

## Cinnabar School

The town of Cinnabar in Trinity County was named for the red cinnabar ore that, once crushed and processed, produces quicksilver or mercury. The Cinnabar area is located above Trinity Center about sixty miles from Weaverville in Wintu ancestral territory. Cinnabar, along with Coffee Creek, Carrville, Trinity Center, and Minersville, made up District 1 for the Trinity County Board of Supervisors at that time.<sup>1</sup> The Trinity and Altoona quicksilver mines were the principal mines located there.<sup>2</sup> There was an often-used trail from Cinnabar directly to Castella in Shasta County.<sup>3</sup>

The school in Cinnabar was established on January 10, 1898, the same date as three other school districts: Carrville, Mad River/Ruth, and Wildwood.<sup>4</sup> During its first school year of 1898-99, Miss Blanche C. Plumb was the teacher of ten students.<sup>5</sup> During the 1899-1900 school year the fall term was taught by Miss L. Belle Jordan with 12 students enrolled.<sup>6</sup> The spring term was taught by Miss Chestina Fish with 17 students enrolled, but only 10 students were present at the time of an official visit by the Superintendent of Schools, Miss Lizzie Fox.<sup>7</sup> Miss Fish closed the school for the summer vacation on June 25, 1900.<sup>8</sup> All of these teachers made the same salary of \$60 per month.

In one of the few references to Cinnabar School District in the local *Trinity Journal* newspaper, the following note could be found:

In commemoration of Washington's birthday the pupils of the Cinnabar School District under the efficient charge of Miss C. B. Plumb gave a pleasing entertainment consisting of patriotic songs, speeches and quotations. A part of the program was devoted to the proper and patriotic observance of Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> [1899], the birthday of Abraham Lincoln.<sup>9</sup>

In 1901, School Superintendent Fox was anticipated to be absent from Weaverville until Saturday, October 19 as she was traveling on official visits to Trinity Center, Coffee Creek, and Cinnabar.<sup>10</sup> The next month it was reported in the paper that the clerks of certain districts had made no reports for the year previous. Cinnabar was included on that list, although it was by no means singled out as the list included 13 different districts out of a total of twenty-two that were remiss in their record-keeping.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, in a list of "Districts, Clerks and Teachers" in the local paper, Cinnabar's Clerk was named as John R. Stoddard, but the teacher's name was left blank, likely meaning that no teacher had yet been found for that school or the school was not opened.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, it should be no surprise that a mention of the suspension of the Cinnabar School District was made in the paper in a report of the School Census Statistics in June of 1902.<sup>13</sup>

The school suspension may also have been due to a fire that wiped out the entire town on November 14, 1901. The fire started from a furnace at the mine.<sup>14</sup> The school may have started up again temporarily in 1902<sup>15</sup>, but according to historic school records at the Trinity County Office of Education and a notation in the 1901-02

---

<sup>1</sup> "Board of Supervisors", *The Trinity Journal*, May 14, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> "Cinnabar District", *The Trinity Journal*, September 1, 1888.

<sup>3</sup> "Board of Supervisors", *The Trinity Journal*, July 26, 1901.

<sup>4</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 89.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>8</sup> "Local Brevities", *The Trinity Journal*, June 2, 1900.

<sup>9</sup> Fox, Lizzie H., "Public School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, March 4, 1899.

<sup>10</sup> "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, October 19, 1901.

<sup>11</sup> "School Superintendent", *The Trinity Journal*, November 2, 1901.

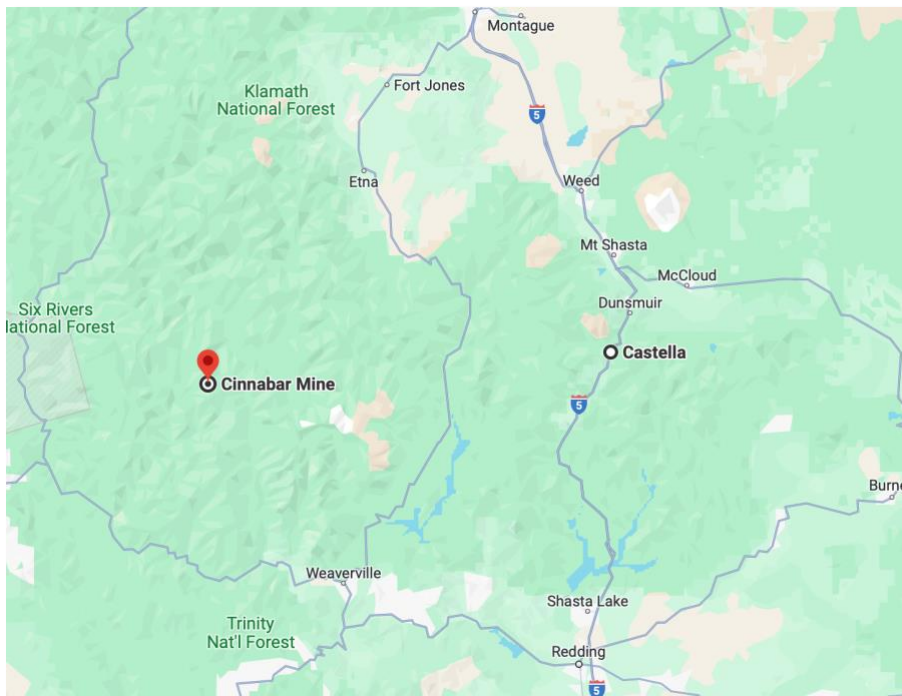
<sup>12</sup> "Districts, Clerks and Teachers of Trinity County, California 1901-1902", *The Trinity Journal*, November 2, 1901.

<sup>13</sup> Lizzie Fox, "School Census Statistics", *The Trinity Journal*, June 14, 1902.

<sup>14</sup> *History and Happenings*, <http://historyandhappenings.squarespace.com/trinity-county/?currentPage=2>, Accessed June 26, 2021, and "Mining Town Wiped Out", *the Los Angeles Herald*, November 15, 1901.

<sup>15</sup> Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, 30, and Warrant records located at the Trinity County Office of Education.

school visit records, the school was not maintained that school year and it was then permanently closed in July of 1902.<sup>16</sup>



*While these are modern maps, they give the idea of where the town of Cinnabar used to be based on the historic mines (now abandoned), taken from Google Maps.*

<sup>16</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 166.