

Buckeye School District relives history for sesquicentennial

BUCKEYE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special to Cameron Park Life

The Buckeye School District has been continuously serving students in the community for at least 150 years. A Buckeye School building has been in existence since 1853-54. As the Buckeye district celebrates 150 years, the present and fourth Buckeye School building will be celebrating 50 years.

The present Buckeye School building is very near the site of the first Buckeye School building, located at a settlement known as Buckeye Flat, just northeast of the community of Shingle Springs.

Contrary to popular belief, Buckeye School was not named for the abundant buckeye trees that thrive in the foothills. The name came from a group of adventurers who came from Ohio, the Buckeye State, "to see the elephant" and to search for gold. They came overland along with 25,000 others in 1849. Since the immigrants were from Ohio, the area became known as Buckeye Flat.

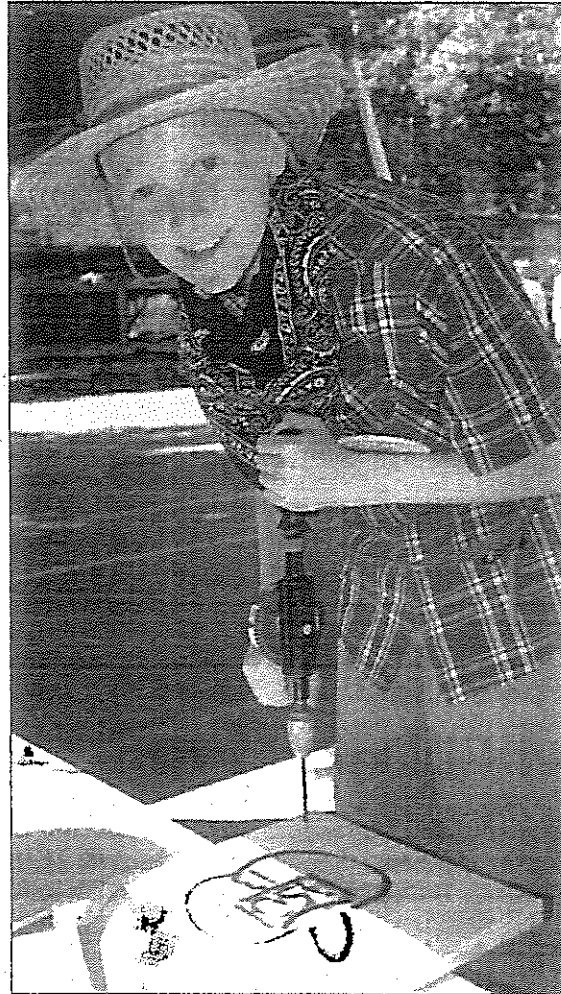
Buckeye Flat, and most of the surrounding foothill area, was not uninhabited when the overlanders arrived. Native Americans had been living in the area for hundreds of years.

Abundant water, game, oak trees for acorns, building materials, and the barrier of the central valley marshes kept the Spanish settlers and missions closer to the coast. The Californios, native-born Hispanics, lived and worked on cattle ranches in the foothills on land grants provided by the government when Spain controlled California and before Mexico gained independence from Spain.

It was a myth that there were few women in this part of California prior to and during the Gold Rush. The Native Americans and the Californios were here. In 1841, including wives, sisters, daughters and sweethearts, crossed the plains for California. Nancy Kelsey was one of them.

Women could see the need for educating their children. There were women among the immigrants at Buckeye Flat. A school was built at Buckeye Flat around 1852-53 and called, for lack of a better name, Buckeye Flat School. It was built and funded by the community.

In 1849, Sacramento was incorporated. Buckeye Flat was thriving. Two stores were built to supply miners. A hotel was built to accommodate immigrants coming overland and from San Francisco as they made their way



Cameron Park Life photo by Mike Roberts
BENCH MAKER — Evan Riggert, 12, makes a stool by hand during the Buckeye School District Sesquicentennial Celebration on May 30.

to the gold fields.

