

# **A History of River Road??**

## **Residence Information:**

How long have you lived in the River Road area?

I lived in the River Road area from March 1962 (age 3) to May 1986 (age 27). My parents still live in the home they purchased in 1962, and one of my two sisters and her family live a few blocks away on McClure Lane.

What River Road addresses have you lived at?

395 Hawthorne Avenue, on the northeast corner of Hawthorne and Meriau Lane. My family is only the second family to live in the house, which was built by Jim Wester in 1952.

Where did you move from?

Molalla, Ore., where we lived for three and a half years. My mother grew up in Eugene, and my father (a native of La Grande, Ore.) attended the University of Oregon and remained in Eugene after graduation until they moved to Molalla. So my family had an extensive Eugene background prior to 1962.

What did you like most about living in River Road?

River Road in the 1960s and 1970s still had a warm, small-town atmosphere. That, combined with the proximity to a relatively cosmopolitan university city and all it had to offer, meant we received the best of both worlds and weren't (I think) unduly influenced by the negative aspects of both. And we were very proud to be North Eugene Highlanders!

## **Family Information:**

Did your parents or grandparents live in River Road?

My mother, Barbie Raney Sims, and her family lived on River Road briefly when she was 4 and 5 years old. They moved to Eugene from Vernonia, Ore. in November 1939 and began building a home in the South University neighborhood.

Grandfather Merwyn "Red" Raney sold logging and mill equipment for R.A. Babb Hardware Co. in Eugene.

My mother's family lived in the Green Gables Auto Court until their house was completed in February 1941. Green Gables was a two-story, wood frame structure, on the east side of River Road immediately north of where Graffiti Alley (675) is today. It fell into disrepair and was torn down c. 1972-73. By that time, it had fallen into disrepute as well - it was rumored to be a haven for hippies, squatters and drug dealers.

My uncle, Bob Raney, attended the second grade and part of the third grade in the old River Road School at 1000 River Road. His second grade teacher was Marjorie Kingsley, who was one of only two teachers who taught in all three River Road School buildings, between the mid-1920s and her retirement at the end of the 1965-66 school year<sup>1</sup>.

### Where did your father work?

My family moved to River Road in 1962 when my father was hired as the River Road Medical Group's first full-time business manager. He worked there until 1986.

Dad was active in the River Road community, particularly with the River Road Kiwanis Club, which held an annual pancake feed at Emerald Park and chicken barbecue at River Road Market. Dad served as club president in 1968-69.

The River Road Kiwanis also cosponsored a charity horse show at the Lane County Fairgrounds, in cooperation with the Eugene Hunt Club. In July 1964 they brought actor Doug McClure, "Trampas" on NBC's popular Western series "The Virginian," to the show as a special attraction.

The River Road Medical Group, originally comprised of Drs. Virgil "Bill" Samms, Olin Byerly, Kendall Hills and Charles Pyfer (all MDs), had opened a year before Dad was hired, in its present location at 890 River Road.

Dr. Samms, River Road's own "Marcus Welby, M.D.," may have been the first physician to actually practice in the River Road area. He first hung up his shingle in 1951 in the new Smith's Center building (900 block, east side of River Road). Right up to his death in 1973, he still made house calls - by then a rarity - and often rode his bicycle to patients' homes!

Dr. Byerly began practicing with Dr. Samms in the late 1950s, and Dr. Hills opened a practice at 1027 River Road in about 1958. Dr. Hills joined with Drs. Byerly and Samms; they added Dr. Pyfer, and founded the River Road Medical Group in 1961<sup>2</sup>.

Though they never lost the "small-town doctor" touch, River Road physicians made their mark in the greater Eugene community as well. Dr. Samms was named "Doctor-Citizen of the Year" by both the Lane County Medical Society and the Oregon Medical Association (OMA) in 1962. He was also active in the Eugene Gleemen, a prominent men's choral ensemble.

Dr. Hills served as team physician for North Eugene High School and University of Oregon football and basketball throughout his career. He was chief of the medical staff at Sacred Heart Medical Center c. late 1970s.

### Where did your mother work?

My mother was a homemaker, and was active in "room mother" activities at the River Road Cooperative Nursery School and River Road School. In the early 1970s, she worked briefly at Rosemary's Antiques, which was located in a very old house on the west side of River Road, in the 200 block just before the old curve onto Railroad Boulevard.

### If your family attended religious services, where did they attend?

Trinity Methodist Church, 440 Maxwell Road<sup>3</sup>. We went to Sunday School there, too (1965-70), and I served as an acolyte.

My sisters and I also attended the River Road Cooperative Nursery School, which was located at the church but not actually affiliated with it, between 1962 and 1967. Jill Heilpern, a warm, wise and creative Englishwoman, was in charge of the nursery school. Later, she helped start the Child Development Center at Lane Community College. River Road Cooperative afforded many youngsters a nurturing, progressive and fun pre-school experience.

## **Area Businesses:**

*(for more details, see attached chart)*

### **What were the most common ways people made a living?**

People who earned their livelihoods in the River Road area itself had small retail or service businesses, worked on nearby farms or in one of the light industries located in the area. There were a few professionals - mostly medical and dental. Many teachers at River Road-area schools lived in the area, too.

People who worked outside the River Road area worked for Southern Pacific Railroad or one of the nearby sawmills, and chose to live in a rural-suburban area close to their jobs. Along with the sawmills, several light manufacturing businesses and beverage distributorships, and nearly all of Eugene's gasoline/oil bulk plants were located close to southern River Road in the area roughly bordered by Monroe Street, West Fifth Avenue, Garfield Street and a line stretching from Roosevelt Boulevard west along the railroad tracks and West First Avenue.

In 1946, Fred Brunner built the Chet's Frozen Foods plant on Railroad Boulevard between Cross and North Polk streets - another source of employment for River Road residents. Brunner was the founder and owner of Brunner Dryer, on the west side of River Road about a quarter-mile south of Howard Avenue.

Around 1940-41, some people involved with the construction of Fern Ridge Dam lived in the River Road area.

River Road residents also included business owners, professionals, public employees and teachers who commuted to workplaces in Eugene proper. These included U of O and LCC employees, as well.

### **Where did you do your grocery and hardware shopping?**

We bought groceries either at McKay's Market (1015 River Road) or one of the three supermarkets located at 645 River Road during that period - River Road, Dean's and Shopper's markets. For convenience in the days before 7-Eleven, we made quick stops at the Late Shopper (230 River Road) or Park Avenue Market (southeast corner North Park Avenue and Beebe Lane).

For hardware, yard and garden items, there was River Road Hardware at 675 River Road. Lloyd and Jean Walker were the archetypical salt-of-the-earth, Mom-and-Pop store owners - great friends and neighbors to all. Their son, Dave, was a football star at North Eugene High School and the University of Oregon.

Were there local nurseries you used?

Woodruff Nursery at 1270 River Road - a longtime River Road business.

What other significant businesses were important to River Road?

**Groceries:** Community Market (Maxwell Road), Irish's (Riviera Center).

**Eating and drinking:** The Pioneer Inn tavern, Alpine Village Inn, Rolling Pin Bakery, Flyin Scot' Drive In, Kellogg's Rich Maid/Ashby's Ice Cream, Eagan's Cafeteria (Riviera Center).

