

# Happy Valley School Keeps Up Old Tradition



Editor's Note: This is the second in a series on the multi-graded schools in Santa Cruz County.

By Jean Baker  
Sentinel Staff Writer

At one time, the areas surrounding Santa Cruz on all three sides were dotted with little country schoolhouses.

As the city developed, of course, the schools merged, finally coming into the city or county systems of the metropolitan area. All, that is, but four districts, quite heavily populated with enough youngsters to fill a school house of several rooms, but far enough removed to make busing neither feasible nor practical.

What then?

Happy Valley, which is one of the older districts, has chosen to remain a school district unto itself. Its history dates back at least 100 years, according to Mrs. Gino Delucchi, who attended school in Happy Valley in the 1920s and now has grandchildren there.

She reports that the school has relocated at least twice and has occupied at least four buildings, one of which remains—the former little red schoolhouse just up the road from the present site. The present building was erected in 1962.

If you look far to your left as you leave the city on Branciforte Drive, you will see this modern, five-room school building nestled against the hills in a pleasant rural setting.

To meet the requirements of the state law, Happy Valley School has a kindergarten which serves children from both Mountain and Happy Valley School districts. Mrs. Linda Stepps is the teacher, and the room buzzes with the many ac-

tivities of 23 small children.

Mrs. Stepps, who came from a San Jose school district, has been at Happy Valley since November.

The pendulum for kindergartners seems to be taking another swing, and in its sweep has come the recognition that kindergarten youngsters (some, not all) may be ready for reading or a form of 'rithmetic. Using the new math designed for the kindergarten level, children are taught concepts of space, size and shapes. They are in pre-reading activities and also are learning to tell time, Mrs. Stepps reports.

Kindergarten is conducted for just three hours each day. Before the children leave at noon, the group talks together about what has been discussed during the morning, and each child, in his own way, evaluates his experience as he is able to relate it to the teacher.

Mrs. Ann Cummings, the first and second grade teacher, is enthusiastic about the Frostigs program, a study in perceptual concepts. Not only is it of value, says Mrs. Cummings, in determining a child's perception, but its benefits are felt in other areas as well.

Mrs. Cummings, who teaches reading and spelling phonetically, uses a book which teaches the child to spell in patterns.

Like the rest of the teachers in the multigraded rooms, Mrs. Cummings divides her time between teaching the first and second grades individually and

by conducting some classes together. She has 14 first graders and 12 in the second grade.

Mrs. Lois Cuneo is completing her fifth year at the school. This year her third and fourth grade class is comprised of 21 students. The day we visited the school, library day had been proclaimed and Mrs. Cuneo took her classes to visit the public library—a trek which she makes via school bus with the group every other week.

The principal, LeRoy Brown, is a newcomer to Happy Valley this year. He took up his responsibility as principal and teacher in the fifth and sixth grades in January. Brown, who was a lieutenant colonel in the Army prior to his retirement, was an instructor at the infantry school in Ft. Benning, Ga., at Ft. Leavenworth and in the ROTC program at Texas A&M.

There is a special education class at Happy Valley—a class for the educationally handicapped, taught by Mrs. Eve Pecchenino under the County Office of Education, Special Education division, headed by Richard Struck.

Mrs. Pecchenino has taught in this classroom of youngsters from 8 to 12 years of age for almost three years. Assisting her as a teacher aide is Mrs. Jean Mullin who comes each Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings.

Because an educationally handicapped child is easily distracted and his attention span limited, the size of the class is restricted to nine. The classroom curriculum is state prescribed and, in addition to the basics, includes such topics as music and art. One of the goals of this program is to return the child to the regular classroom as soon as he is able.

Last year, Mrs. Pecchenino set up small offices for each pupil to avoid distractions. This year, by means of an award system (points for various as-



## SCHOOL NEWS



pects of progress, participation, behavior) the youngsters are in a normal classroom arrangement. The youngsters themselves worked out the system.

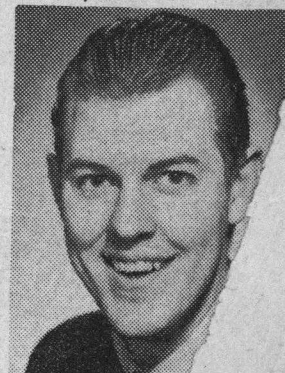
Throughout the school rooms, one is impressed by the creativity of the youngsters as expressed in a variety of art forms. The walls are alive with the students' work — be it a written story, a finger painting, a winter scene or a calendar that says "March is here."

Also on the staff at Happy Valley are Mrs. Gail McGuire and Mrs. June Pierson, secretaries who double as bus drivers, and John Pavlovich, a student at UCSC, who is the school custodian.

Next week:  
Mountain School

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### NAVY MUSIC SCHOOL

Musician Seaman Thomas C. Phillips of the Flying Horse Ranch, Boulder Creek, is attending the Navy's school of

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## JOINS STARR



The third and fourth graders taught by Mrs. Lois Cuneo search for frog eggs in a swampy area near Happy Valley Elementary School.

## Cabrillo Coeds Win BofA Award

Cabrillo College sophomores Judy Wright and Patricia Nakayama are winners of 1968 Bank of America junior college busi-

## Quail Hollow Outing Set

The fourth grade classes at the Quail Hollow School of Ben Lomond are planning a field trip next month to the San Francisco International Airport. The trip will be part of a unit study on the behavior of air. The project, "Operation Airborne" is supervised by Tom Pugsley and Patricia Huntsinger. The class has built a large