An overland party from Michigan came from Sacramento just south of Buckeye Flat and headed toward what we know as Sly Park and

Pollcock Pines. They camped at an area we now know as Shingle Springs. Coming from Michigan they were familiar with the

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Village Life
photo by Mike Roberts
HOW THEY MADE ROPE — 100 years ago. Kyle Gallagher, 9, Hannah Garcia, 9 and Caroline Heldsick, 8 learn how to make rope the old fashioned way from volunteer Allcia Milanowski at the Buckeye School District Sesquicentennial Celebration on May 30.

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timber industry.

On their way back toward Sacramento, three of the party decided to stay in the area to establish a shingle mill to produce roofing materials for a fast growing Sacramento. Conditions were perfect. There was a need; there were lumber, labor and water needed for operation. The mill was operated by horse power. The shingle mill was located near a spring. The area became known as Shingle Springs.

There were frequent fires and annual floods in Sacramento creating a constant need for building materials. Prior to this time most finished lumber was shipped from the east around the Horn and was very expensive due to the growth and demands of San Francisco and Sacramento.

In 1850, a road house was built next to the mill and was called Shingle Springs House. More people were stopping in the area for supplies, services, and advice as they headed east to Hangtown

(Placerville), and points east, north and south along the Mother Lode. In 1851, the Missouri Flat House was built in the area known as Shingle Springs. In 1852, the Planters House was built as well as two blacksmith shops. Shingle Springs was growing while Buckeye Flat growth was slowing down as the gold strikes were few and far between. In 1853, the first post office was built in the village of Shingle Springs, but was closed in 1855 due to lack of business.

In 1857, the first store to supply travelers and residents was built in Shingle Springs leading to less business at Buckeye Flat. The same year, a school was built south of Shingle Springs and the French Creek School District was established. Shingle Springs still did not have enough students to operate a school. It took six students. Children living in Shingle Springs were attending the Buckeye Flat School.

In 1865 Shingle Springs was

surveyed and lots were designated and sold, and Shingle Springs became a town. The post office was re-established. The Placerville and Sacramento Valley Railroad terminus was established in Shingle Springs. Freight was shipped to Shingle Springs to be distributed to points east, north and south by wagon. Instead of three days by oxen or mules, freight and passengers could arrive in hours. The train operated two times per day except Sunday. The railroad contributed to the loss of business to Clarksville as the train tracks circumvented the area, which is now El Dorado Hills.

A second Buckeye school building was built. According to a public notice in the *Mountain Democrat*, an election was held in the Buckeye Flat School on the 21st day of October, 1865, to generate the sum of \$1,000 to build a new school. Most likely the school built in 1852-53 at Buckeye Flat did not have enough students to keep it open.

Miners left when the gold ran out.

Shingle Springs was now the center of population with the freighting business and accompanying services. The school was built late in 1865. Buckeye Flat passed into oblivion, as most temporary gold rush towns did, but the second Buckeye School, known as the school on the hill, continued until devastated by fire near the turn of the century.

The third Buckeye School was built in the area behind the park in Shingle Springs, and was in existence until the first phase of the fourth Buckeye School was completed in 1958 at its present site, back at Buckeye Flat.

A Buckeye School has been in existence for over 150 years, even though there were four separate buildings due to wear and tear, student growth and fires. The remains of the previous three buildings were most likely recycled into barns, residences or chicken houses as lumber was expensive.

In 1866, the Central Pacific Railroad was established across the Sierra Nevada Range along the present Highway 80, which diverted much of the commerce from Shingle Springs, as freight and passengers could continue to Reno and points east more efficiently than by wagon, stagecoach, horse or walking.

In 1947, the United School District of El Dorado Hills (Clarksville) joined the Buckeye School District.

On July 8, 1949, the French Creek School, and the Buckeye School merged to become the Buckeye Union School District. The Buckeye School has existed for over 150 years. The French Creek School, closed in 1960, has been in existence since 1858 or 102 years. The United School was in existence from 1869 until 1947, or 78 years. Therefore, the present Buckeye Union School District is 59 years old.