



Morse Community Park History

The Morse family has been contributing to Elk Grove history for 150 years. In 1860, George Washington Morse and his younger brother, Lucien, came from Wisconsin by wagon train to Sacramento, California. For 10 years they used their skills as teamsters for freighting goods and equipment from Sacramento to the gold and silver mines. Over a period of time, George purchased 800 acres and settled on property on what is now Bruceville Road, about three miles south of this park site. He started a successful grain farming and horse raising business. By 1890, this farm on "Morse Lane" became one of the best farms in the area. George married a neighbor, Sarah Emily Russell and raised four children: Egbert, Maude, Archie and Evelyn. Archie and Egbert took over the farming operation following their father's death. During World War I the brothers grew many acres of wheat needed by the military due to the economic climate at the time. Archie continued to farm on the Bruceville Road Morse Ranch increasing the acreage to 1,120. Egbert purchased and cultivated a second farm on Twin Cities Road. In 1914, Maude (Ehrhardt) produced the first movie picture made in Sacramento, "12 O'Clock." Her sister Evelyn and son Henry were in the cast. It was shown at Clunie Theatre. The two sisters eventually moved to San Francisco.

In 1918, Archie married Barbara Comstock, they had five children: Barbara Evelyn, Archie, David, George and Herbert. That same year, Egbert married Ruby Wantz, and they also had five children: Mildred (Clow), Irene (Rose), Bertha (Sharp/Barber), Elvin, and Lawrence. All the Morse children attended either Carroll School or Mokelumne School. Barbara and Archie were always deeply interested in education, with Barbara serving on the Board of Trustees for Carroll School. They were instrumental in having the original Carroll School replaced in 1927. After Archie passed away in 1932, during the Great Depression, Barbara his widow raised their children and with their help and also the help of a steady employee, Ted Ehresman, continued the family farming business. Archie and Barbara's five children were graduates of Elk Grove High School. Egbert served for many years on the Galt High School District Board of Trustees and Ruby served on the Mokelumne School District Board of Trustees. Their five children graduated from Galt High School.

Egbert continued farming and passed away in 1958. Barbara was recognized as an outstanding woman in agriculture and education. She passed away in 1959. Ruby an award winning gardener, passed away in 1988. Their teachings allowed their children and their families to carry on the Morse legacy.

The Morse family has been immersed in the growth and the history of the Elk Grove community in many ways. Family members have played leadership roles in numerous community organizations and educational institutions including the Sacramento County Farm Bureau, Franklin Laguna Area Planning Advisory Council, Soropotimist International of Rio Cosumnes, Meals on Wheels Senior Nutrition Program, Elk Grove Food Bank, Elk Grove Historical Society, Elk Grove High School Student Council, Strauss Festival of Elk Grove, Home Field Advantage, Elk Grove Book Club, Elk Grove Friends of the Library, Elk Grove Garden Club, several Elk Grove School District PTA's and Mother's Clubs, Future Farmers of America, Cosumnes River Patrons Club, Native Daughters and Sons of the Golden West, Masons, and Eastern Star. Their contributions also include founding the Western Festival of Elk Grove, developing the TRIAD Education program, originating the Elk Grove High School Elk Conference, significant contributions to the success of the Oral Language Faire for the E.G.U.S.D., founding the Morse Pellet Mill, developing the infrastructure and master planning for the current Elk Grove Park and Recreation system, and writing and producing the play, "A Woman Got It Done", based on the life of Barbara Comstock Morse.

Two community facilities have been named in family members honor including the Barbara Comstock Morse Elementary School and the Barbara Morse Wackford Community and Aquatic Complex.

Each generation of the Morse family has been taught the importance of family values, the joy of giving back to the community, to treasure educational opportunities, and to respect the land that nourishes and sustains. Barbara Evelyn Morse once recalled about this area, "There were fields covered with poppies so that we could gather great bunches of them and never see where they were picked." Reflecting on the past helps us envision the future.

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