**Friendly neighborhood gas stations and garages:** I'm partial to Clark Hollis, a wonderful and faithful family friend who was the veteran of River Road's service-station owners.

Clark entered the business two years out of Eugene High School, in 1952, with River Road Associated Service at 595 River Road. That station later became Clark's Flying A Service, and Clark served his neighbors well at that location until 1963, when the Flying A station was closed and Clark opened Clark Hollis Enco and U-Haul Rentals at 988 River Road.

We were stunned and angered when, just before Christmas in 1971, Humble Oil and Refining Co. abruptly closed the Enco station - citing low profit margins. (This was just a few months before Humble was merged into Exxon.) But Clark bounced right back, taking over the Texaco station at 615 River Road. He and his son Greg were "the men from Texaco," with Doug Hollis operating C&D Radiator Service on site, for three decades. Clark Hollis Texaco closed c. 2002-03.

Clark, a lifelong River Roder, has definitely been one of the "local fathers." He was active in the River Road Kiwanis Club, serving as its president, and an active North Eugene Highlander booster as well. He was a founding member of the old North Eugene Quarterback Club, whose red plaid

decals graced a number of River Road businesses during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Clark and River Road Mobil dealer Glen Haldorson were Kelly Junior High's first student body president and vice president, respectively. Haldorson owned the Maxwell-Park Mobil Servicenter on the southwest corner of Maxwell Road and North Park Avenue. It and Nelson and Beever Richfield, across Maxwell Road, were the only area gas stations off River Road. Both were built in the mid-1960s and were gone by the mid-1980s.

Other notable stations and garages: River Road Super Service (Jerry Leibel), Cairns Richfield, Fraederick's Saving Center, Seven Oaks Garage, Red Hastings' Texaco and American stations, Riviera Richfield.

**Drugstores:** Deer Drug, River Road Pharmacy (Bob Jastad), Tiffany's Rexall Drug (Riviera Center).

**General retail/variety:** Tiffany's, Hand's Jewelers, Fuller's, Villa-Mart.

**Floral:** Briarcliff Florist, Riviera Florist (Cele Hennigan).

**Services:** Ayr-Dot Radio and TV Service, Emerald Radio and TV Service (Ron Holladay), Our Barber Shop (Dick Ruff, sons Denny and Max), Brunner Dryer.

**Entertainment:** Firs Theater (1950s), Firs Bowl.

**Manufacturing:** Potter Manufacturing Co. (decals).

Around 1941, there was a small café or lunch counter at the west end of Hansen Lane, presumably to serve railroad workers.

## **Events:**

*Also see addendum,*

*"Timeline of River Road Events pre-1970."*

Do you have memories of the flooding of the Willamette River (1945 and 1964)? Describe.

My maternal grandmother, Helmi Ranes, was a registered nurse and Red Cross volunteer. She told of traveling up River Road in a rowboat during the 1945 flood, as well as the floods of 1941 and 1943, to assist families in the deluged areas.

Because River Road - then part of Highway 99 - flooded on a near-annual basis, the state of Oregon in 1936 relocated Highway 99 from River Road west to Prairie Road<sup>4</sup>. The present-day Highway 99 to Junction City, including the

viaduct over the Southern Pacific Railroad's Coos Bay branch line, was built c. 1937-38.

I recall the 1964 Christmas Week flood very well. I was in the first grade at River Road School. Neither my family nor the families of any of my schoolmates were seriously affected, but I remember hearing of people who lived east of River Road (East Briarcliff Drive, Rasor Avenue, etc.) who were very concerned about the rising waters. These were people living within a couple of hundred yards of the river.

We knew of families in Santa Clara who had to leave their homes, mostly in the River Loop area near Madison Junior High School. At one point, Belt Line Highway was closed at the river due to high water.

And, on top of everything else, a couple of evenings before Christmas, we watched the skies above River Road very nervously - an airliner with 35 people aboard circled overhead for several hours, unable to land at Mahlon Sweet Airport due to an unsafe landing gear.

Are there other important events that happened in the River Road area that you think are important to pass on to the next generation? Describe.

***See addendum, "Timeline of River Road Events pre-1970."***

How did the River Road area change during the Great Depression?

Marjorie Kingsley recalled to me that during the Depression, many of her River Road School students came to school hungry, and wearing shabby or inadequate clothing. Several area farms failed, and several River Road businesses closed - the latter also caused, in part, by the relocation of Highway 99.

Miss Kingsley also said that during this period, many hop yards in the area were transformed into orchards - mainly walnuts and filberts. And, she explained, the effects of the Depression on River Road were mitigated somewhat by the community's proximity to the Southern Pacific Railroad division yards, which when built c. 1925-26 brought many jobs and a population surge to the area.

## What impact did ... World War II have on the development of the River Road area?

The River Road area already had experienced a slight amount of suburban-style growth prior to WWII, due to construction of the railroad yards and the desires of some monied Eugeneans to build their dream houses outside the city.

By the time WWII began, the River Road Water District had been formed and had contracted to purchase water for the community from the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). EWEB had also improved and expanded its electrical distribution system in the growing River Road area<sup>5</sup>.

After WWII, the Eugene area experienced the same suburban growth that was sweeping the nation, particularly with the growth of the timber industry. Due to its location near most of the area's sawmills and the railroad, River Road and Bethel-Danebo received the bulk of suburban growth north of Eugene.

In River Road's case, construction of several dams on the upper Willamette River meant the end of the floods that deluged the area on an annual basis, the most notable of which occurred in 1927, 1941, 1943 and 1945.

Many young families migrated into the River Road area during the postwar period, and many still remain, as do their children and grandchildren. Even in the 1960s and 1970s, I had schoolmates whose fathers were WWII veterans.

The wartime growth spurt helped induce several small outlying school districts, including River Road No. 185, to merge with Eugene School District 4J in the fall of 1945. As a condition of the merger, area residents insisted that they have their own junior high school, rather than having to send their youngsters to Wilson or Roosevelt junior high schools in Eugene proper.

Colin Kelly Junior High School opened on a "double shift" basis at the Wilson building on West 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the fall of 1945. During the process of naming the new school, the names of such prominent WWII heroes as McArthur and Eisenhower were proposed, but the students wanted their school named after an "ordinary guy."

The guy they chose was Capt. Colin P. Kelly, an Army Air Corps pilot shot down in the Pacific just months after Pearl Harbor. Kelly himself had no local connections, but the story of his heroism in the grim early days of WWII was

well-known nationally. The students selected Kelly green as the school color and the nickname "Bombers." The school newspaper was called the "Kelly Flyer," and the original name of the yearbook was the "Kelly Bombardier."

Kelly students and faculty moved into their new building, built on a former alfalfa field at the southeast corner of Howard and North Park avenues, in January 1947.

The school's attendance area included the Ferry Street Bridge, Willagillespie and Willakenzie areas until 1953, when Cal Young Junior High School opened on Gilham Road.

Rapid postwar population growth in the neighborhoods between Horn Lane and Maxwell Road necessitated building another elementary school in the area. District 4J had also purchased the land just east of Kelly on Howard Avenue, and it was there that Howard School was built and opened in September 1949.

