

Historical Ramblings

Maple School – The Survivor

The Lompoc Valley was once dotted with over 13 one room schoolhouses, serving the families in rural areas ranging from Jalama to Honda. Only one schoolhouse remains in its original location, as a memorial to the early days of rural education. Maple School, located on Floradale Avenue, sits forlorn and dilapidated, overshadowed by its neighbor, Big E Produce.

Established in 1877, Maple School's district covered over 10 square miles, ranging from the Santa Ynez River to the north to Rodeo Canyon, south of Ocean Avenue. Its western boundary followed Douglass Avenue to Ocean Avenue where it followed the road west to Artesia Avenue then southward into the hills. The eastern boundary was the approximate location of Lompoc's current V Street. Maple was the third schoolhouse constructed in the valley, preceded only by Artesia School and the in-town grammar school.

Although it is believed that the original building served students from 1877 until 1920, information obtained from an 1899 Lompoc Record stated that "\$1,600 has been voted to build the new Maple School, that shall be the pride of the valley." Apparently, the original 1877 school was replaced at that time. In 1920, a fire of mysterious origin destroyed Maple School along with all its registers and records. The Lompoc Record stated that "the schoolhouse was built in 1875 at a cost of \$1,000, so the loss to the district is very slight," providing contradictory information regarding its construction date and the building of a new school in 1899. After the fire, trustees built a temporary addition onto the teacher's cottage and school resumed in January 1921. Lompoc's Everett Building Company built a new school, with Nicholes and Fabing doing the heating and plumbing. The new building was constructed for \$6,600, with an \$8,000 bond passed to construct and furnish it. That building, enlarged to two classrooms in 1951, is what survives on Floradale Avenue today.

In 1914, twelve year-old Clara Kalin was a Maple School Student. She wrote an article for the Lompoc Record describing daily life at the country school: "Maple School is located on Floradale Avenue just north of the Burpee Seed Farm and is about three miles northwest of Lompoc. There are several large Maple trees on the grounds under which the children spend most of their playtime. The present trustees are James Bendasher, George Sanor and Charles Douglass. There are 23 pupils now going to school. There are four we hope will graduate: Evelyn Garland, Sadie Howerton, Alverta Bendasher and Stanley Hill. There is a large playground for the children. Some of the games are Hide and Seek, Jump Rope Kick the Can, and we also play tennis. In winter, when it rains, the grounds aren't used much for games, but the pupils play games inside. They often spend their time in singing and playing merry school songs. Two of the girls each year are janitors and are paid by the district. Each night after school they sweep. In the morning, before school takes up, they dust. There are two ante rooms, one for girls and one for boys. These rooms are on each side of the schoolhouse as you come in. In between the ante rooms is a library containing 600-700 books. We often have school out under the trees or on the porch. In 1912 we gave a play and two dances to raise money to buy an

organ.” She goes on to describe the surrounding landscape: “There are hundreds of acres of sweet peas, lilacs, roses, larkspurs, carnations and many other flowers. It is no wonder in the midst of such beautiful surroundings that we can do our best work.” Clara Kalin went on to become Mrs. William Proud and began teaching at her beloved Maple School in 1937. In 1940, she became principal, a post she held until her retirement in 1961. Maple School closed its doors as a country school in 1967. All of the country schools became part of the Lompoc Unified School District in 1960, eventually closing when students from the outlying areas were bussed into town. After serving as a storage unit for 3 years, the school reopened in 1970 as Maple Continuation High School. Maple High School still exists, although now at a different location. Maple School now sits unused, still in its original setting. Local FFA students use the grounds for their projects and have indicated an interest in renovating the aging structure. The Santa Barbara County Landmark Commission is also interested in recognizing the school as an official County Landmark. It is worthy of such designation. Hundreds of students who spent their school years at Maple School would agree.