

Forest School

Forest School was located in the Tsnungwe Ancestral Territory. Dena Magdaleno, Tsnungwe Elder, describes the school as located between Margaret Woolen's and the current store called "Dazey's Supply" (2024) near the town of Willow Creek in Humboldt County. She indicates the school road used to go up behind what is now the "Blue Dog Nursery" (also 2024). The area had been called Enchanted Springs¹; before that, it was called minq'it-ch-ding to the Tsnungwe². Another source describes the same location by stating the school was in a small clearing a mile or so west of the South Fork Bridge near the Tsnungwe village of Leldin, which means "where the rivers flow together."³ The location of the school would have once been in Trinity County before the county boundaries were changed. However, by 1880, the location would have been solidly in Humboldt County, as it is today (although it is very near the dividing line between Humboldt and Trinity County). The school was thought to have been administered by the Trinity County Office of Education at one time because "Forest" showed up in the annual school reports in Trinity County's educational records.

It could be that the Forest School was once under the Lower Trinity School District, just like New River and others were at different times in history. These schools also included Hawkin's Bar, Salyer, Burnt Ranch, Denny, and others. The publication called "*History of Humboldt County Schools*" somewhat supports this assumption when it says, "In 1919, the name of the school was changed from [Lower] Trinity to the Forest District."⁴

As there was also a "Forest Glen School" in Trinity County, located to the south in the community of Ruth, the historical records can be confusing for this reason too, especially since that school in Ruth was sometimes abbreviated to "Forest School" as well. Sometimes, the school's location was missing from the records altogether, so it is unclear which "Forest School" the documentation referred to. Newspaper articles had to be



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 (Henderson), 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."

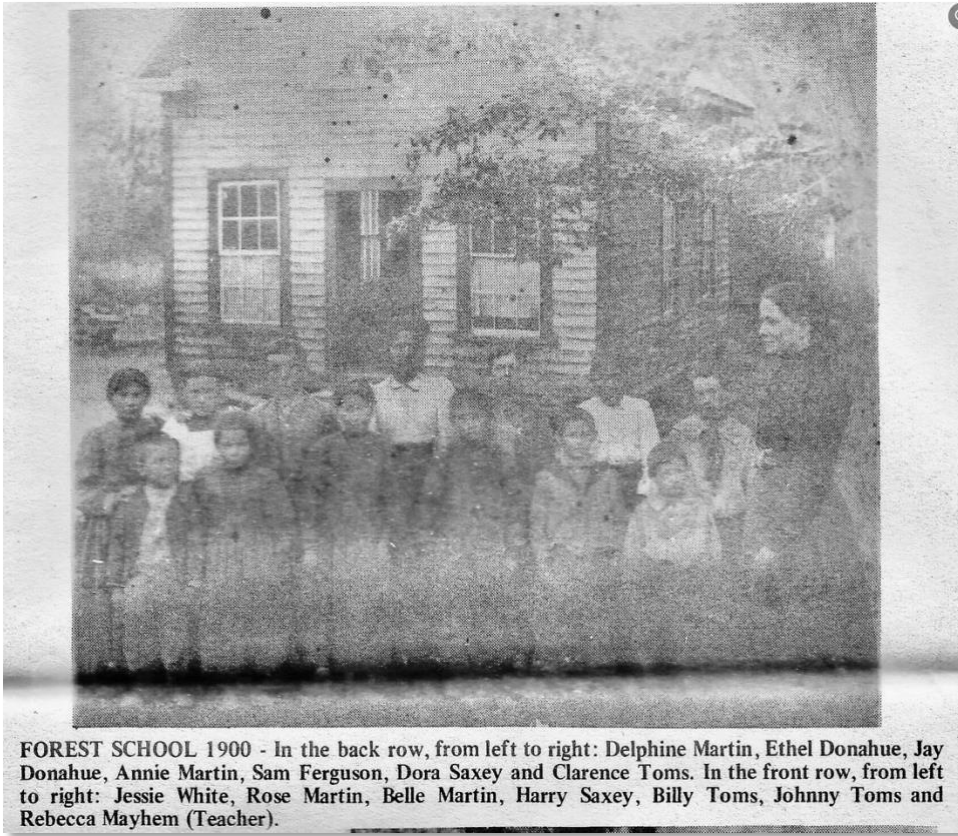
¹ Supahan, Sarah, email correspondence with Dena Magdaleno, January 6, 2022.

² Tsnungwe Tribe, "Tsnungewe Place Names", https://2075a3e3-b3ae-464a-a7a6-9fb9755721a.filesusr.com/ugd/089640_47891ce71441427b88e6b0ec214252f1.pdf, accessed February 21, 2024.

³ "The Tsnungwe Tribe", Facebook, accessed January 1, 2022.

⁴ *History of Humboldt County Schools*, Volume VI, 25.

researched carefully to look for other clues. For instance, a notice in the local paper in July of 1920 helpfully declares the Forest School “recently formed in the southern portion of the county...”⁵ We clearly know that the Forest School in the Salyer area was not considered “in the southern portion” of Trinity County.



FOREST SCHOOL 1900 - In the back row, from left to right: Delphine Martin, Ethel Donahue, Jay Donahue, Annie Martin, Sam Ferguson, Dora Saxey and Clarence Toms. In the front row, from left to right: Jessie White, Rose Martin, Belle Martin, Harry Saxey, Billy Toms, Johnny Toms and Rebecca Mayhem (Teacher).