The 1949 opening of Willamette High School in the newly-formed Bethel School District relieved some of the crowding at Kelly. With no junior high or high school of their own, Bethel ninth graders attended Kelly through an agreement between the Bethel and Eugene districts. Willamette's opening as a four-year high school removed about 100 pupils from Kelly for the 1949-50 school year.

River Road School felt postwar growing pains, too. The building, not quite 25 years old, quickly became overcrowded and unable to accommodate the growing student body. In 1953, a new school building was built around the corner from the old, at 120 W. Hilliard Lane, occupied only by the first, second and third grades.

The remaining three grades were gradually added and the building expanded during the next three years. When the transfer was completed in 1956, the old River Road School building was torn down and the land sold to U.S. Bank, which opened its third Eugene branch - and River Road's first bank - two years later.

As River Road's suburban growth pushed northward in the late 1950s, a third elementary school was needed to relieve overcrowding at Howard and Santa Clara. Silver Lea School opened on Silver Lane adjacent to North Eugene High School in 1961.

The 1957 opening of North Eugene High School (NEHS or "North") gave the River Road community a major new rallying point.

NEHS had been in the planning stages as early as 1953, the year Eugene and University<sup>6</sup> high schools had merged into a new building on East 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Two years later, District 4J broke ground for the new high school at 200 Silver Lane.

The district board considered the names "River Road" and "Santa Clara"<sup>7</sup> for the new high school. But the school community - which included the Coburg Road area and even some Springfield neighborhoods<sup>8</sup> - wanted a connection with the city of Eugene. The district named the new school North Eugene High, and added "South" to Eugene High School.

North opened in September 1957 at Kelly Junior High, with high-school students sharing the school through double-shifting. NEHS opened with just a sophomore class, of approximately 325 students. They moved into the new building on October 21, 1957, and the building was formally dedicated in October 1958.

Ray Hendrickson, former University and Eugene high administrator and coach, was North's first principal. Hendrickson, a longtime starter at U of O track meets, retired in 1975. His vice principal was Bob Newland, a U of O alumnus who came north from Medford and stayed at NEHS until the late 1970s.

Both Hendrickson and Newland served as track coaches at North, and helped found the Oregon Track Club. In addition to a strong academic program, these two men and their deep interest in athletics helped NEHS get off to a fast start as a sports leader.

Runner Kenny Moore, NEHS class of 1962, went on to be a world-famous sportswriter and screenwriter. He co-authored a documentary (*Fire on the Track*) and a major motion picture (*Without Limits*) about famed runner Steve Prefontaine. He also had a rather noteworthy appearance in a 1980 movie, *Personal Best*, starring Mariel Hemingway and filmed in Eugene.

It's interesting to note that in the 1957-58 *Tartan* yearbook, one word is conspicuous by its absence - "Highlanders." Apparently, students that year chose the school colors of scarlet and white but deferred choosing a nickname until 1958-59, when NEHS began playing varsity basketball and baseball against District 5-A-1 rivals South Eugene, Springfield, Roseburg, Marshfield and North Bend.

The first varsity football team began full league competition in the 1959 season, with Civic Stadium as the

shared home of the Highlanders and the South Eugene Axemen. And local basketball fans enjoyed the first decade of the North Eugene-South Eugene rivalry at McArthur Court - which was often nearly filled to its 10,000-seat capacity for the "Civil War."

According to the NEHS website, the filbert orchard upon which North was built was either donated or sold to District 4J by its owners, who were of Scottish ancestry. Their ethnic heritage may be the reason why North students selected "Highlanders" as the school's nickname.

That nickname inspired such related symbols of school spirit as the tartan plaid-clad rally squad performing the Highland Fling at halftime of the North-South basketball game, accompanied by the Eugene Highlander Bagpipe Band (an adult group not associated with NEHS).

During the 1960s, a live mascot joined the rally squad at athletic events - Bonnie Lassie, a lovable Scottie dog. Bonnie Lassie I was killed by a car on Maxwell Road c. mid-1960s and succeeded by Bonnie Lassie II (and presumably last).

NEHS grew from one class to two in 1958-59, and the following year had a full three-class student body. The Class of 1960, North's first, included actor David Ogden Stiers. His most famous role remains that of Major Charles Emerson Winchester III on the CBS-TV series "M\*A\*S\*H." At the end of his first season on the show, "Major Winchester" was invited back to NEHS as commencement speaker to the Class of 1978.

***For more NEHS history, see "Timeline of River Road Events Pre-1970."***

My grandmother, Helmi Raney, was school nurse at Kelly, Howard, River Road and Whiteaker schools, beginning in 1951. She said that a large number of the young, energetic teachers at these schools were WWII veterans.

She recalled that Kelly's vice principal, a Navy veteran, would begin all-school announcements with a booming "Now hear this!" and end them with a laconic "That is all," as commanding officers did aboard ship during the war.

She also said that a number of the impoverished families who came to River Road in the postwar years lived in Green Gables and in the Cabin City Auto Court at 225 River Road.

Cabin City had been built c. early 1920s to serve tourists traveling the Pacific Highway, but it became more of a low-rent housing facility after the highway was relocated. My grandmother recalled making home visits to both Cabin City and Green Gables, often taking donated clothing to needy schoolchildren living in those places.

Cabin City was torn down in 1962 and replaced by a Villa-Mart department store.

Another center of River Road community life was the River Road Park and Recreation District and Emerald Park, founded in 1954. In 1961, the community center and indoor swimming pool were opened.

Emerald Park supplanted the River Road-area schools as a focus of activity and a positive influence on youth. Park offerings included swimming lessons and open pool sessions, a wading pool for toddlers, the usual playground equipment, summer day camps and after-school recreation facilities.

Kelly Junior High students enjoyed "Funteen" dances, many of which featured local bands, on weekend nights during the school year. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were a few dances held outdoors during the summer. Funteen was also open to seventh- and eighth-graders who attended St. Peter's (Catholic) School on Maxwell Road.

With the Emerald Park pool came the River Road Swim Club, which provided competition and instruction for elementary and junior high school-age swimmers and divers. The club and individual members earned many local and regional honors, and gave an excellent start to athletes who would go on to win local and state championships for NEHS.

Scouting was a big part of postwar community life. Beginning c. early 1930s, the River Road School PTA sponsored Cub Scout Pack 66 (later 366), and Boy and Girl Scout troops 66. They met at the school and were well-regarded in the Eugene-area Scouting community, frequently winning pack, troop and individual achievement awards.

As the River Road area grew after WWII, Scout organizations were also founded at Trinity Methodist Church and at Howard and Silver Lea schools.

## Resource Information:

What historic resources do you remember that no longer exist today?

The cluster of businesses at the south end of River Road, just outside what was then the Eugene city limit, at the beginning of Railroad Boulevard. (See chart for details.) These were displaced by the proposed Roosevelt Freeway, which was never built; the Northwest Expressway (1980) and the Chambers Connector (1988).

I'd like to know more about that big old (Victorian?) house that housed Rosemary's Antiques. It was located at what had been a fairly significant crossroads prior to the coming of the railroad yards, where Blair Avenue (now Boulevard) crossed the railroad tracks and intersected with the Elmira road (now Roosevelt Boulevard) and River Road.

If you could save any building(s) or landmark(s) that still exist in the River Road area today, what would it/they be? And why?

