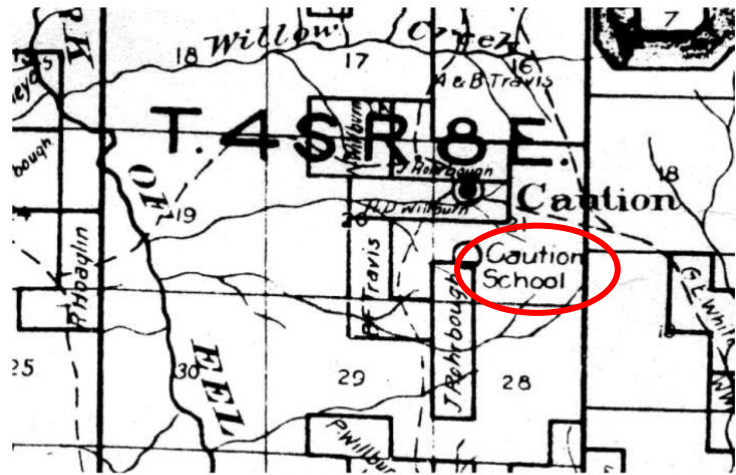


Caution School District

On August 31, 1901, a Post Office was established as “Caution, Trinity, California” and was located 10.5 miles southeast of Hoaglin with H. D. Willburn as the first Postmaster.¹ The name “Caution” had apparently been suggested by John S. Reid, a teacher at the local school who later became the Trinity County District Attorney.²

Small historic schools in Trinity County came and went due to changing numbers of children in a particular area, or were moved to a different location to be closer to more students. Sometimes a school or school building might be merged into another school or school district, taking on a different name. Schools in the Southern Trinity area, such as the Caution School, are particularly hard to track.

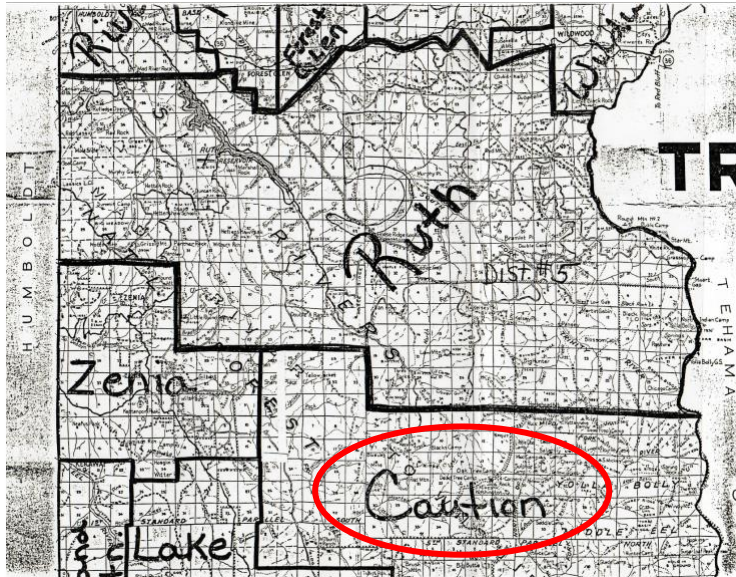


1915 TNF map.

Map above found at http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, page 150

According to one source, Caution School was said to have opened sometime between 1871 and 1875.³ If a school was open at that time, it had to have begun as a private school, paid for by the families of the children themselves and not funded through public monies.

There is historic school information that indicates that the address for the Hettenshaw School at that time was the town of Caution. Hettenshaw School was closed after the 1912-13 school



year, and the public school named “Caution School” was first opened the very next year during the 1913-14 school year.⁴ In 1915, the school was referred to as “Caution (Hettenshaw)” in the same historic records. It’s not known if this is in reference to the two schools merging or as a location. The school is identified in some records as the school “adjacent to the Hiram Willburn place” or, more specifically, “south and east of the Wilburn cabin”. The schoolhouse and surrounds may have actually

¹ “History and Happenings”, <http://historyandhappenings.squarespace.com/trinity-county/>, Accessed August 22, 2023.

² Keter, Thomas S., “A Compendium of People and Places for the North Fork Eel River Region during the Homesteading Era”, http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, 2017, Accessed November 4, 2022. 122.

³ Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, 25; and Bright, William, *1500 California Place Names, Their Origin and Meaning*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, 81.