One source reported that the Forest School started in about 1907 as a private school, becoming an official public school district in the 1913-14 school year before it “lapsed” and became a school under the Lower Trinity School District in 1929.⁶

The Forest School schoolhouse was erected in 1883.⁷ Photographic evidence confirms that the Forest School in the Salyer/Willow Creek area started very early. One photograph (on this page) is dated 1900 and names 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.⁸

In 1911, another photograph, included above, also lists the students at Forest School as well as the teacher, Caroline Koon.⁹

A school program dated June 18, 1920, found on the Tsnungwe Tribe’s webpage, names the teacher at the Forest School “in the Salyer area” 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.¹⁰

Under the newspaper headline: “Burnt Ranch and the Lower Trinity River,” Forest School was opened in August of 1928 for the fall term with Miss Dora Mortensen of Oakland as the teacher. In November of that year, it was reported that she and the students would present a Thanksgiving party and entertainment at the schoolhouse.¹¹

A newspaper article written in 1979 said that the “Little Forest School” had been absorbed into what was then written as the “Willow Creek Unified District” in the early 1930s.¹² Another article in 1946 called the combined

⁵ “Bonds for School House”, *The Trinity Journal*, July 7, 1920.

⁶ Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, 31-32.

⁷ *History of Humboldt County Schools*, Volume VI, 25.

⁸ “The Tsnungwe Tribe”, *Facebook*, accessed January 1, 2022.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ “Burnt Ranch and the Lower Trinity River”, *Blue Lake Advocate*, November 24, 1928.

¹² McGowan, Katherine R., “Organization of small school districts on lower Trinity”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1972. 10.

school the “Willow Creek Forest School.”¹³ However, an open meeting to discuss the consolidation of the Willow Creek and Forest School Districts was announced for April 21, 1937 – a bit later than “the early 30s”. The installation of electric lights in the schoolhouse had reportedly been completed, sponsored by the Trinity Valley Grange and “the district school board.” Power was said to be furnished by the ice plant under the direction of Ernest Beeson.¹⁴ But in July of 1938, Robert A. Bugbee, County Superintendent of Schools (Humboldt), visited Willow Creek where he made arrangements for an election in August to determine the site for the new school building for the newly formed “Willow Forest Union School District”.¹⁵ Then, in 1944, the “Willow Forest School District” was discussing a bond to raise \$7,500 for a new school building.¹⁶

Further information needs to be discovered to determine which county the Forest School fell under for educational oversight, the correct date that Forest School consolidated with another school, where that combined school was located, and which was the correct name of that combined school district.

Assuming that the Forest School became the “Willow Forest School,” graduation exercises were announced having taken place on June 2, 1948, at the Community Hall with eight graduates. The graduating students were identified as Roxanne Hicks, Joyce Hanger, Arthur Chase, Dennis Bean, Andrew Jones and Wayne Bradley. A welcome was given by Authur Chase, president of the 8th grade; many songs were sung and music played by students at the schools; a poem was read by Dennis Bean; an address to the graduates was provided by Harry Griffith of Humboldt State College, and the Presentation of Diplomas was provided by Frank Graham.¹⁷

The known teachers at the Forest School include:

- 1900 Rebecca Mayhem [*“The Tsnungwe Tribe,” Facebook, January 1, 2022*]
- 1911 Caroline Koon [*“The Tsnungwe Tribe,” Facebook, January 1, 2022*]
- 1920 Rose (aka Rosaline) Martin [*“The Tsnungwe Tribe,” Facebook, January 1, 2022*]
- 1921 Roselin Emery [*History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1922 Hortense Rhyne [*History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1923-24 Mrs. Virginia S. Filigno [*History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1925-26 Miss Julia Townsend [*Blue Lake Advocate, October 31, 1925, & History of Humboldt County... 25*]
- 1927 Mrs. Virginia S. Filigno [*History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1928 Dora Mortensen of Oakland [*Blue Lake Advocate, August 25, 1928, & History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1929 Sadie I. Blake [*Blue Lake Advocate, October 5, 1929, & History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1930-33 Miss Lorna Cochrane [*Blue Lake Advocate, June 13, 1931, & History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*].
“Miss Cochrane is the teacher at the Forest School and deserves much credit for the work she has done with the children.” [Blue Lake Advocate, June 13, 1931]
- 1934-37 Miss Agnes Johnson of Glendale [*Blue Lake Advocate, May 19, 1934, July 3, 1937, & History of Humboldt County Schools, 25*]
- 1937-38 Miss Kathryn Haley [*History of Humboldt County Schools, 22-24*]
- 1941 Miss Helen Connick of Eureka [*Blue Lake Advocate, April 12, 1941*]
- 1945-46 Mary E. Thomas [*Blue Lake Advocate, March 30, 1946*]
- 1948 Mrs. Henderson [*Blue Lake Advocate, June 5, 1948*]

¹³ *Blue Lake Advocate, March 30, 1946.*

¹⁴ *“News From Willow Creek and Vicinity”, Blue Lake Advocate, April 10, 1937.*

¹⁵ *“New Willow Forest School Site to be Decided August 6”, Blue Lake Advocate, July 30, 1938.*

¹⁶ *“Willow Creek Social Doings”, Blue Lake Advocate, July 29, 1944.*

¹⁷ *Blue Lake Advocate, June 5, 1948.*

Other information about Forest School staff indicates that a long-time custodian of the School was Lucinda Henderson.¹⁸

The original Forest School was demolished in 1952.¹⁹

See also **Lower Trinity School**.

¹⁸ "The Tsnungwe Tribe", *Facebook*, accessed January 1, 2022.

¹⁹ *History of Humboldt County Schools*, Volume VI, 25.