

Hettenshaw School District

“Hetten” comes from the Wintu word “xetin”, an edible bulb, like a potato. “Shaw” or “Sawe” means song. Therefore, the Hettenshaw Valley for which the school was named, means “Song of the little Indian potato”.¹

The School District has a complicated history which is hard to sort out, especially given the different locations said to house the school as well as the different school names involved.

In August of 1874, a petition was presented to the Trinity County Board of Supervisors (acting as the Board of Education at that time in history) from the citizens of Hettenshaw to establish a school district there. At the time there was no school at Caution or Long Ridge so the children from the North Fork basin often boarded with relatives in the Valley to attend school there.”² The board agreed and a new district was formed. The district boundary was determined to be as follows:

... all that portion of Trinity county [sic] lying South of a line drawn from the head of the South Fork of Trinity river [sic], on the Eastern boundary of the county to a point on the Western boundary of the county crossed by Van Duzen’s creek, be and the same is hereby established as Hettenshaw School District.³

A woman by the name of Irene Willburn Stapp was interviewed [no date] and noted that there was a school in “Hettenshaw Valley” in the late 1800s. This had to be Hettenshaw School District as opposed to Hetten Valley School District because the Hetten Valley School District did not yet exist at that time. She said that the school was located on “Shop Hill just to the Northwest of the old Wilburn place”. She further described the location as, “to the east of the county road along the west side of Hettenshaw Valley where it goes up and over a small rise in the road. It was a one-room school.” Irene's mother had been born in 1889, and went to school there with the older Frank Wilburn.

In 1890-1891, the teacher was a 21-year-old man ‘from the public schools in Marin and Humboldt County’, D. J. Hall.⁴ He left teaching soon after to become the Trinity County District Attorney.⁵

In the spring of 1892, the new teacher at Hettenshaw was Robert Marshall. His parents organized a party in his honor due to this new teaching assignment. They called it a “Pea-Nut Party” and was considered a “notable event of the season” as the idea for the party was quite

¹ Bright, William, *1500 California Place Names, Their Origin and Meaning*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998. 66; “Indian Names in Trinity Co.”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 19, 1916.

² “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 8, 1874; and 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, 157 -160.

³ “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 8, 1874.

⁴ 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, 152; and “D. J. Hall”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 9, 1890.

⁵ 9/27/1890 and June 3, 1899.

new for the participants. On entering the party, guests were presented with “a handsome souvenir receptacle for holding pea-nuts”. The party description continues:

At the word all commenced to hunt, the nuts being secreted all over the house; from cellar to garret a reign of confusion followed; topsy-turvy could not describe the scene. Miss Alice Flagg having found the most was awarded the first prize and Mr. Richard Gribble the second. Conversation cards were next introduced, the ladies holding the cards as judges. Two minutes was allowed each gentleman to find out and tell what he knew of pumpkins and babies. At the close, a vote was taken by the ladies as to who was the best conversationalist on the above subjects. Mr. Robert Carter received first choice and Mr. Henry Morris second. On a vote being taken by the gentlemen as to who was the best lady conversationalist, Miss Annie Griffith was first choice and Miss Lizzie Fox second. At the conclusion cake and chocolate were served, making a delicious lunch. All enjoyed themselves immensely, for how could they otherwise.⁶

The record of an official school visit noted that in 1895 the school district of Hettenshaw was held in Hettenshaw Valley with teacher Elizabeth (Lizzie) E. Taylor with a salary of \$70 a month. There were 14 students enrolled, but only eight were present at the time of the visit, with an average attendance of 11.⁷

On June 10, 1897, Joseph F. McKnight visited the School in his role as the Deputy Superintendent of Schools. He observed 12 students present out of the 30 enrolled, still under the guidance of teacher Miss Taylor. At this point, Miss Taylor was only receiving a salary of \$60 per month with no explanation as to why it would be less than what she was making before. Perhaps it was a funding issue. At the time the condition of the school building and grounds, as well as the order and attention of the students were reported as “Good”.⁸ The Trinity Journal reported that in May of the same year (1897), the school was held at the “Hettenshaw schoolhouse” for six months, and then in the concluding two months it was anticipated that it would be held “on Mad River” with J. F. McKnight as the teacher.⁹ Mr. McKnight continued teaching there for the fall term of 1897. The Post Office Box of the school at the time was “Hetten”.¹⁰

To confirm the location of the school, in 1898 the “Hettenshaw School House in Hettenshaw Valley” was mentioned in election information in the local paper as a polling place for voters.¹¹

In May of 1899, there was an interesting legal controversy involving the school. The voters of the Hettenshaw School District were to elect a new school board member. One advertisement

⁶ *The Trinity Journal*, April 2, 1897.