The tall firs along River Road between Knoop Lane and Park Avenue, and along Park Avenue between River Road and the pond at the site of Ben Merriau's (c. 1910s-1920s) racetrack.

The Beebe barn house and other buildings on the northeast corner of North Park Avenue and Beebe Lane. Mr. Beebe was a prominent Lane County farmer and an early, if not founding, board member of the Eugene Fruit Growers Association (later Agripac).

The Davis house (north side of Knoop Lane, 200 block), which I was once told was built by either River Road pioneer (Benjamin?) Davis or his descendants.

Also, as outstanding examples of post-WWII architecture:

Colin Kelly Junior High School<sup>9</sup>.

McKay's Market, now the Goodwill store, 1015 River Road.

The Firs Bowl, one of the last remaining Quonset huts in use locally, at 1950 River Road.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Kingsley was a friend and neighbor to the author; she lived at 892 Park Avenue with her sister Olive Field, also a longtime River Road teacher. Miss Kingsley related many tales and anecdotes of River Road history, and shared scrapbooks she'd kept of her teaching days at the school, including pictures of nearly all of her classes.

<sup>2</sup> The author's knowledge of River Road Medical Group history comes from personal recollections and family anecdotes. His father Tom Sims was the clinic manager from 1962 to 1986. His maternal grandmother Helmi Raney, a nurse at River Road-area schools from 1951 to 1973, was a patient of Dr. Samms' 11 years before his father went to work for the group. Mrs. Raney remembered Dr. Samms standing at his office door, looking across River Road at the empty lot on the southwest corner of Elkay Drive and saying, "Yep, Helmi, that's where I'm building my clinic!"

<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1948.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to 1936, the Pacific Highway (U.S. 99) left downtown Eugene on West Sixth Avenue, veered north on Blair Boulevard and Van Buren Street to Railroad Boulevard, then out River Road to Junction City and beyond. The 1936 relocation sent Highway 99 traffic west on Sixth to Garfield Street, then north to Roosevelt Boulevard (then called Elmira Road), west to what is now Bethel Drive, and north on present-day Bethel Drive, Empire Park Drive and Prairie Road to Junction City. This was a temporary route until the opening of the new Highway 99 alignment.

<sup>5</sup> Mountain States Power Co., which served Springfield, Junction City and most of the southern Willamette Valley, also served the River Road and Santa Clara areas north of Maxwell Road. Shortly after Pacific Power and Light Co. (PP&L) bought Mountain States Power in 1954, it turned over to EWEB all of its service area lying within Eugene School District 4J.

<sup>6</sup> Because of its smaller size, many River Roaders chose to attend University ("Uni") High School on the U of O campus (present-day College of Education building on Alder Street), rather than the larger Eugene High School at West 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Charnelton Street. At the time of his 1975 retirement, NEHS principal Ray Hendrickson in a *Caledonian* newspaper article noted that a number of NEHS students were sons and daughters of his former Uni High pupils.

<sup>7</sup> Until about 1941, there had been a Santa Clara High School in the present-day elementary school building at 2685 River Road. Wilma Wittemeyer, a Santa Clara graduate, told the author that the Santa Clara "Hornets" played six- or eight-man football against Lane County rivals Coburg, Lorane, Thurston, Wendling and Westfir high schools - all of which have disappeared. (The Thurston High mentioned is not the current version in east Springfield, but an earlier rural school which closed c. early 1940s.)

<sup>8</sup> At the time NEHS opened, its attendance area and District 4J included some Springfield neighborhoods near Harlow and Game Farm roads. This

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area had been part of the Willakenzie School District before its merger into District 4J c. 1951. The 1960-61 construction of Interstate 5 created an unofficial yet prominent boundary between Eugene and Springfield, and the portion of District 4J east of I-5 was transferred to the Springfield School District at about that time.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly's "ultra-modern" design (as described the *Register-Guard*) became of great interest among Northwest school board members and administrators, who came to inspect the facility even before it was completed in 1947. One of those visiting school board members was the author's paternal grandfather, La Grande (Ore.) school board chair Foster Sims. The world is indeed a small place.

## Other sources

Annual reports:

Eugene School District 4J.

Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB).

Oregon State Highway Commission

(now Oregon Department of Transportation or ODOT).

*Bountiful McKenzie: The Story of the Eugene Water and Electric Board*, 1986, Norman F. Stone.

Colin Kelly Middle School archives. These include *Kelly Bombardier* yearbooks, *Kelly Flyer* newspapers and scrapbooks.

Eugene and Lane County directory, 1941.

*Eugene Modernism, 1935-1965*; 2003, City of Eugene Planning and Development.

Regional transportation improvement-expansion study, 1951, Oregon State Highway Commission, Lane County, cities of Eugene and Springfield.

North Eugene High School archives. These include *Tartan* yearbooks, *Caledonian* newspapers, scrapbooks and the school's website at [www.nehs.lane.edu](http://www.nehs.lane.edu).

Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) online archive at [www.osaa.org](http://www.osaa.org).

*Register-Guard* archives.

*The Story of Eugene*, 1949, Moore-McCornack-McCready.

# RIVER ROAD HISTORY – BUSINESSES

## Addendum to Questionnaire

### \* Significant Businesses, Related Events

*South to north, from site of present-day Chambers Connector to Silver Lane/River Avenue*

BUSINESS	ADDRESS, BLOCK OR GENERAL LOCATION	NOTES
Nu-Way Cleaners	West side River Road, 100 block	Built c. 1940, closed and torn down c. 1980
Gas station	165 River Road	Circa mid- to late 1940s to early 1960s, a Veltex gas station was located at this address. Veltex was the brand name of a regional chain of stations owned or supplied by Fletcher Oil Co. of Boise, Idaho. From c. mid-1960s to c. mid-1970s, Fraedrick-Skillern Oil Co. of Eugene operated one of its many Sunny discount gas stations at this location.
Cabin City Auto Court	225 River Road	Built c. 1920s, closed and town down in 1962.
Villa Mart	225 River Road	Seattle-based discount superstore, built 1963. River Road's first alternative to shopping at department stores in Eugene proper. Closed in 1973.
Holeman Lockers	West side River Road, 200 block	Building housed lockers and grocery. Built c. 1930s-early 1940s, torn down c. 1976-77.
Auckerman's ( <i>sp?</i> ) Food Market, Late Shopper	West side River Road, 200 block	Shared building with Holeman Lockers. Auckerman's ( <i>sp?</i> ) in 1950s, Late Shopper 1960s until closure c. 1976-77. Torn down for Northwest Expressway extension.
Chevron service station	East side River Road, 200 block	Built c. 1945, closed and torn down c. 1969-70.
Pioneer Inn	East side River Road, 200 block	Red log cabin housed tavern from mid-1930s until early 1970s. Torn down c. early 1970s.

