

THE HISTORY OF ISAAC DISTRICT

Since 1924 the history of Isaac District can best be described as a biographical sketch of the achievements of the retiring superintendent, Mr. J.B. Sutton. However, to make this history complete it is necessary to go back to 1878 on September 28 when Isaac District No. 5 was created. At this time Phoenix was a thriving city of 4,000 population. The early records were scant but they do show the first trustees of the district to be R.J. Cartwright and Samuel Franklin. In 1881 the trustees were William Isaac, Samuel Franklin and R. Cartwright. The records show no election in 1885 so E.E. Isaac, Henry Franklin and C.H. Christy were appointed. The district gets its name from one of these early families.

The first school, a two room frame structure, was built about half a mile west from the present junior high school site. Two names of teachers found in the records were Julia Pomeroy and Bill Murray. The records of 1904 gave little more information. The school was maintained for seven months with an enrollment of 39 pupils. The handsome salary of \$468.75 was paid Miss Hattie M. Green for the year's work.

Early in the 1890's two rooms were built at the present Isaac School site. These rooms are numbers 23 and 24 in the building known as Sutton Hall. The old frame building which housed the first school was sold. In 1912 the Wednesday Social Circle, which later became Isaac Womens Club, was organized by the women in the community. Mrs. Sutton is a former president of this group. The club served the needs of the teachers in the Isaac District as a sort of P.T.A. until one was organized in 1951. The Womens Club still holds its monthly meeting in Leisure Lodge, a building on the school grounds.

Another building program in 1915 added two more rooms to the two previously built. But the greater building programs were to come with the hiring of a young principal, J.B. Sutton, who came to the district in 1925. From an A.D.A. of 10 in 1881, the school had grown to an enrollment

of 66. The school board was made up of W.E. Cavaness, James Hyde and J.L. Cobb. They were determined to have their "pound of flesh" when they handed out the contract for this new principal. Mr. Sutton, a young man in his early twenties, was hired for the principalship, teacher of sixth, seventh and eighth grades and janitor for the yearly salary of \$1,500. He received an additional sum of \$300.00 for the custodial work. A former patron of the district, Mrs. Maggie Syler, remarked when her daughter proudly pointed out her new teacher to her mother, "That young thing!"

Also, in 1925 the district voted a bond issue of \$8,500. This provided the money for the addition of a kitchen and auditorium to the five room school that existed at that time. They also built a small cottage to house the new principal. One of the requirements in his contract was that he live on the grounds, protect the school property and give the district more of his services. Other innovations of this year were the addition of running water, electricity and inside toilets replacing the outside privies.

Isaac School was also making its contribution to the youth of the district early. In 1928, the Foy Scout Troop No. 12 was formed. Mr. Sutton was their scout leader for ten years. This troop comprised about 98 percent of the boys in the district. Troop 12 is still active, functioning under the leadership of Mr. Gilbert Torres. The scouts in turn have honored Mr. Sutton by making him a member of their present board, by conferring on him the Silver Beaver Award and by presenting to him his 40 year service pin.

In 1929 three rooms were added to the school building. These rooms are now known as numbers 25, 26 and 27 in Sutton Hall. Also, at this time a frame lunch room was built. In the same year the enrollment reached 180 and the district purchased its first bus. The school now employed six teachers including the new principal, who also doubled as coach for all sports. In 1932 the district enjoyed the distinction of a

state championship basketball team. This team was made up of Waldo Butler, George Cobb, Jim Tang, Elmo Gibson and Milton Morgan.

But we must go back also to 1934; shortly after Mr. Sutton came into the district a young teacher, Miss Anna McCune was hired. She doubled as home economics teacher, eighth grade teacher and later as principal.

In 1937 the district enrollment had grown to 250 pupils. In the same year, with W.P.A. funds and P.W.A. labor the present auditorium and the building known as Leisure Lodge were built. When the auditorium was formally dedicated Governor Raleigh Stanford was the guest speaker.

In 1940 Mr. Claude Mitchell left a position at the new North High School cafeteria to manage the Isaac cafeteria. He brought with him two young sons who were destined to make names for themselves in the district. Mr. Mitchell continued in this position until his death in May of 1961.

Of the two sons, Harley Mitchell, the older, came up from the business department to a teaching position for three years, and later, after securing his masters degree, came back to the business department as Assistant Superintendent of Business. He will become the new superintendent of the district in July 1968. Norman, the other brother, was the father's assistant and took over his job as district manager of the cafeterias, a position which he still holds.

In 1942 another young man, Joseph Zito came to the district as seventh grade teacher. He left to join the infantry in World War II but returned in 1946. He taught grades 4,5,6,7 and 8 and some P.E. shop and art classes. He stayed on to become principal and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction in the district.

The year of 1943 brought some unforeseen problems for Isaac District when a war time housing project known as Alzona Park was built. This brought a great influx of children into the school. With federal funds it was possible to build a new cafeteria, shop and sixteen classrooms this

year. The school had grown to 900 pupils with only one school plant. In this same year a young second grade teacher, Alma Robinson, was hired. She came into the district office as primary music coordinator in 1964.

