



Perry Park History

Joseph Avila Perry (1870-1946) was an outgoing and influential Elk Grove agricultural pioneer and citizen, who near the turn of the century purchased property at the corner of Waterman and Calvine Roads.

When he was 14 years old and by himself, Perry left his homeland, an island off the coast of Portugal, and set off for the New World aboard a whaling vessel. Without money and unable to speak the language, Perry landed on the East Coast and spent years working his way across the continent in order to reach the fertile valleys of the West. He settled on 81 acres in Elk Grove, where he met his wife Mary Sousa of Clarksburg. Two of the couples 4 children- Mary, Ermaline, Anne, and Margaret, - were born on the family ranch, still referred to as the "Homeplace" by surviving daughters Anne and Margaret.

Later, Perry purchased an additional 160 acres adjacent to the Homeplace. On this land, he grew grain crops, such as barley and wheat, and raised beef and dairy cattle, selling his milk to Crystal Creamery. "Life was quite different back then," said Anne. Not only was Elk Grove a tiny "close knit" town, containing only a bakery, railroad station, dime store and lumber company, but all the farm work was done by hand, including having to disc the fields by horse and plow, sowing the seeds and milking the cows. The family also had a small orchard, containing a wide variety of fruit trees. Most of their staple food was grown on the ranch. The family raised Holstein and Durham cattle and kept a brown Swiss as a family cow.

In addition to his hard work on the farm, Perry enjoyed socializing with his fellow farmers and local politicians. He became one of the most prominent and well-liked Elk Grove citizens of the time. If there was concern, Perry would often meet with the other community leaders on the steps of one of Elk Grove's businesses to discuss "what they liked or disliked, what they wanted, and who they were going to contact to get it," said Margaret. "He was a very social, hard-working, honest and outgoing man." Two years after Perry's death in 1946, the family sold the property and moved to a house in Sacramento. In 1984, the 160 acre property was sold to Winncrest Homes for its Perry Ranch subdivision development. "We are delighted by this park named after our father. He's deserving of it. We think Dad and Mama would be elated too. Dad - with his big ideas - always knew the property would amount to something," said Margaret and Anne.

The information within this document was created at the time of park dedication and may not be current.