

## Album spurs school memories

By Jerry Bowen

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A few weeks ago I received an e-mail from Arden Lites who lives in Sebastopol. She told me that her mother, Doris Mann, had found an album of photos in her attic with the name, "Floy P. Weeks, Green Valley School, 1915-1956," engraved on the front cover.

She asked if the Vacaville Heritage Council might be interested in the album.

Would we be interested? You bet! I called her and we had a nice conversation. It turned out that her mother and her mother's mother had shared the same teacher, Lucy Downie, over the years at the Springhill School in Sebastopol and the album ended up in Doris' home that had at one time belonged to Lucy Downie.

So who was Lucy Downie? She was Floy P. Weeks's sister. Now, I know that many of you old-timers in the Cordelia area know who Floy was, but for the rest of the readers they need to know that she taught in the old wooden Green Valley School from 1916 to 1924 and then continued in the "new" Green Valley Union School until 1956.

As for the album, it was given to Floy at her retirement party on May 5, 1956. It contains photos of former students who attended the party - one page allowed per year from 1916-1956; also newspaper articles and pictures of Floy taken at the party. Included on each page are the names of the graduating students for each year that attended the retirement party.

It was a work of love to honor a teacher who had influenced many Solano County citizens to go on to lead respectable and influential lives ranging from the arts, opera, business and ranching whose names are still familiar even today.

Wilmere and Percy Neitzel must have spent many weeks of hard labor to track down and invite former students to attend the retirement party for Floy. The album is filled with replies both affirmative and unable to attend for various reasons. In the end, 500 well-wishers attended the grand fete that included 190 former students.

The first page of graduating students on June 21, 1916 lists the following names: John Farraro, Ivy Potterton, Vernon Mayhood, Viola Glusen, Laverne Dunker, Lloyd Elliot, Walter Goosen, and Victory Glynn. In the photo above the names six of the eight former students were there.

The page for the 1921 graduates held a particular interest for me with a photo that included tall and lanky Hans Adler. We, (the Vacaville Heritage Council) recently had filmed a three-and-one-half-hour video oral history interview with Hans as a continuing part of our oral history program started in the 1960s.

Hans is still hale and hearty today as he celebrates his 100th birthday this month. His memory for dates, names and details is phenomenal. You will learn more of this man in a future article.

Before coming to Solano County in 1915 as a teaching principal at the Green Valley School, Mrs. Weeks taught at the Coleman Valley School in Sonoma County for nine years. She left there when she married Samuel James Tilden Weeks and commuted by train from her new home in Vallejo to teach in the little wooden schoolhouse in Cordelia.

Since that time Mrs. Weeks saw the little school with a handful of students grow into the 10-room Green Valley Union School.

The gentle school principal was stunned when more than 500 former students and well-wishers from as far away as Iowa crowded into the Green Valley Union School to attend her retirement party. Lewis and Shirley Mangels presented a gift of a \$400 television set from the former students who chipped in to buy it.

At the end of the ceremony the entire gathering concluded the program by singing specially written lyrics to the familiar "School Days" tune" that went:

"School days, school days,

Memory book and fool days,

Operas and band days and three time three-

You've lots of mem'ries and so have we-

You've taught us well-each girl and boy-

We'd like to say here's luck from us.

This is so true and your name is Floy

And we wish you the greatest joy."

Mrs. Floy Weeks had devoted 50 years of her life to educating the young, but she

wasn't ready to give up and totally retire yet. She had also served for 16 years as an appointed member of the Solano County Board of Education. She ran for election for the District One seat on May 18, 1956 under a new law that required county school trustees to be elected instead of being appointed. She won hands down, continuing to serve her community in the way she knew best.

I wish I could conclude this article on a happier note but Mrs. Floy Weeks passed away in October 1957. The old wooden school where she began her career in Solano County in was torn down last year in spite of efforts to save it. The Green Valley Union School where her retirement ceremony was held now is boarded up and I believe scheduled for destruction.

You can tear down the memory-riddled structures built by man but the memories will live on in the minds of people who care enough to preserve them.

I know that many of the old-timers of the Cordelia-Green Valley area still treasure memories such as these, so we at the Vacaville Heritage Council have photographed the entire album and copies on CD will be made available to anyone who wants one. Requests can be made at [www.vacavilleheritagecouncil.org](http://www.vacavilleheritagecouncil.org) or come on down and visit on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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