More children and little space still plagued the district in 1944. Through the efforts of Mr. Sutton, the federal government made money available for six rooms. Other changes occurred in 1946. The principal Mr. Sutton became the superintendent Mr. Sutton. A successful bond issue made it possible to build the home economics building. The district was able to buy from the government a building on 35th Avenue, now known as the Baptist Day Center. It had been a nursery during World War II. This building was used for four primary grades. It was named "La Otra School" which from its Spanish translation means the other school.

Also, on October 1, 1946, a group of civic minded men met and organized the Isaac Mens Club. The officers were J.B. Sutton, President; G.A. Donelson, Vice President; R.H. Willow, Recording Secretary; F.C. Bowdein, Treasurer and Todd A. Miller, Financial Secretary. Starting with a membership fee of one dollar per year they had great dreams of eventually building a playing field, a swimming pool and sponsoring a summer recreation program. Their first dream was realized in 1947 when they were able to build Isaac Stadium and put up the kleig lights.

Also, in 1947 John Schettler, a young major from the air force came to Isaac as a seventh grade teacher. Under Mr. Schettler the audio visual library in the district was formed while other districts in the Valley used a film cooperative. The film library was well established and flourishing when Mr. Schettler read in a book that this school was too small to economically have its own library. It was now too late and too profitable to change. He became Assistant Superintendent to Mr. Sutton in 1952. This position he held until he received his doctorate. He went to California where he holds the position of vice president and comptroller with

the Palomar Junior College in Escondido, California.

Roy Sexton came into the district in 1947-48 as attendance officer. He has remained in the district as Building and Grounds Supervisor.

In January of the same year Marion Bowen joined the staff as science and math teacher for the seventh and eighth grades. Also, in this year the building program at Isaac added rooms numbers 41, 42, 43, 44 and the music plant.

Two other teachers were hired within the next two years; Corinne Foster, a fifth grade teacher, who became intermediate supervisor in 1955; and Mary Stevens, who started as a third grade teacher and was made primary supervisor in 1959.

A major tragedy hit the school in 1949 when the original cafeteria burned. Tables and chairs were set up in the gymnasium as a temporary cafeteria. Children were fed in shifts, with food cooked in the kitchen of the Reynolds Metal Company and then transported to Isaac School. Fortunately the insurance money was received in time to rebuild the cafeteria the same year.

History was made in the district in 1951 with the organization of the first Isaac P.T.A., with Mr. Hank Merrian as the president.

Also, between the years 1951 and 1953 five men, who were later to become administrators, became teachers in the district. These were Leroy Dunn, who taught all grades from third up; Harold Parker, who taught from fifth grades through eighth; Harry Frye, who worked as fourth and seventh grades teacher, librarian and shop instructor; Frank Mendola who taught eighth grade at Sutton and Coe and was upper grade supervisor for two years; and Albert Bowler, sixth and seventh grade teacher at Isaac, Sutton and Coe. Mr. Bowler is presently the principal of the Isaac Junior High School.

The school was bulging from growth. The enrollment had reached 1,800 pupils. Eighth grade classes were being held in tents placed in the patio at Isaac School. Mr. Sutton wanting the best for each child collected the facts and figures and went to Washington. He worked hard to secure one

half million in federal monies to build a new plant of thirty rooms, a shop, home economics department and cafetorium. When this new school opened in the fall of 1952, the trustees saw fit to reward Mr. Sutton's untiring efforts by naming the new school, the J.B. Sutton School with Mr. Joseph Zito as principal.

At the same time Miss Anna McCune became the principal of Isaac School where she had been acting as head teacher. The Board of Trustees sold the building, "La Otra", to the Baptist Church for the amount of \$16,000. This sum was to be used in buying the ten acres which became the site of the third school.

The growth of the district continued and by 1954 it was necessary to open this third school. The School Board honored the beloved Mrs. Alta E. Butler for 38 years of untiring service as a trustee and named this school, the Alta E. Butler School. Marion Bowen was the principal of Butler School until Miss McCune's retirement in 1957. He then became principal of Isaac School until 1959 when he assumed the position of administrative assistant. Mr. Harold Parker took over as principal of Butler School, while Mr. Frank Mendola became principal of Isaac School.

Another future administrator joined the force at Sutton School in 1954. Ralph Tucker taught three years at Sutton, was principal of Sutton School after Mr. Zito, and later came up to the administrative office as one of Mr. Sutton's administrative assistants. Mr. Leroy Dunn became the new principal of Sutton School, a position which he has held for five years. Mr. Robert Houy came into the Butler School in 1956 as an eighth grade teacher and was destined to become an administrator. He is at present business manager of the district.

In 1957 the Board of Trustees officially made Mr. Harley Mitchell Assistant Superintendent of Business and Mr. Joseph Zito Assistant Superintendent of Instruction.

The small Isaac School where Mr. Sutton started his district teaching had continued to grow. In 1958 the P.T. Coe School was opened at 38th Avenue and Roanoke. Mr. P.T. Coe, a trustee for 21 years and a dedicated citizen in the Isaac community, was honored. He did not live to see its dedication but his widow and family were present at this time. Mr. Harry Frye was made principal of Coe School, a position he held for nine years.