McDaniel Lumber Co.	240 River Road	Built c. 1945, closed and torn down c. late 1970s for Northwest Expressway extension.
Alpine Village Inn	East side River Road, 200 block	Bavarian restaurant/lounge built c. late 1950s-early 1960s. Closed and torn down c. mid-1970s for Northwest Expressway extension.
River Road Super Service	NE corner River Road - Thomason Lane	Shell service station opened c. 1945, owned by Jerry Leibel ( <i>sp?</i> ) for many years, closed c. 1980
Chevron service station	SE corner River Road- Fir Lane	Built c. 1966 in anticipation of Roosevelt Freeway interchange. Freeway never built; station closed and torn down c. mid-1970s.
Potter Manufacturing Co.	405 River Road	Nationally-known decal manufacturer founded c. 1920s. Business moved to Prairie Road and building torn down c. mid-1980s to accommodate widening of River Road.
Ayr-Dot Radio-TV Service	East side River Road, 400 block, immediately adjacent to Potter Manufacturing Co.	Glendon Dotson operated this business into the 1970s. Besides radio and TV repair, Ayr-Dot offered vending machine service.
Richfield / Arco service station	420 River Road	Station built c. 1920, one of first on River Road when it became Pacific Highway (U.S. 99) after World War I. Gas station closed c. late 1980s.
McAlpin Vault Co.	East side River Road, 500 block	This manufacturer of burial vaults was one of several light manufacturing facilities in River Road area. It was closed and torn down c. mid-1970s to early 1980s.
North's Chuck Wagon, Rose Cleaners	585 River Road	Opened as one of first North's Chuck Wagon buffet restaurants c. 1957-58; became Rose Cleaners late 1950s-early 1960s. Cleaners left location c. 1980.

Flying A service station	595 River Road	Clark Hollis, native “River Roder,” opened the first of his three River Road service stations in 1952. Flying A station closed 1963; Hollis opened Enco station at 988 River Road. A Fina gas station operated briefly in the old Flying A location c. 1971-72; building now occupied by Glass Spray Service (longtime River Road business).
Texaco service station	627, later 615 River Road	Original station building built c. early 1950s, at about same time as Flying A station, during post-World War II growth in area. New building built 1962. Red Hastings operated the station until c. 1967, when he opened an American (later Mobil) station at 2090 River Road. Clark Hollis took over the Texaco station from Marion Cessna in 1972, until operated it until it closed c. 2002-03.
River Road Market / Dean’s Market / Shopper’s Market	645 River Road	New owners (unknown) purchased the original River Road Market (675 River Road) from the McKay family c. 1948 and built a River Road “Super Market” just south of the old store, on the NE corner of River Road and Rasor Avenue. The original entrance faced River Road. Store remodeled with entrance facing south c. 1963-64. Dean’s Markets of Junction City purchased River Road Market in 1966; about a year later, Shopper’s Market purchased and renamed Dean’s. McKay’s Markets brought the story full circle when they bought and renamed Shopper’s in 1975. McKay’s sold the store c. 1980.
River Road Market / River Road Hardware	675 River Road	Miles McKay, patriarch of McKay’s Markets and the related commercial-development family, opened the “original” River Road Market c. mid-1930s. After its new owners built the postwar supermarket next door, Lloyd and Jean Walker in 1949 moved in and opened River Road Hardware. It was River Road’s “mom and pop” hardware store until c. mid-1980s, when it was relocated into the present Graffiti Alley building as River Road was widened.

Green Gables Auto Court	Immediately north of Graffiti Alley on the east side of River Road	Date of construction, opening unknown, but this early apartment house was housing tenants at least by the fall of 1939. It gradually fell into disrepair and was torn down c. 1972-73.
River Road Medical Group / Deer Drug	890, 884 River Road	Dr. Virgil “Bill” Samms, River Road’s own “Marcus Welby, MD,” may have been the first doctor to practice out River Road when he hung up his shingle in 1951. Ten years later, he and two other River Road doctors – Olin Byerly and Kendall Hills – added a fourth partner, Charles Pyfer, and founded the River Road Medical Group. In 1965-66, they expanded the clinic to nearly twice its original size, added two more doctors (Stanley Boyd and Luis Bianchini) and Deer Drug, which relocated from its Smith’s Center location across the street.
Hancock service station	895 River Road	Two small houses, not much more than cabins actually, occupied the lot on the SE corner of River Road and McClure Lane until c. 1966-67, when Signal Oil Co. purchased the lot for a Hancock service station. The two houses were relocated to 113 and 115 McClure Lane. Circa early 1980s, the Southland Corporation purchased the station site (by that time a Franko discount gas station) and built a 7-Eleven store.
Emerald Center	NE corner River Road-McClure Lane	Original center (name unknown) built c. 1954; renamed Emerald Center c. 1957-58. Early tenants included Fuller’s variety store, Handi-Snack (later Emerald) Café, dentist Dr. Leonard Smith, Laundromat, River Road Shoe Repair and Ron Holladay’s Emerald Radio & TV. In 1966, Winston Chin opened the Twin Dragon restaurant in the old Emerald Café location.

Smith's Center	937-943 River Road	Built c. 1951; displaced some relatively-new residences (where did they go?). Tenants through the years were Dr. Samms, Rolling Pin Bakery (939), Powell Drug (941; purchased by Charles Deer and renamed Deer Drug in 1959), Our Barber Shop (longtime River Roder Dick Ruff and sons Denny and Max). Dick Ruff was son-in-law of C.E. Howard, area landowner for whom Howard Avenue was named.
Clark Hollis Enco Service	988 River Road	Built in 1963 on site of former Ralph Kindler residence, on the SW corner of River Road and Marion Lane, which was named for his wife, Marion Kindler. Exxon abruptly closed the service station in December 1971. It was a Hudson discount gas station through the 1970s, and is now Autobahn Imports, a car repair business.
Mobil service station	SE corner River Road-Oakleigh Lane	Built c. mid-1950s. Became Mr. Suds Car Wash and Phillips 66 gas station c. 1968. Both closed; building torn down c. late 1970s.
Union 76 service station	1005 River Road	Built c. mid-1950s. Station closed c. mid-1970s; building dismantled, moved piece by piece and rebuilt at Heceta Beach junction on U.S. 101 north of Florence.
U.S. Bank	1000 River Road	The ultra-modern third Eugene branch of the bank was built in 1958 on the former site of the old River Road School, which had been torn down two years earlier. U.S. Bank closed the branch c. early 1990s.
Dairy Queen	SW corner River Road-West Hilliard Lane	Built in 1960 as first national-chain fast food restaurant on River Road. Served "after school" treats to River Road School children until c. mid-to-late 1980s, when the franchise was moved to Santa Clara.