⁴ *School District Warrants*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

been located in whole or in part on National Forest lands. Whether or not that was known at the time is unclear.⁵

In April of 1906, Caution School was noted to have opened for the Spring Term on April 16th and a humorous note in the local paper said, "...so the switch of the birch is heard in the land."⁶

Documentation indicates that a fire burned the town of Caution in "about 1915". After the fire, the town, along with its post office, was relocated across the North Fork of the Eel River to Long Ridge, "where there was a school, a post office, and a blacksmith shop".⁷ Because the Long Ridge School itself was closed during the 1914-15 school year and remained closed until the 1917-18 school year, it could mean that during that time, the Caution School relocated into the Long Ridge Schoolhouse, at least temporarily.⁸

In notes from the 1919-20 school year, it was, "impossible to secure [a] teacher" for the Caution School. The handwritten notation continues, "This district is very remote and this fact, coupled with the shortage of teachers makes it almost impossible to have school."⁹ Not surprisingly, the attendance at Caution during the 1919-20 school year could not be counted because the school did not run for the required 120 days as indicated in another notation.¹⁰ It must be assumed that this was due to the lack of a teacher. Consequently, Caution School was suspended that year, but was back in session during the 1921-22 school year, was suspended again for the 1922-23 school year, and then lapsed (closed or merged with another district) on July 2, 1923, along with several other schools.¹¹ Further evidence suggests that, given the number and ages of the children in the different Willburn families as well as the nearby Russ and Meyers families, it was only during the period of about 1905 to about 1920 that there would have been enough children in the area to provide for the required number of enrolled students to fund a public school (usually six or more), although it's clear that some exceptions were made in early Trinity County School history.¹²

In 1924 the Caution School was closed for the year on June 29th. That day there was a picnic dinner on the school grounds with a program following the dinner. Student prizes were given by the teacher, Mrs. Clara Cox Tyree, to students who had earned the highest marks in various contests. Dorothy Willburn received a prize for having gathered, pressed, mounted, and identified the greatest number of wildflowers and shrubs. Martena Willburn received the prize for the greatest improvement in writing. Calvin Willburn won the drawing contest. Many people from the community were present for the dinner including several from the Willburn family as well as the Duncans, Betts, and Smith families.¹³

⁵ Keter, Thomas S., "A Compendium of People and Places for the North Fork Eel River Region during the Homesteading Era", http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, 2017, accessed November 4, 2022, 150.

⁶ "Zenith Items", *The Trinity Journal*, April 27, 1906.

⁷ Keter, Thomas S., "A Compendium of People and Places for the North Fork Eel River Region during the Homesteading Era", http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, 2017, accessed November 4, 2022, 125.

⁸ *School District Enrollments*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

⁹ "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 13.

¹¹ *School District Disbursements and Annual Reports*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

¹² Keter, Thomas S., "A Compendium of People and Places for the North Fork Eel River Region during the Homesteading Era", http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, 2017, accessed November 4, 2022, 150.

¹³ "Caution Items", *The Trinity Journal*, July 14, 1934.

The name "Caution" was mentioned again in the 1937-38 school year in reference to the Long Ridge School. The notation in the historic school enrollment records reads as "Long Ridge, Caution". Indeed, the school board members for Long Ridge School District during the years 1935 to 1938 all had post office addresses in the town of Caution.¹⁴ An explanation for this may be that the Long Ridge School was located in a district which at that time was called "Caution School District" as evidenced by an undated historical map, located at the Trinity County Office of Education, which indicates the Caution School District encompassed the Long Ridge area (see map above). The district was located east of the Zenia School District, South of the Ruth School District, and in Lassik ancestral territory, an Athabaskan Indian tribe.



The "Caution School Bus", left to right: Gladys Willburn Parker, Dorothy Willburn, unknown, Bill and Warren "Bud" Willburn, unknown. The Willburn children's mother was Postmaster at Caution.

Curiously, the Caution School has also been referred to, likely erroneously, as the "North Fork School". This may have just been a reference to its location near the North Fork of the Eel River because the only "North Fork School District" known in Trinity county school records was located in Helena, some distance away. The school was also said to be called the "Pumpkin Center" by Irene Willburn whose mother, Francis Willburn, used to attend there.¹⁵

¹⁴ Keter, Thomas S., "A Compendium of People and Places for the North Fork Eel River Region during the Homesteading Era", http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, 2017, accessed November 4, 2022, 147.

¹⁵ Keter, Thomas S., "A Compendium of People and Places for the North Fork Eel River Region during the Homesteading Era", http://wordpress.solararch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/people_and_places_nferw_vol_1.pdf, 2017. Accessed November 4, 2022, 149.

We know that a “Mrs. Dearing” taught at the Caution School.¹⁶ Other teachers known to have taught at Caution and the months and years they were in attendance during an official visit by the Trinity County Of Education are listed below:

1915, October - Alzora Haight

1916, October - Hettie S. Lowden

1917, October – S. B. Chesmet

1918, October - Hettie S. Lowden

1920, June – Anita Ernestina Van Matre

1921, August - Mayme Brother

See also **Hettenshaw and Long Ridge Schools.**

¹⁶ Ibid.