valley Home School District Trustee-nine years

Taken
June 1948