<p>McKay's Market</p>	<p>1015 River Road</p>	<p>The McKay family sold River Road Market after World War II and in 1949 built the first of what would be a regional chain of McKay's supermarkets on the SE corner of River Road and East Hilliard Lane. The store closed c. 1965-66 and the building served a number of purposes in the next few years. First, it was Mayfair Markets' local sign-painting shop. It then housed Tom Peterson's only furniture and appliance store outside Portland for a couple of years before becoming Mike Porter's discount appliance store. Mike Porters closed c. 1970.</p>
<p>The Leaf Station,  Fraederick's Saving  Center</p>	<p>1040 River Road</p>	<p>The Leaf Station, a longtime River Road service station (<i>gasoline brand unknown</i>), was located on the NW corner of River Road and West Hilliard Lane until c. early 1950s. Fraederick Oil Co. built Fraederick's Saving Center in 1958. It was typical of post-World War II gas stations that sold unbranded gasoline, motor oil and other auto-related products, and cigarettes at discount prices. Such stations, including Fraedrick's, had above-ground fuel storage tanks and no service bays. Fraedrick's closed c. late 1970s-early 1980s.</p>
<p>Flyin' Scot Drive In</p>	<p>1041 River Road</p>	<p>Curt and Frances Newell built the first of what would eventually be four locations of this popular burger and chicken restaurant in 1962. They were avid community boosters and their four sons – Doug, Steve, Gary and Dave – were all football stars at North Eugene High School. The Newells sold the River Road location to longtime River Roaders Bob and Clatys Gould, who opened Gould's Country Burgers in 1974.</p>
<p>Kellogg's Rich-Maid /  Ashby's Ice Cream</p>	<p>Across from  Brunner Dryer on  east side of River  Road</p>	<p>Ice cream shop that, as Ashby's, also sold pizza to go. Exact dates unknown; Ashby's was closed by 1969.</p>

Firs Theater / Firs Bowl	1950 River Road	This postwar Quonset hut first housed the Firs Theater, which opened c. 1950. It became the Firs Bowl c. 1958-59.
Abby's Pizza Inn	1970 River Road	Opened in December 1967 as the first full-blown pizza parlor in northwest Eugene. It was only the third or fourth location for the Roseburg-based chain, and was "the place to be" for several generations of North Eugene High School students.
Riviera Center	2000 block River Road between Corliss Lane and River Avenue	<p>Opened in 1962 as River Road's first large, car-friendly suburban shopping center. Original tenants included Eugene-based chain stores Tiffany's Rexall Drug and Irish's supermarket.</p> <p>At about the same time, Riviera Richfield Service opened in front of the center on the SE corner of River Road and River Avenue.</p> <p>The River Road branch of First National Bank of Oregon (later First Interstate and Wells Fargo banks) opened in front of the center in 1968.</p>
Bi-Mart, Safeway	SW corner River Road-Silver Lane	<p>In 1968, these major retailers displaced most of the last remaining filbert groves in this neighborhood. The arrival of Bi-Mart and Safeway marked the beginning of the end for River Road as a community of "Mom and Pop" businesses.</p> <p>That homogenization continued with the arrivals of Kentucky Fried Chicken (1968), McDonald's (1971), Pizza Hut (1974) and</p>

		<p>Fred Meyer (1975), all within a quarter-mile of the massive River Road-Belt Line freeway interchange completed in 1970.</p> <p>Kent Mortimore, Lane County prosecutor and River Road native, was editor of North Eugene High School's <i>Caledonian</i> newspaper when Fred Meyer opened in the spring of 1975. In an editorial, Mortimore bemoaned the coming of California-type sprawl to River Road. He closed the editorial by quoting a popular Joni Mitchell song of the day: "They've paved Paradise, and put up a parking lot."</p>
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# Timeline of RIVER ROAD EVENTS Pre-1970

- c. mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century** The territorial road north from Eugene near the west bank of the Willamette River gradually becomes the main overland route from Eugene to Salem and Portland. The 14-mile section between Eugene and Junction City becomes known locally as “the river road.”
- 1871** The Oregon-California Railroad, later to be purchased by Southern Pacific, is completed through Eugene. Its main line will gradually form a boundary of sorts between the River Road area, Eugene to the south, and the Bethel, Danebo and Irving communities to the west.
- 1911** Southern Pacific completes its branch line from Eugene to Marshfield (now Coos Bay). The “wye” at which the western branch begins is located immediately west of the mainline rail crossing where River Road becomes Eugene’s Blair Avenue (now Boulevard). This helps make the area an attractive site for sawmills and, ultimately, a railroad switching and maintenance center.
- 1913** The newly-created Oregon State Highway Commission creates a network of state highways, which includes River Road as the Eugene-Junction City section of the Pacific Highway.
- c. 1914** River Road School District #185 is formed. River Road School opens in a two-room “little red schoolhouse” on the west side of River Road just south of Hilliard Lane.
- 1920** River Road is hard surfaced (blacktop).

**c. 1925-26** Southern Pacific Railroad builds its division yards and shops on a tract of land bounded by River Road, Elmira Road (now Roosevelt Boulevard) and Prairie Road (the southern section of which is now Bethel Drive). A group of Eugene businessmen sell bonds to purchase the land, which they sell to the railroad for \$1. The bonds are scheduled to reach maturity in 1962-63.

The arrival of the rail yards causes a number of changes in the area –

- New suburban housing is built along River Road, and on nearby lanes and side streets, to house the population influx brought by new jobs at the rail yards and shops.
- A new, larger River Road School building is needed. It is built c. 1926 on the site of the original schoolhouse.
- The Pacific Highway is relocated to Van Buren Street and Railroad Boulevard, to avoid bottlenecks at the south end of the rail yards where (as Blair Avenue) it crossed the tracks directly onto River Road.
- Sometime after 1936, a road linking North Park Avenue and Prairie Road is closed due to expansion of the rail yard. The road ran west from Park at its 90-degree northerly turn near present-day Cornwall Avenue, across the railroad tracks to what is now Rikhoff Street.

**1926** The federal government creates a nationally-uniform system of numbering U.S. highways. River Road thus carries the Eugene-Junction City sections of U.S. 99 (Pacific Highway) and U.S. 28 (Ontario-Florence).

**1927** River Roaders hear local radio for the first time. KORE, Lane County's first commercial radio station, goes on the air from studios in downtown Eugene.

**1927** Major flood submerges River Road area, along with other low-lying areas throughout the Willamette Valley.

**1936** U.S. 99 is relocated from River Road to Prairie Road due to annual flooding. U.S. 28 signs come down along River Road, too, as federal highway authorities move the route's western terminus to its junction with U.S. 99 at Glenwood. The state of Oregon will retain River Road as a state highway (Junction City-Eugene Highway #223) until 1985, when it trades River Road to Lane County in exchange for Belt Line Road.

- 1939** The River Road Water District is formed, and begins purchasing water for the community from the Eugene Water Board (later renamed Eugene Water and Electric Board – EWEB).
- 1941** Bert Dotson, a Eugene High School senior living on Sunnyside Drive, devises a simple, unique house-numbering system for the lanes branching off River Road. Dotson proposes assigning address numbers based on the number of feet properties are located from River Road (*i.e.* 295 Sunnyside Drive – 295 feet from River Road). Prior to acceptance of “the Dotson plan” (presumably by Lane County and/or postal authorities), area addresses consisted of the usual rural route-box number combinations. Dotson will go on to be a founding faculty member and administrator at Lane Community College.
- 1941-42** **Winter:** Disastrous winter flooding again hits the area, closing River Road and inundating homes and businesses.
- 1945** Voters approve the merger of River Road School District #185 into the larger Eugene School District 4. Joining River Road in the merger are the Santa Clara and Willagillespie districts, which insist upon construction of a junior high school north of Eugene proper as a condition for joining District 4.
- Fall:** Colin Kelly Junior High School opens at Wilson Junior High on West 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, sharing the building on a “double-shift” basis.
- Construction of the new Kelly building begins on a former alfalfa field at the southeast corner of Howard Lane (now Avenue) and North Park Avenue.
- December:** Another major flood comes to River Road.
- c. 1946-52** EWEB rebuilds its electrical distribution system in the River Road area, in response to postwar commercial and residential growth. The project includes a new distribution line along River Road, and two new River Road-area substations (on the east side of River Road in the 800 block, and on Howard Avenue just west of River Road).
- 1947** **January:** Colin Kelly Junior High students and faculty occupy their new building.

