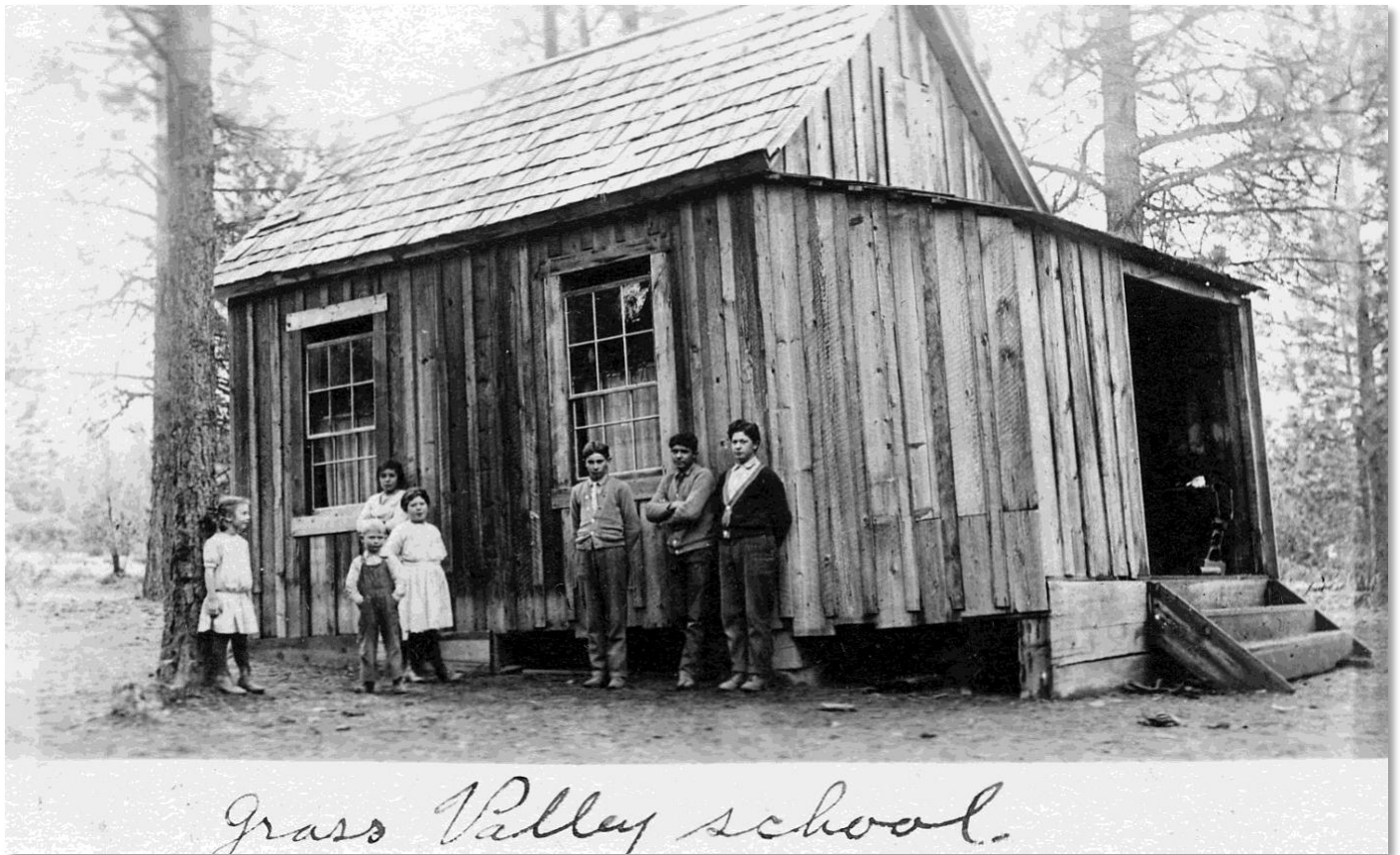


## Grass Valley School District

The school was officially established as “new” on November 10, 1906,<sup>1</sup> although in other historical records, the establishment date was said to be August 4, 1859. The discrepancy in the dates likely means that the school began as a private school before becoming public.

