



Johnston Park History

Born in 1848, Thomas Johnston was a native of Quebec, Canada who eventually moved to California and settled on a farm with his wife, Ida E Derr, in Elk Grove. Ida and Thomas had two sons: Lester Bailey and Thomas Junior. Lester Johnston was born on February 14, 1879 and attended Franklin Elementary School and then Howe's Business School in Sacramento. Lester continued to work on the family farm with his father and in 1910, he married Emma Hansen. They had two children, Milon and Jeanette; Emma died at childbirth and Jeanette died six months later. In 1912, Lester married Elizabeth Batey and they had one daughter, Ida. Lester became a respected rancher and serious agriculturist in Franklin. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Franklin School for over 15 years. In 1920, Lester organized the Elk Grove Fruit Growers Association, which also started the first winery in Elk Grove.

The Johnston Farm was noted for having established the first pear orchard in the area. The original orchard, planted in 1886, continued to produce fruit for over 100 years. Thomas, Lester and Milon Johnston were instrumental in the agricultural development in Elk Grove.

The information within this document was created at the time of park dedication and may not be current.