- 1948** Trinity Methodist Church is established at 440 Maxwell Road.
- 1949** The first supermarkets arrive in the area: the new River Road Super Market at 645 River Road, and McKay's Market at 1015 River Road.
- 1949** **September:** Howard Elementary School opens at 700 Howard Avenue.
- 1950** River Road Baptist Church is established at 1105 River Road.
- Late 1940s – mid-1950s** The arrival of flood-control dams on the upper Willamette River system means the end of annual flooding in the River Road area, prompting increased development. Subdivisions sprout like wildflowers, filling in fields, farms and orchards.
- One of the first is in the Kelly neighborhood, between Howard Avenue and Maxwell Road, North Park and Grove avenues (c. 1949).
- Other important residential developments during this period:
- New neighborhoods east of River Road – Oakleigh and East Hilliard lanes, Greenleaf Drive and Sandra Lane, Hatton and East Maynard avenues, Owosso Drive, Corliss Lane.
- The Meriau Park addition on the old Walker walnut orchard between Park Avenue and Knoop Lane (c. 1950-53; Hardy and Hawthorne avenues, Dorris Street, Meriau Lane, extension of Mayfair Lane north from Knoop Lane to Hawthorne).
- The old Beebe farm between Elkay Drive and West Hilliard Lane, Fairway Drive and North Park Avenue.
- The neighborhood west of River Road between Horn Lane and Howard Avenue (Rosetta Street, Lindner and Evergreen lanes, Maynard Avenue).
- Freda Jo Estates off North Park Avenue between Kelly Lane and Howard Avenue (c. mid-1950s; Nantucket, Josephine and Barrett avenues).
- The neighborhood north of Maxwell Road between North Park and Grove avenues, Maxwell Road and Armstrong Avenue (c. mid-1950s).
- In addition, there is a great deal of residential “in-fill” along existing, older thoroughfares in the area.
- c. 1951** Smith's Center opens on the east side of River Road (900 block between McClure and Oakleigh lanes). River Road's first “strip mall” includes Powell Drug, the area's first pharmacy.

**1951** Our Redeemer Lutheran Church opens at 255 Maxwell Road.

A “Dike Road” through the River Road area is part of a long-term regional road plan created by the Oregon State Highway Commission, Lane County and the cities of Eugene and Springfield. The proposed expressway would run along the west bank of the Willamette River from Hunsaker Lane south to a new bridge crossing the river between the Whiteaker neighborhood and Country Club Road. Dike Road will not be built as planned, but in 1964 Lane County will build the Delta Highway along a similar route on the east side of the river.

**1953** **June:** University High School, located on the University of Oregon campus (1500 block of Alder Street), closes. Since the 1920s, “Uni” has been the high school of choice for many River Roaders, due to its smaller size. The Uni High student body merges into the new Eugene High School building on East 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the fall.

**September:** The new River Road School building opens at 120 W. Hilliard Lane. Initially, it houses grades one through three, with grades four through six gradually added during the next three years.

**1953, 1954** Don Ainge and Wendy Rasor, both River Road and Kelly alumni, lead Eugene High to successive appearances in the state basketball championship game at McArthur Court. They are selected to All-Tournament teams both years, but the Axemen lose both title games.

Eugene will win the 1955 state championship without Ainge and Rasor, but with Bob Anderson, future North Eugene High administrator and coach. Anderson’s charges will include Don Ainge’s three sons – Doug, Dave and ... Danny.

**1954** The River Road Park and Recreation District is formed to meet the needs of a growing population not served by a city park department. Emerald Park opens at 1400 Lake Drive with playground equipment and a picnic area.

The first streetlights are installed in the River Road area, by a local civic group in cooperation with EWEB.

The *(name unknown by compiler)* shopping center opens on the northeast corner of River Road and McClure Lane. It will be renamed the Emerald Shopping Center c. 1957-58. Like Smith’s Center, it contains a mix of retail and service businesses and professional offices.

- 1954**            **April:** Local television comes to River Road when Eugene’s first station, KVAL-TV, takes the air as an NBC affiliate on channel 13.
- 1955**            Construction begins on North Eugene High School (NEHS) at 200 Silver Lane.
- 1956**            The new River Road School is completed, and the old school building on River Road is demolished.
- St. Matthews Episcopal Church is established, on the west side of River Road at the present-day site of the Belt Line Highway interchange. The church will relocate to Santa Clara in the late 1960s.
- 1957**            Park Avenue Market, SE corner North Park Avenue and Beebe Lane, is destroyed by fire.
- February 22:** A horrific tragedy stuns the community. Two peace officers, both River Road-area residents, are fatally wounded in a two-hour gun battle at a Park Avenue residence.
- Lane County Sheriff’s Deputies David Hefner and E.J. Robertson respond to a domestic violence call at the home of Albert Wachsmuth, 387 Park Ave. Wachsmuth shoots Hefner from inside the house, and Robertson radios for assistance.
- Oregon State Police trooper Charles Sanders responds, and is shot and killed instantly when officers rush the house. Wachsmuth then runs out the back door and unsuccessfully attempts to kill himself.
- Hefner, the LCSO’s chief criminal detective, dies of his wound the following day. He and Sanders are the first Eugene-area peace officers killed in the line of duty since 1937.
- September:** NEHS opens with a sophomore class of 325 students. For the first month of the school year, North High students share Kelly Junior High on a “double-shift” basis. High school juniors and seniors from the River Road area continue to attend Eugene High School.
- 1958**            River Road gets its first branch bank. U.S. Bank opens its third Eugene office on the former River Road School site at 1000 River Road.
- October:** NEHS is dedicated.

**c. late 1950s - 1962** The River Road Church of Christ is established at 1580 River Road.

St. Peter's Catholic parish is formed, with a new church and school at 1100 Maxwell Road. As with the public school district, the Archdiocese of Portland opens St. Peter's school (grades 1 through 8) in response to the increasing suburban population. St. Peter's graduates will attend ninth grade at Kelly or other junior high schools near their homes.

**c. 1960-62** More subdivisions are completed, most notably north and west of North Eugene High School and Silver Lea School. North Park Avenue is extended north to a new Skipper Avenue, which runs along the south side of the Belt Line right of way, and Silver Lane is extended west to North Park Avenue. Sunview Street and the Sterling Drive neighborhood are built.

Other new neighborhoods are built along Lombard Lane and East Briarcliff Avenue in lower River Road, between Howard Avenue and Maxwell road east of Dalton Drive, and along East Howard Avenue and its side streets.

**1960** **June:** NEHS graduates its first class.

**1961** Emerald Park's recreation center and indoor swimming pool open.

The River Road Medical Group, first of its kind in the area, opens at 890 River Road. Neighborhood physicians Drs. Virgil "Bill" Samms, Kendall Hills, and Olin Byerly are joined by Dr. Charles Pyfer in the new clinic.

EWEB builds a high-voltage intertie with the Bonneville Power Administration's main line, and a new Santa Clara substation, in response to residential and commercial growth. The new EWEB line runs along the Belt Line Road right of way from Prairie Road east to the substation on Division Avenue.

