

A PROUD PAST

Central Valley School District

New High School Evokes Memories of Primitive Roots

Since 1890 teachers, administrators, parents, and students have planned, labored, and sacrificed not only to improve current learning circumstances, but to provide for the future generations as well. And even though the buildings, teaching methods and tools have changed over time, the pioneering spirit that characterizes Central Valley School District endures, creating remarkable opportunities for students.

Early schools followed the railroad: students lugged firewood and water

Educational pioneering began in the Valley soon after 1881, when the Northern Pacific Railroad laid tracts through the area as part of transcontinental rail project. Due to the railroad, the population rapidly increased during the 1880s, and the Valley community began building schools for its children. By the 1890s, numerous elementary school districts operated in the Spokane Valley: Saltse, Quinamosa, Trent, Liberty Lake, Greenacres, Lone Fir, Mica, and Spokane Bridge. The school districts contained only one school each, usually a frame structure with one or two rooms.

By today's standards, conditions in these early schools were harsh. Just getting to school was a chore, especially in the winter; students wrapped gunnysacks around their feet to keep them dry as they walked several miles to class. When they arrived at school, the older boys were expected to carry in firewood and drinking water. While the elements provided some comfort, room temperatures were still erratic due to inefficient wood stoves, causing students either to sweat or to shiver. In the fall, grasshoppers often had to be skimmed from the drinking water before children could help themselves to a drink with the school's only metal dipper. Crude outhouses served as plumbing, and kerosene lanterns supplied light. Children enjoyed recess, although the only playground equipment usually consisted of a "tree swing," built by one of their fathers.

Still, despite limited resources, teachers and students persevered. Depending on the school, the academic term could last anywhere from two months to seven months per year. Average enrollment was between ten and twelve students of various ages, with sporadic attendance due to weather and transportation problems. Teachers had few educational tools other than a blackboard, map, globe, and dictionary. Textbooks were scarce, and children often learned to read from books they brought from home. Memorization and recitation were the major learning methods, which the teacher reinforced to forgetful students with raps from a ruler when necessary. For their efforts, teachers earned an average of fifty dollars per month, and they paid twenty-five cents for membership in the Spokane County Teachers' Association.

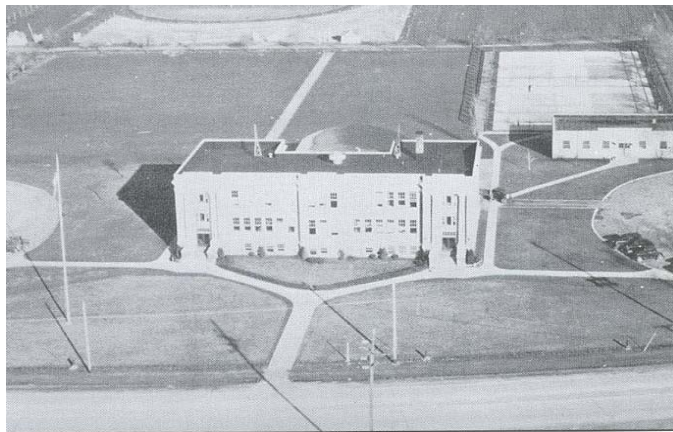
Although teachers at that time worked alone, apart from colleagues, they received tremendous support from the community. Each school had a Board of Directors, whose members were prominent citizens from around the Valley who helped decide policy and curriculum issues. Since these early schools were not financed by taxes, there was seldom enough money for school supplies, Valley mothers solved this dilemma by holding "box" socials, where women and girls created box lunches that men and boys bought. Then, the creator and the purchaser of each lunch

box would dine together. Aside from providing a few hours of fun and romance, box socials were terrific fundraisers. Families also loved gathering at the schools in the evenings for square dances and debates. Every year, students showed their gratitude to the community by presenting a Christmas program that was always a hit, especially when rare treats like candy and oranges were handed out.

Flu epidemic and labor shortages impact the first high school

By the 1900's, schools played a vital role in the community, with more students progressing through the elementary system and needing secondary education. To meet this need, Vera High School was established in 1912, with its first class graduating in 1916. However, travel was still difficult for some students and increased subject requirements discouraged others from attending. Even so, by 1915, 30 students attended Vera High School. In 1917 courses such as typing, physics, biology, and geometry were added to the curriculum to better prepare students for employment. The school was not immune from larger world issues. The school principal was drafted for World War I, and the school closed for six weeks in 1918 because of the flu epidemic that killed more than 500,000 people nationwide. Due to a labor shortage in 1919, students were released from school to help farmers pick apples. Despite these hardships, Vera High School hired three more teachers in 1919 to accommodate the increasing student population.

During the 1920's, educators and citizens forged ahead to improve schools for Valley students. In 1925, the following five school districts were consolidated into one: Vera, Greenacres, Liberty Lake, Saltese, and Lone Fir. While the consolidation proved more efficient, it also caused overcrowding at Vera High School. The community solved this problem by building the first Central Valley High School on the site where Greenacres Middle School is currently located. The school opened its doors in January of 1927 after a much-celebrated dedication by Washington State's Governor, Roland H. Hartley. Because the school board offered free transportation to classes, the student population rapidly increased at Central Valley High School.



