

Remembering “Mr. Happy Valley”

By Mark Hurlburt

Happy Valley was once a small, rural and isolated community of farmers. Today it’s a booming incorporated City. The one man most responsible for preparing the way for that change to become possible was a life-long Happy Valley resident named Ed Rebstock. To understand why Rebstock became affectionately known as “Mr. Happy Valley” we must begin with his father, Charles Rebstock.

Charles was born in 1871 in Wurttemberg, Germany and emigrated in 1888 from Bremen, Germany to Southampton, England, on the ship *Eider*, and continued on to the United States.¹ In 1898, he married Bertha Knauss and while living in Minnesota they had their first child, Pearl.² The Rebstocks then moved to Oregon and settled in Happy Valley where they had four more children named Esther, Erma, Emery and Ed. In 1901, the Rebstocks were deeded land from John George Zinser, who had purchased the land from John Bennett Deardorff in 1890, and began living in the house Zinser built.³ Edward Alvin Rebstock was born in on May 17, 1911 in this home which would later be known as the historic Rebstock house.



**The Rebstocks (left to right):
Erma, Pearl, Bertha, Emery, Charles, Esther, Ed**
Courtesy: The Rebstock family



**The Rebstock house as it appeared during the 1940s.
Here a basement is being built under the house.**

Courtesy: The Rebstock family

As a boy, Ed Rebstock worked on the family farm and attended the East Mount Scott School, the previous name for the Happy Valley school.⁴ In 1930, while working as an unpaid laborer on the family farm, he married Erma Killingbeck and they would have two children together, a son named Karl and a daughter named Barbara.⁵ His helping hands were not limited only to the family farm as his generosity extended to any neighbors in need. He helped build many of Happy Valley's roads and telephone lines. He installed the valley's water system and helped organize the Happy Valley fire district, where he served as a volunteer for 31 years. He helped form the Mount Scott Water District, now Sunrise Water Authority, and served on several boards including the school, his church, the city planning commission and on the vigilance committee during the Great Depression.⁶ Another example of his unhesitant generosity to lend a helping hand was a time when snow had knocked out the road in front of the school. Rebstock was there pulling cars out using a team of horses.⁷

In addition to farming his land, Ed worked as the superintendent of the Mount Scott Water District for 33 years until retiring in 1979.⁸ Due to his unselfish endeavors to the point where he knew everyone in the community and everyone knew him, his neighbors affectionately referred to him as "Mr. Happy Valley" a title that he shrugged off, but earned despite his humility. He was also one of the people who helped start the Happy Valley July 4th fireworks show, now perhaps the biggest day of the year on the Happy Valley calendar.⁹ In his pastime, Ed was an avid outdoorsman and loved going fishing and hunting with one of his most memorable adventures taking place in Prince Albert, Canada where he harvested an 800-pound grizzly bear.¹⁰ Rebstock died of cancer on April 12, 1984 after having lived his entire life in the valley.



Ed and Erma Rebstock
Courtesy: The Rebstock family



Rebstock during a volunteer work day at Happy Valley Park
Courtesy: The Rebstock family

After Ed passed away, the City purchased the house he was born in and planned a renovation to transform it into the city hall. Unfortunately, due to extensive dry rot and termite damage the Rebstock house was demolished and a new building in the style of an old farmhouse, very similar to Ed's home, was built in its place.¹¹ In 1994, in remembrance of his generosity to provide unselfish service to his neighbors and support of the community, which included using his tractor to help create Happy Valley Park, the City dedicated a new park located behind what was then the city hall, now the policing center, as Rebstock Park.¹² Today you can visit what this author refers to as the "heart of Happy Valley" where King Road and 129th Avenue meet. It is the location of the Happy Valley Policing Station, which sits on the same site of the Rebstock House, Rebstock's workplace, which is now Sunrise Water Authority, the Happy Valley Fire Station, which Rebstock helped organize, and the Evangelical Church, which Rebstock supported. It is appropriate that this place is the City's "heart," for it was the love of Edward A. Rebstock for his community that helped propel Happy Valley to develop and prosper towards becoming the thriving City it is today.

Mark Hurlburt is a lifelong Happy Valley resident and the volunteer librarian in the Wilmer Gardner Research Library at the Museum of the Oregon Territory.

References

- 1 United States Germans to America Index
- 2 1900 U.S. Census
- 3 “Warranty Deed from J.B. Deardorff and Wife to J. George Zinser”, 1890; “Warranty Deed from J. George Zinser and wife to Charles Rebstock and Bertha Rebstock”, 1901
- 4 Helping other folks is just a way of life for ‘Mr. Happy Valley’, Oregonian. Steven Amick, January 23, 1984
- 5 1930 U.S. Census; “Erma Lydia Rebstock obituary.” Oregonian. 18 September 1993.
- 6 Amick, Steven. “Helping other folks is just a way of life for ‘Mr. Happy Valley’” Oregonian 23 January 1984; “‘Mr. Happy Valley’ dies of cancer” Oregonian 15 April 1984.
- 7 “Ed Rebstock honored for service.” Clackamas County The Citizen 27 June 1979.
- 8 Ed Rebstock Retirement Reception flier, Mt. Scott Water District, 1979.
- 9 Karl Rebstock interview, June 6, 2015.
- 10 Karl Rebstock interview, June 6, 2015.
- 11 “Happy Valley’s Efforts to Build a City Hall meets Dry Rot” Inside Happy Valley September 1991.
- 12 City of Happy Valley Resolution No. 94-12, September 6, 1994.