

**Oral History Committee
Mill Valley Library Association**

**Mill Valley Public Library
Mill Valley, California**

MISS S. EDNA MAGUIRE

An Interview Conducted

by

Ruth Wutke Lescohier

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Edna Maguire Index

Abrahm, Belle	1
Arden, Eve	1
Cafeteria in Park Primary	2
California Teachers Association, Bay Section Council 1938	3-4
Chowchilla, Calif. (first teaching experience)	5
Digger Indians (Modoc)	5
Edna Maguire Bulldogs (t-shirts)	3
Edna Maguire School opened 1955	3-4
Father	Intro.
First grade teaching	Intro.
Flood 1929	4
Freemont Grant Mine	Intro.
Gift to Indian children, unopened	5
Gold Rush Country	Intro.
Homestead School	1,2,4
Hot lunch program	2
Hydraulic mining (illegally)	Intro.
Indians	5
Larkspur	1
Liberty Hill hydraulic mines	Intro.
Library in park	4
Locust Station	4
Marin City	2
Marinship	2
Mariposa	Intro.
Meeting to save Old Mill Park	4
Mill Valley School District	Intro.
Mill Valley schools	1,5
Mill Valley Schools:	
Edna Maguire School	3,4
Homestead School	1,2,4
Old Mill School	1,4
Park Primary School	2
Park School	1,2
Summit School	1,2
Miller Avenue Flooded	4
Modoc Indians of Chowchilla	5
Nevada County (place of birth)	Intro.
Niece and nephew teaching in Micronesia	5,6
Old Mill School	1,4
Park Primary	2
Park School	1,2
Plaque of recognition	3
Plummer, Ida	1
Poison oak flourished where library was built	5
Principal (position of 20 years)	Intro.
Quedens, Elsie	1

Quedens, Eunice	1
Redwood trees, preservation	4
Retired 1955	5
Santa Rosa niece and nephew	5
S(arah) Edna Maguire	3
7 o'clock arrival at school	2
Squaws as first pupils	5
Summit School	1,2

Miss S. Edna Maguire

Born April 23, 1889 in Nevada County, California.

Moved to Mill Valley in 1921.

Interviewed October 1970 at the Mill Valley Rest Home, 297 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley.

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Introduction

Sarah Edna Maguire was born in California's Gold Rush Country -- Nevada County. Her father was superintendent of the Liberty Hill hydraulic mines, well-known among the northern mines.

When hydraulic mining was declared illegal, Mr. Maguire moved his family to Mariposa. There he managed the 44,000-acre Fremont Grant Mine for an English company, and there Edna Maguire began her 44-year career as a teacher.

For 34 years she taught in the Mill Valley School District; for 20 of these years she was a principal. In 1955 a new seventh and eighth grade school was named in her honor.

Edna Maguire taught three generations of youngsters. She usually taught first grade, feeling this was the most important in the pupil's life. The story is told that one September day a former pupil opened the door of Miss Maguire's classroom, pushed her small son in and said, "There, young man, is someone you will obey!"

S. EDNA MAGUIRE

Ruth Lescohier

Many people would like to know about the early Mill Valley schools. You were a teacher here?

Edna Maguire

I came here in 1920 or '21 as principal of Homestead School. There were two teachers at Homestead at that time. I came here from Larkspur, but I had taught in Mariposa before that. My younger sisters were with me; they came down to go to Tamalpais High School.

I lived at Elsie Quedens¹ boarding house. A number of teachers lived there. She had a boarding house up on Buena Vista, right where the Catholic Church is now. I used to walk from there down to Homestead School every morning, along Ethel Avenue. A lot of the children lived up on that hill back there, and I'd call them as I'd go along. I'd see them and call them to school.

Mrs. Lescohier

When you came, Old Mill School had just been built?

Miss Maguire

No, they started building Old Mill School a few years later. Park School was here. There were five teachers at Park; Avis Locey was principal. Ida Plummer was principal at Summit School. Belle Abraham was principal at Old Mill when it was opened in about 1926.

¹Elsie Quedens was an aunt of Eunice Quedens, a Mill Valley girl who has won fame as actress Eve Arden.

Mrs. Lescohier

And Summit School was then torn down?

Miss Maguire

It was torn down in the early '30s.

Mrs. Lescohier

During the war years¹ you were principal at Park School?