**Fall:** Silver Lea School opens at 250 Silver Lane.

**1961-62**

Belt Line Road is opened as a two-lane expressway between River Road and Coburg Road. The Belt Line gives River Road and Santa Clara residents direct access to the Willakenzie area and, via Coburg, to the newly-completed Interstate 5. The Belt Line also dramatically shortens the commute for NEHS students and staff living in the Coburg Road area.

In 1985, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will acquire the Belt Line from Lane County in exchange for River Road. ODOT will rename the Belt Line as Belt Line Highway #69.

**1962**

The Riviera Center, River Road's first large, car-friendly shopping center, opens on the southeast corner of River Road and River Avenue. Original tenants include Eugene-based chain stores Tiffany's Rexall Drug and Irish's supermarket, as well as a Coast to Coast store and a cafeteria adjacent to Tiffany's. Riviera Richfield Service also opens, in front of the center on the River Road-Avenue corner.

Southern Pacific expands its yards north to Irving, and transfers many functions and employees to Eugene from its southeast Portland yards. This causes another population surge in River Road, as well as in Bethel-Danebo, Irving and Santa Clara.

**March:** The NEHS basketball team, coached by Mel Krause, makes its first appearance in the state A-1 (now 4A) tournament at McArthur Court, and claims the consolation championship and fifth-place trophy. John Franz is named to the All-Tournament first team.

**May:** North's track and field team wins the A-1 state championship, paced by Dave Deubner's state titles in the 880-yard and one-mile runs. Future Olympian and sportswriter Kenny Moore is also a team member.

1962

**October 12:** The Columbus Day Storm causes extensive damage to the area, with wind gusts as high as 86 miles an hour during the two-hour storm. Power is not fully restored to River Road, characterized by the *Register-Guard* as a “fringe” area, for five days.

The NEHS football team, scheduled to play at Marshfield that evening, is stranded overnight in a Coos Bay motel. The game is postponed to Saturday afternoon, October 13, and the Highlanders and Pirates play to a 13-13 tie. On the way home, players get off the bus on at least one occasion to assist in clearing debris from the middle of the highway.

Many of the area’s old filbert and walnut trees, remnants of orchards now filled with homes, are toppled. Oddly, most of River Road’s old Douglas firs hold firm against the southerly winds. But in 1965, the school district will cut down a block-long row of firs on the south side of the River Road School grounds, as a precaution against a future disaster.

The wind tears a string of advertising pennants from its mooring at Clark Hollis’ Flying A station, and drapes them on a power line across River Road. Northwest author Ellis Lucia will note the incident in *The Big Blow*, his 1963 chronicle of the storm.

**1963 (March)** **March:** NEHS wins the A-1 state basketball championship, defeating Marshall, Medford and Astoria en route to the title clash with Tigard. Center Ron Davies is a First Team, All-Tournament pick, with teammates Bob Craven and Bill Thomas selected to the second team. The championship is coach Mel Krause’s NEHS swansong – in the fall, he will transfer to the new Sheldon High School on Willakenzie Road.

River Road resident Mike Guldager is the play-by-play radio announcer for Highlander games on KERG.

**September:** Sheldon High also claims NEHS students in the Coburg Road area, including some members of the championship basketball team and other faculty members. For the first time, NEHS is an exclusive River Road-Santa Clara institution.

Madison Junior High School opens at 875 Wilkes Drive, removing Santa Clara from the Kelly attendance area.

**1964** Completion of the Maxwell Road viaduct across the railroad tracks ends long bottlenecks at the old grade crossing, delays that were exacerbated by the northerly expansion of the rail yards.

Belt Line Road is extended west from River Road to Highway 99.

The Christmas week flood, worst disaster in Oregon's history, has area residents nervously eyeing the swollen Willamette, particularly in neighborhoods east of River Road. They are spared, but some Santa Clara neighborhoods and Madison Junior High are inundated. High water also closes the Belt Line at the river.

**1965** Pacific Northwest Bell builds a new switching facility on the east side of River Road just north of Maxwell Road. The River Road gets new prefixes, 688 and 689, replacing the "DIAMOND" numbers it had shared with Eugene.

**Fall:** The NEHS football team, coached by John Reed, wins its first District 5-A-1 championship. The Highlanders lose a squeaker at Grants Pass in the state quarterfinals.

**1965-66** State Rep. F.F. "Monte" Montgomery, River Road resident, is an early candidate for the Republican nomination for Governor. Montgomery, first elected to the Legislature in 1960, will be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1967. He will retire from his seat in 1969.

**1966** **March:** NEHS again wins the state A-1 basketball championship, in the first tournament held in Portland and in North's first trip to State since winning the '63 title. The Highlanders beat Medford, Molalla, Baker and Sunset, paced by Warren Youel, Bob Newland, Rich Bray, Roger Bennett and Gary LaSala, among others. Youel is named to the All-Tournament first team.

The championship is especially sweet for Eugene basketball fans, still angered at the abrupt move of the tournament from McArthur Court to Portland's Memorial Coliseum. In a rare sports-related editorial, the *Register-Guard* salutes the Highlanders thus: "They salvaged our pride and all Eugene is grateful."

It's also coach Barney Holland's first tournament appearance with North. Holland, who succeeded Mel Krause in 1963, will make nine more trips to state, win two more championships and achieve a .750 win-loss record (approximate) before resigning in 1977.

**Fall:** North wins its second straight district football championship, but draws a trip to "the University of Medford" for the quarterfinals, and falls to the Black

Tornado 33-19. Bob Newland, a wide receiver, is named to The Oregonian's All-State first team. He and classmate Dave Walker will go on to have fine football careers at the U of O.

**c. 1967**

Belt Line Road is widened to four lanes, and a second (eastbound) bridge is built over the Willamette River.

The controversial Roosevelt Freeway is proposed, with a major interchange planned for River Road just north of Railroad Boulevard. The proposed freeway would link Highway 126 with Interstate 105, running parallel to Roosevelt Boulevard and slicing through the Whiteaker neighborhood before connecting to I-105 at Skinner's Butte Park.

Construction of the freeway would mean removal of virtually all River Road businesses between Railroad Boulevard and Fir Lane, as well as a sizable number of homes.

The Roosevelt Freeway will be scrapped c. early 1970s but eventually, most businesses in the 100 and 200 blocks of River Road will be demolished to make way for the Northwest Expressway (1980) and Chambers Connector (1988).

**1968**

Bi-Mart and Safeway open across from the Riviera Center, taking the last large filbert grove off River Road and marking the beginning of the end for the area as a community of "mom and pop" businesses.

Belt Line Road is completed, giving River Road motorists a direct, high-speed link to Interstate 5.

Lane County begins construction of the Northwest Expressway, at Park Avenue just west of Willow Avenue. The expressway will be extended north to Irving Road in 1971, and south to River Road in 1980.

**1970**

A full Belt Line-River Road interchange is completed. Several homes and St. Matthew's Episcopal Church have been demolished to make way for the interchange.

**Fall:** Bob Newland is the first NEHS graduate to be named a college football All-American. The following year, he will become the first Highlander to play in the NFL (four seasons as a wide receiver with the New Orleans Saints).