

Forest School District

Forest School (sometimes referred to colloquially as “Salyer School”) was a school district located in the Tsnungwe Ancestral Territory, however, the exact location of the school is somewhat disputed, if it indeed remained in one locale for the entire time of its existence and didn’t move from place to place (maintaining the same name) as other schools did in early Trinity County history.

Dena Magdaleno, Tsnungwe Elder, remembers the school as being located between Margaret Woolen's and the current store called “Dazey’s Supply” (2022) near the town of Willow Creek. She indicates the school road used to go up behind what is now the “Blue Dog Nursery” (also 2022). The area had been called Enchanted Springs.¹ Another source indicates that the school stood in a small clearing a mile or so west of the South Fork Bridge near the Tsnungwe village of Leldin, meaning “where the rivers flow together”². Perhaps the school was at two different locations at two different times. Either way, while the location is today in Humboldt County, at the time it was administered by the Trinity County Office of Education.

It is not clear when this school was established first as a private school, however, a photograph of Forest School was said to have been

taken in 1900 and named the following students: Delphine Martin, Ethel Donahue, Jay Donahue, Annie Martin, Sam Ferguson, Dora Saxey, Clarence Toms, Jessie White, Rose Martin, Belle Martin, Harry Saxey, Billy Toms and Johnny Toms. Their teacher was Rebecca Mayhem.³



FOREST SCHOOL 1911 - Pictured here are (in the back row from left to right): Martha Bennett, Fred Newell, Herbert Henderson, Julia Newell, Margaret Martin, Vera Henderson, Gifford Bennett, Saide Bennett, Wesley White, Caroline Koon (Teacher), Arthur Pike and Davey Pete. In the front row (from left to right): Harvey Orcutt, Fred Newell, Ollie Henderson, Ruth Taylor, Mae Newell, Morris Newell and Paul Taylor.

Information from Dena Magdaleno, Tsnungwe Elder, January 2022 about the photo above:

“My grandmother, Ruth Taylor, two of her brothers, Paul Taylor and Wesley White, and some cousins are in the picture above. Anita Bussell's grandmother, Caroline Koon, is the teacher. The boy in the front row on the left end is Paul Taylor, Dena’s grandmother’s brother (Dena’s great-uncle) who is misidentified in the original caption above. The other boy next to him may be Morris Newell.

The Bennetts, Martha, Sadie and Gifford, are not Native; Margaret Martin is Portuguese. All of the other people including the teacher are Native American: Harvey Orcutt was Yurok; Caroline Koon, the teacher, was Mattole; The other children are all Tsnungwe. 14 of 19 in the picture or 73.7% are Native.”

In 1911, another photograph lists the students then as Martha Bennett, Fred Newell, Herbert Henderson, Julia Newell, Margaret Martin, Vera Henderson, Gifford Bennett, Saide Bennett, Wesley White, Arthur Pike, Davey

¹ Supahan, Sarah, email correspondence with Dena Magdaleno, January 6, 2022.

² “The Tsnungwe Tribe”, Facebook page, January 1, 2022. Accessed January 1, 2022.

³ Ibid.

Pete, Harvey Orcutt, Fred Newell, Ollie Henderson, Ruth Taylor, Mae Newell, Morris Newell, and Paul Taylor. Their teacher was Caroline Koon.⁴

The school appears to have become an official public school under Trinity County's jurisdiction sometime during the 1918-19 school year when the school name was written into the Annual Report in red ink at the bottom of the page (out of alphabetical order) as though it became a public school after the start of the school year.



Photo contributed by Dena Magdaleno, Forest School c. 1930; Known students: back row from left John Henderson, Wes Ammon, Les Ammon; middle row from left Theresa Henderson; front row from left Jubie Ammon, Junie Ammon, ?, and possibly a Bussell.

A program dated June 18, 1920, lists the teacher as Rose Martin and also records the following students: Paul Bennett, Ruth Taylor, Frank Ammon, Ruth Henderson, Sarah Wilson, Paul Taylor, Beatrice Martin, Harpst Henderson, Marian Beaver, Richard Parker, Vera Martin, Madeline Bennett, Sarah Henderson, Esther Taylor, Grace Hennings, and Idell Marshall.⁵

An official visit to the school was made on August 12, 1920 which indicates that it was a public school by then. The teacher for the new school year was Helen E. Anderson. Her salary was \$110 per month and she taught 10 enrolled students. A note on the visit records

indicates that a new school building was needed as they were holding school in a woodshed.⁶ It's no surprise then, that a bond was issued in January 1921, in the amount of \$600, to build a new school and to furnish it.⁷

Another visit to the school occurred on June 19 (presumably in 1922) by the Deputy Superintendent of Schools. The new teacher, Anita Anderson, was paid a salary of \$130 per month teaching nine students. It was stated that her teaching methods were up to date and she was an earnest worker. The schoolhouse was yet unfinished and the outbuildings were temporary. The school also needed "playground apparatus" but they had a library which was listed in good condition. The students, seven primary and two in the 6th-8th grades, were making good progress in their studies, especially in reading.⁸

Another visit to the school occurred on July 31, 1922. Anita Anderson had continued teaching there for the same salary. There were nine students enrolled with seven students present at the time of the visit. The students' order and attention were "Very Good" and the building and grounds were now reported as being in good shape. The only thing needed at the school was a picture of President George Washington – an obligation of all schools at that time (along with a picture of President Abraham Lincoln).⁹

In July 1925, Anita Anderson was still teaching at Forest School but the enrollment had dropped to just three students. A handwritten note said, "Teacher doing good work". The school was still missing a picture of Washington and it was noted that another one of the needs of the school was also "more pupils".¹⁰

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 58.

⁷ *Warrant Records*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

⁸ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, no page number.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

Other information about Forest School staff indicates that a long-time custodian of the School was Lucinda Henderson.¹¹ In addition, it's known that Ethel McDonald once taught at this school as she did at several other small schools in the area¹².

The Forest School lapsed on July 5, 1927, and students were said to have transferred to Mad River and Hetten Valley School Districts even though they were both a good distance away. Mad River received five students and Hetten Valley eight.¹³



¹¹ McGowan, Katherine R., "Organization of small school districts on lower Trinity", *Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1972, 10.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *School District Disbursements & Receipts*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.