Miss Maguire

I came over to Park in 1925. I was in Homestead until then.

Mrs. Lescohier

I remember you told me that when the war started and Marinship² was built, some of the people who worked there lived in .Mill Valley and their children went to school here.

Miss Maguire

Yes, they would bring their children to school at 7 o'clock in the morning and pick them up at 7 at night.

Mrs. Lescohier

They worked such long hours?

Miss Maguire

Yes. We had teachers assigned to get to the school early. I always got there by 7 o'clock, to be there when the children started arriving. I was the principal, and I wanted to be sure they were taken care of. Then the other teachers would come.

Several of the mothers started a hot lunch program, and we had a cafeteria in Park Primary basement.

¹World War II.

²A shipyard near Marin City (in existence only during World War II)

Mrs. Lescohier

You no doubt have many pleasant memories of the wonderful children you've known, and your colleagues here in the district.

Miss Maguire

Yes, we've always had an outstanding group of teachers in Mill Valley, and the children are very responsive.

Mrs. Lescohier

Are there any particular children that you remember?

Miss Maguire

They were all wonderful. Mill Valley has always had very outstanding children, they really have had.

One incident that amused me happened after the new Edna Maguire School was built.¹ I was going along Throckmorton Avenue and saw two girls walking ahead of me wearing T-shirts with "Edna Maguire Bulldogs" on the back. That's their football team, and they were wearing these sweatshirts with the green lettering on them. That struck me so funny "Edna Maguire Bulldogs." I was laughing when I got up to the girls, and they turned around and looked at me. They didn't know why I was laughing, and they didn't like it. So I told them, "I'm Edna Maguire." After that, some of the children wanted me to buy one and wear it. Somehow I couldn't see myself with "Edna Maguire Bulldogs" in green lettering across my back!

Mrs. Lescohier

That's a wonderful story.

Nay I take down this plaque? It says, "In recognition of a significant contribution to the teaching profession, as president of California Teachers Association, Bay Section Council, 1938. S. Edna Maguire." Is there a secret about that "S"?

¹Edna Maguire School, opened in 1955, was named for Miss Maguire.

Miss Maguire

My first name is Sarah, and I always sign my name "S. Edna Maguire."

Mrs. Lescohier

So besides teaching and being principal, you were active in the Teachers Association?

Miss Maguire

I was president of the Bay Section. That's the 13 counties around San Francisco Bay.

Mrs. Lescohier

Do you have any memories of the big flood of 1929?

Miss Maguire

Yes, Miller Avenue was flooded. All the lower part of Homestead was under water. You couldn't get down past Locust station. School was closed for several days. You couldn't get over to Homestead School.

Mrs. Lescohier

Can you remember the meeting that was called to save Old Mill Park?

Miss Maguire

Yes, that was when the Old Mill School was to be built, and people were afraid some of the redwood trees would be cut down. One Sunday they had a meeting, to preserve the trees. The people of Mill Valley subscribed money to buy the site of Old Mill Park.

Mrs. Lescohier

And now they've built the new library in one corner of the park!

Miss Maguire

Yes, but no trees were sacrificed.

Mrs. Lescohier

That was the corner where the poison oak flourished, so it worked out quite well.

Where did you first teach school?

Miss Maguire

I taught at Chowchilla, near Yosemite. Most of the children were little Digger Indians, Modocs.

Mrs. Lescohier

You were supposed to teach them to read and write English?

Miss Maguire

Yes, and I had squaws older than I was who came to school every day to learn to read and write.

I'll never forget. At Christmas I gave the boys neckties and the girls handkerchiefs. I did them up in tissue paper and put red ribbon on them. I went back about five years later and went to visit them in their homes. Those packages were still tied up in that same paper and ribbon. They didn't untie them, they just kept them.

Mrs. Lescohier

You think they hadn't much contact with other people?

Miss Maguire

They didn't have any. They were just by themselves. It was mountain country.

Mrs. Lescohier

How long did you teach in the Mill Valley Schools?

Miss Maguire

Thirty-four years. I retired in 1955.

Mrs. Lescohier

You had been living with your niece and nephew in Santa Rosa?

Miss Maguire

Yes, but they left just yesterday to teach in Micronesia. We've been very busy getting them off.

Mrs. Lescohier

Thank you for talking to us about past years when I'm sure your mind must be filled with the present.