Central Valley High School 1927

Although the new school building was a tremendous source of civic pride, the surrounding grounds needed improvement. So the following spring, "Campus Day" was established, a day where students, faculty, and citizens planted grass, trees and shrubs around the school, graded the driveways, and fenced the tennis courts. Local businesses and private citizens financed individual letters to spell out Central Valley High School on the front of the school, and the telephone company provided a flagpole. By the next spring, Central Valley hosted its first county track

meet, thanks to volunteer labor that completed the track and athletic fields.

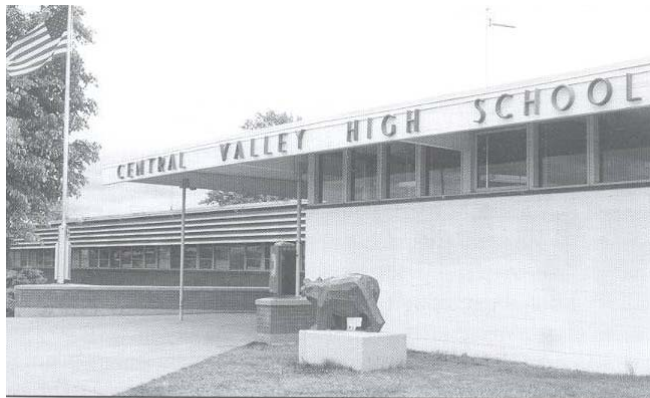
School improvements did not end there, however. Teachers, students, and parents combined their efforts again in 1930 when Central Valley needed a gymnasium for school plays and basketball

games. After two teachers drafted plans for the gymnasium, community members raised funds and built the gymnasium, completing it in time for the senior play in December of 1930. During the next nine years, a furnace room, library, and art classes were also added. In 1941, students raised funds so that Central Valley's Douglas Field could have lights for evening football games. Once the lights were purchased, students and parents erected them, making Douglas Field the first lighted field in Spokane. A few years later, the outside of the school was also refurbished to give the building a more modern appearance.

From pre-war apple orchards to cutting-edge technology

By the end of World War II, life was changing in the Valley. Vast apple orchards were being transformed into residential neighborhoods as more families moved into the area. To keep pace with these changes, County Superintendent of Schools, William F. Standeford, formed Central Valley School District #356 on July 1945. From the beginning, Central Valley School District was faced with challenges. The post-war baby boom resulted in crowded schools and teacher shortages. Because the community refused to compromise their children's education, they passed a heavy excess levy and bond program to meet these challenges. This commitment, along with emergency state aid, enabled the district to move forward providing improved buildings and better education.

Student population continued to increase during the 1950s, and despite numerous remodeling efforts, Central Valley High School was simply too crowded. With enough space for 800 students, the new Central Valley High School opened in 1956. Located in an open field on Sullivan Road, the school covered 101,489 square feet and cost \$1.1 million. The old Central Valley High School became Greenacres Junior High until 1961, when it was demolished and rebuilt. During this same period, several new elementary schools were constructed in the district, while outdated buildings such Liberty Lake School were either sold or demolished.



Central Valley High School 1956-2002

Even though the new Central Valley High School seemed massive in 1956, within a few years it, too, became overcrowded. Community and school board members agreed that if quality secondary education was to continue in the district, a second high school must be built. In 1960, ground was broken for University High School.

During the next several decades, the Valley continued to prosper. More businesses and families moved to the area, increasing the student population in Central Valley School

District to approximately 11,000 students by millennium. Central Valley was remodeled several times to accommodate the growing influx of students. Valley citizens continually met these challenges by passing bonds and levies for school improvements. However, the community's support did not end with their votes and tax dollars. Volunteers served in groups such PTA, PTO, and booster groups, and on committees deciding on issues about curriculum, strategic planning, capital projects, and transportation. Parents assisted in classrooms, school offices, and at school

events. These efforts paid off as Central Valley students excelled in academics, sports, music, fine arts, technical achievements, and vocational activities. The majority of Central Valley School District graduates enrolled in college, and many continued their educations at some of the most prestigious universities in the United States.

By 1998 Central Valley High School was again overcrowded and outdated, so the community passed a bond issue to build a new Central Valley High School. Teachers continue to prepare students to contribute to a complex world; administrators continue to plan, anticipating the educational needs of future generations; parents continue to volunteer, promoting educational opportunities in Central Valley; and students continue to shine, giving their best efforts to their schools and their community.

From blackboards to computer labs, Central Valley schools have come a long way over the past 100 years. However, some things never change. Community members are still willing to try new things, to work hard, and to give generously to provide a better education for Central Valley's children. The new Central Valley High School was opened in September, 2000 featuring:

- 240,000 square feet, or approximately 5.1 acres under roof
- 50 acre site
- Performing arts center include seating for 575, orchestra pit, full stage and set construction area
- Gymnasiums include areas for gymnastics, wrestling, weight training, dance, four full size basketball courts and seating for 2,200 fans
- Media center provides students with technologically advanced research and communication capabilities
- Professional-technical facility includes technical training, engineering, drafting and radio/television production
- Networking infrastructure provides classrooms with internet access for video conferencing
- Multi-use student commons provide areas for food service, dances and community meetings

The pioneering spirit that paved the educational path in this area is alive and well. Today, with the new Central Valley HS, we are continuing on the road to a brighter future for our community. We can be certain that the educational pioneers who built the first schoolhouses in Central Valley would be proud.