A school building was erected and put into use in August of 1907. It was originally built to serve the children of the workers at the Shingle Shanty Sawmill, located along Grass Valley Creek near Buckhorn Mountain on Lewiston Road. It was located in Wintu ancestral territory. In 1909, the school was taught by Miss Nellie Sanders, who opened the spring term in early April of that year.<sup>2</sup> It appears the mill closed sometime between 1910 and 1915, which reduced the millworkers in the area (and therefore their children too), so the school moved downstream to a site overlooking the Lowden Ranch on the Ranch property where more children were living at the time.<sup>3</sup>



1915, students Meta Leas, Bernie Leas, Myrtle McKay, Leola Lewman, Mervyn Given, Frank McKay, Warren McKay

The County Superintendent of Schools, Lucy Young, visited the school on November 18, 1920. Nine students were enrolled, and nine students were present, and all were doing well in their studies. A note in the records says, “Children are too shy. Advised them to be less so.”<sup>4</sup>

In another visit on September 23, 1926, Lucy Young reported that the school building needed painting, was too small, needed new shades, and probably needed to be replaced.<sup>5</sup> It wasn’t, but some remodeling was done in the early 1930s. The school, with board and batten siding painted battleship grey, was a regular frame structure,

<sup>1</sup> *Warrant Records*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, and from an old handwritten document, possibly in Co. Supt. Lizzie Fox’s handwriting.

<sup>2</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, April 10, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> Etter, Orville, “Grass Valley School in the Twenties and the 3-R’s”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1995. 32-46.

<sup>4</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 59.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

possibly 15' x 20', with east and west gables supporting a 45-degree shake roof that peaked over the center of the building. There was a lean-to windowless porch at one end, with the school door opening inward off the porch. The inner wall of the porch was equipped with coat hooks for the children.<sup>6</sup>

Inside the schoolhouse, a ladder was nailed to one wall to allow access to an attic over the schoolroom. There were two windows on each side of the room, each with 12 small panes to allow in as much light as possible, as there was no electricity and no gas or oil lamps. The walls were wall-papered except for the one devoted to the blackboard. There was no decoration except a picture of President Washington and one of President Lincoln. Sometimes, wildflowers would be brought in during the early spring to brighten the room. A cast iron stove provided heat. A janitor split the wood for the stove and stored it in a woodshed outside. It was brought in and put into a box near the stove when needed.<sup>7</sup>

The teacher's desk had originally been a cabinet for spools of thread. The logo on the front read, "J. & P. Coates. Best Six Cord." The classroom library was housed in a set of shelves with doors that extended four feet above the floor to the ceiling. Water for the students to drink was stored in a ten-quart galvanized bucket of water on the school porch and refilled at the beginning of each day. The janitor filled it from Paulsen's ditch, a hundred yards up the hill. Students would use a dipper to fill their drinking cups out of the bucket.<sup>8</sup>



*Grass Valley School District, 1925*

An outside pit toilet in the northwest corner of the schoolhouse served everyone. In 1926, another was built at the northeast corner of the playground, which was designated for the girls, leaving the old one for the boys.<sup>9</sup>

School started at 9:00 am each day and ended at 4:00 pm each afternoon for the older students, while the third and fourth grades ended at 3:00 pm and the first and second grades at

<sup>6</sup> Etter, Orville, "Grass Valley School in the Twenties and the 3-R's", *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1995. 32-46.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



2:00 pm. The first recess at 10 am lasted five minutes, and the second at 11 am lasted twenty minutes – ‘just long enough for a game to be played.’ The noon recess was an hour long. In the afternoon, another five-minute recess occurred at 2:00 pm as the younger students left, and a twenty-minute recess followed at 3:00 pm. The older students had two and a half hours of recess in their seven-hour day, or 4.5 hours of actual study.<sup>10</sup>



*Grass Valley School District 1917*

One year in the mid-1920s, there were 14 pupils when highway construction brought workers and their children to the district. The number of students usually did not exceed ten. Most were from two large families. The larger of the two families was that of Jim and Elizabeth Adrian. They moved to the Lowden Ranch in 1919.<sup>11</sup> Seven of their 18 children were educated at the school, and the family boarded at least one of the teachers at their home if not many. They couldn't know at the time, but 93 years later, their own

granddaughter, Bettina Adrian Blackwell, became the Trinity County Superintendent, following in the footsteps of Lucy Young. Bettina was the eighth woman to hold the office.<sup>12</sup>

The other family was the Wellock family. They moved to the Buckhorn Ranch in 1923. By the school year of 1928-29, a girl named Vera Leas was the only student left, and the school closed upon her graduation in May 1929. It wasn't open again until late in the 1930s.<sup>13</sup>

Seven different teachers taught at the school during the 1920s:

- Edith Larson (or Linson as it is spelled in the 1920 census) was the teacher when the decade began. She boarded with the Adrian family and was listed in their household in the census.
- Nellie Shuford taught in the fall of 1920 and early 1921. She earned \$100 per month and had nine students.<sup>14</sup>
- Ada Shipley took over the teaching position in March 1921.
- Ellis Flowers of Junction City was the teacher from September 1921 until May 1923. He was a young man who had graduated from Trinity County High School in 1919 and was granted a teaching certificate in 1921. At the time, he was the only applicant for a Certification.<sup>15</sup>
- Frances Smith from Weaverville taught from September 1923 until May 1925. She had also graduated from Trinity County High School in 1923 and would later become a teacher and principal at the Weaverville Grammar School.
- Leola Oliphant was a teacher from the Chico Normal School during the 1925-26 school year.
- Edna Brannan Leach was the next teacher and taught two full school years from 1926 to 1928. She'd grown up in Burnt Ranch. She was not a high school graduate, but in 1918, she passed an examination conducted by the County Board of Education and qualified for a teaching credential. She'd also gotten experience teaching at the Indian Creek School before coming to Grass Valley.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