The district enrollment at this time had reached a new high of 3,200 children. Community growth of new subdivisions was creating further growth. The trustees met this need in 1960 by adding ten rooms, a shop and home economics department to both Coe and Butler Schools.

By 1962 the district had grown to an enrollment of 4,192 and a teaching staff of 152 teachers, four plants with the P.T. Coe School on double sessions. Double sessions were not exactly new in the district since there were some in 1952 and part of the year 1947-48. As yet the district had not reached peak growth.

Bond issues failed to pass. Mr. Sutton figured feverishly how to get the most for the children in the district. His idea to turn the Isaac School into a district junior high for all seventh and eighth grade students was approved by the trustees. The Isaac Junior High School became a reality in 1965-66 school year.

Part of the construction for the junior high was the building of a new and modern library, shop building, P.E. building, and the remodeling of the old barracks into block covered rooms. Remodeling provided a new warehouse and an administrative unit. Envisioning teaching techniques of the future, Mr. Sutton worked to get federal money through Title I to install instructional T.V. in the junior high school. Gary Fadely became the first director. The I.T.V. program is still growing. A second channel is being presently installed. The principals who have worked with the junior high

school have been Frank Mendola, Robert Houy and the present principal, Albert Bowler.

Progress did not stop with the junior high school. Double sessions at Coe School were getting very difficult with a district enrollment of 4,674 in 1964. Anticipating this growth the trustees had bought land for another school in March 1960. A bond issue was finally passed and the fifth school went on the drawing board when Mr. Lloyd Ware was named architect for the building. The present trustees, Mr. Carl Smith, Mr. Truman Cook, Mrs. Beth Calhoun, Mr. George Klenner and Mr. Harvey McCartney decided to name the new school, the Joseph Zito School. Mr. Harry Frye was appointed the new principal.

The school was completed in November 1967 and the children were moved over from the Coe School where the two schools had been operating under the same roof. Mr. Zito and his family were privileged to see the dedication of the new Joseph Zito School on the evening of January 13, 1968.

Today, May 3, 1968, the Isaac District has grown to five schools, 180 teachers, 19 administrators, 56 non-certified workers, 62 cafeteria workers and a student enrollment of 4,860.

One can easily see from this history of the Isaac District that it is a biography of its retiring superintendent, Mr. J.B. Sutton. His 41 years in the district represents the work of a teacher with a dream, a dream which led him on to a principalship and later to a superintendency. Mr. Sutton can not reminisce without remembering how his life is intertwined with this district. His two children, Mrs. Phoebe Jean Cooper and Dr. James B. Sutton, were born while Mr. and Mrs. Sutton lived in the cottage on the school grounds. These two spent their childhood here and both graduated from the eighth grade at Isaac School. Both Mr. and Mrs. Sutton have been active in Isaac community organizations throughout the years.

The educational program at Isaac has progressed and expanded

also under the leadership of Mr. Sutton. In 1951 classes in "Special Education" were instituted in the district. There are now classes for both trainable and the educable children. A program for the blind has been in progress since 1960.

To stay abreast of new ideas and teaching techniques, special pilot studies have been carried on in different schools. Several classes in team teaching have been a part of the educational planning in the 1967-68 school year. Also an attempt has been made to enrich the program for children who show both a high aptitude and high motivation. In 1967 the district started a Concentrated Language Arts Program for the child capable of achieving but who for some reason has not done so.

Because of Mr. Sutton's deep concern for the school children he has given unsparingly of his time and talent in working for school legislation. He has worked with the Greater Phoenix Superintendents Association and with Mrs. Sarah Folsom, State Superintendent of Instruction, in spear heading school legislation. His time has also been made available to the State Legislature when statistics and educational background have been needed by the group. It is safe to say his influence is far reaching in the field of educational legislation.

Many of the innovations in the Valley schools started as "firsts" at Isaac District. When Mr. Sutton wrote his masters thesis, "The School Lunch Room", he incorporated these ideas in the program of the Isaac cafeterias. In 1935 the district was the first to use washing racks for mass washing of pupils' hands before lunch. In 1936 the district won recognition by being the first school in the State to have every classroom cooled by evaporative coolers. The Isaac Schools also had the first public address system of any Valley schools. The Isaac Mens Club, with Mr. Sutton as their first president, was responsible for the first Valley summer recreational program on the school grounds. It was also first in the Valley

to have its own audio visual library. This was started in 1948 while other schools were still using the film cooperative. The Isaac Junior High School was started in 1965 and was the first in the Greater Phoenix area. The same junior high started in 1965 was the first to offer a program of child training care. Another first came in 1966 when the closed circuit Instructional T.V. was installed at Isaac.

Mr. Sutton, your strength and guidance has made possible much of the growth of the Isaac District. The people of the district salute you. The teachers and administrators will work hard to keep the pace for progress that you have set for them.

Information compiled for J.B. Sutton's
retirement dinner by Mrs. Corinne
Foster and Mrs. Mary Stevens.

April 1968