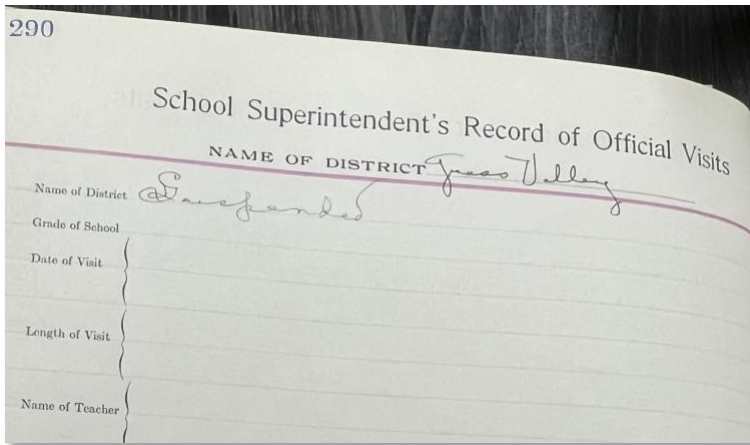
<sup>12</sup> Supahan, Sarah, communication with Bettina Blackwell, March 12, 2021; and the list of all County Superintendents held at the Trinity County Office of Education.

<sup>13</sup> Etter, Orval, "Grass Valley School in the Twenties and the 3-R's", *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1995. 32-46.

<sup>14</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 59.

<sup>15</sup> "News Back Then", *The Trinity Journal*, Saturday, July 2, 1921 as reported on July 7, 2021. 17.

- The last teacher of the decade was Marguerite Friend of Lewiston. She was the one to teach the last pupil, Vera “Lees” (spelling?) Williams, during the 1928-29 school year. Miss Friend earned a salary of \$130 per month.<sup>16</sup>



Former student, Orval Etter, remembers well teacher Ellis Flowers and felt he was one of the half dozen best teachers he ever had. Several of Mr. Flowers’ students rated high in the comprehensive state examinations given to eighth-grade students in 1922. The exam covered at least eight subjects, and students had to pass with an average score of 70 or better to earn a diploma. Flowers also had many talents, including the ability to play piano by ear. He also had “superb penmanship” and received the highest score for penmanship in the teacher credential examination.<sup>17</sup>

The teacher’s salary ranged from \$100 per month in 1920 to \$135 per month from 1925 to 1928. These were considered good salaries at the time. Teachers’ salaries comprised 75% to 90% of the school’s budget, much like they do today.

The assessed valuation of taxable property in the Grass Valley School District in 1926 was \$125,265. County Superintendent Lucy M. Young valued the school grounds at \$160, the schoolhouse at \$400, school equipment at \$100, and books in the library at \$20.<sup>18</sup>

The school was suspended on July 2, 1929<sup>19</sup> It was briefly opened again as an “emergency school” within the Lewiston School District from 1938 until 1942.<sup>20</sup> Later the schoolhouse became a home for one of the Adrian family members and his own family.<sup>21</sup>



See also **Lewiston School District.**

<sup>16</sup> Etter, Orval, “Grass Valley School in the Twenties and the 3-Rs”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook 1995*, 34 and *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 265; and Etter, Orval, Note attached to the 1929-30 School statistic reports. June 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Etter, Orval, “Grass Valley School in the Twenties and the 3-R’s”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1995. 32-46.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *School District Disbursements & Receipts*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

<sup>20</sup> *Annual Reports, 1939-1946*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education; and *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, 290.

<sup>21</sup> Supahan, Sarah, communication with Bettina Blackwell, March 12, 2021.





Teacher Edith Larison. Students Bernie, Leslie and Meta Leas, Imma Wilson, unknown, Gertrude Lowden. Courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.



GRASS VALLEY SCHOOL - 1939  
looking eastward toward west end of remodeled schoolhouse

teacher: Bertine Rogers  
pupils, left to right, back row: Joseph Fancelli, Ralph Phillips, Kenneth Rowland, Nona Wellock, Phyllis Lunden, unidentified girl, Charles Rowland, Clyde Wellock  
front row: unidentified girl, Joyce Adrian, Chloe Wellock, Loreen Alwood  
in front, on bottom step: Delbert Wellock