⁷ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 14; and “Fox, Lizzie, H., “Our Public Schools”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1895.

⁷ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 14; and “Fox, Lizzie, H., “Our Public Schools”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1895.

⁸ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 53.

⁹ “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, May 29, 1897.

¹⁰ Fox, Lizzie, “Districts, Clerks and Teachers”, *The Trinity Journal*, October 2, 1897.

¹¹ *The Trinity Journal*, August 13, 1898.

indicated that the election was to be held at “the Poison Camp Schoolhouse” [later the name “Poison Camp” was changed to “Zeniah”] on June 3rd. On the same day, an election was also to be held at the schoolhouse in Hettenshaw for the same purpose. At the Poison Camp election, the voters chose Mr. Counts, while at Hettenshaw the voters chose H. D. Willburn. Both certificates of election were forwarded to School Superintendent Lizzie Fox. She filed the certificate of Mr. Counts and recognized him as the new school trustee. The controversy went to court. The issue was that some believed that the Hettenshaw School site was the legal place to hold an election as the site had been established many years before in Hettenshaw Valley. But others held that on July 27, 1897 at a meeting of the electors of the district, a vote was taken to move the site of the Hettenshaw schoolhouse to Poison Camp. The vote was 16 to zero. The issue went to court and Judge T. E. Jones determined that Mr. Counts was the legally elected trustee. In the judge’s opinion about the matter, he said that the schools were 20 miles apart, but both were in the same school district because the Board of Supervisors had refused to make Poison Camp its own district even though it had enough students to do so.

In 1897 the board did indeed turn down the request to make Poison Camp School its own district apart from Hettenshaw, and the local paper mentioned in November of 1897, that “The public school at Poison Camp, [in] Hettenshaw District, closed on November 12 for the winter break. The teacher there that fall term had been Mr. Henry M. Marvel.¹² However, reports on this incident are the only evidence that has been found of a school district by the name of Poison Camp.

Two years later, in June of 1899, the Hettenshaw school was visited by the Superintendent of Schools. It was noted that John S. Reid had taught there in the Autumn of 1898 and Mr. Joseph F. McKnight most recently taught there in the spring of 1899. The salary had gone up to \$65. There were 17 students enrolled and 12 students present on the day of the visit. The address was then written as “Zeniah P. O. Poison Camp”. The school building and grounds were reported as being “Very Good”.¹³ Mr. Reid was still teaching at the school in the spring of 1903.¹⁴

In 1900, a boundary change occurred, annexing some territory from the Long Ridge School District to the Hettenshaw School District. The petition had been signed by “heads of families” in both districts representing 78 children under the age of 17 years. The new Hettenshaw boundary touched on both the line between Mendocino and Trinity County, and between Tehama County and Trinity County in the very south eastern area of Trinity.¹⁵

In a school visit in October 1906, the Hettenshaw School, listed as “Hettenshaw, Poison Camp”, had an enrollment that had increased to 47 students. This influx of students was possibly due to another school closing and those students transferring to the Hettenshaw School. The salary for the teacher, Mr. Henry Marvel, was \$70 per month and the school building was still considered in good shape at that time.¹⁶

¹² “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 13, 1897.

¹³ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 101.

¹⁴ “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 28, 1903.

¹⁵ *The Trinity Journal*, January 27, 1900.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

In 1910, teacher Miss Agnes R. Dedrick closed the school on November 4 for the winter break. A month later she accepted a position as a private teacher for a local family in Minersville.¹⁷ On March 11, 1912, teacher Miss Mary Louise Joseph of Indian Creek opened the Hettenshaw School for the spring term.¹⁸ In early July of 1912, teacher Miss Elsie Holtorf opened the school for the fall term.¹⁹ In another official school visit in 1912, the condition of the school was reported to be “Poor” and a note said that the school needed a new building as well as new furniture. The school’s enrollment had plunged to just 10 students.²⁰ In February of 1913, Martha E. Willburn was paid \$8.00 for janitorial work.²¹ Following the 1912-13 school year, Hettenshaw School was listed under the Caution School District section of the Trinity County Office of Education’s historical disbursement book with the location said to be in Caution.²²

On a school visit in August 1914, the Hettenshaw school’s enrollment was reported to be little improved with a total of 13 students. Hettie S. Lowden was the teacher with an \$80 salary. She was a brand new teacher at the time having only taught for four months at this district and nowhere else prior to that. At the time, classes were held in what was referred to as an “unfinished building” that needed more windows, needed water, and only had a “limited” library,²³ so it appears that the Hettenshaw School had likely moved to a new building or a new location – perhaps to the town of Caution. In fact, in the local paper, a polling place was listed as “Hettenshaw School House (new building)”.²⁴

Later that year, on November 10, 1914, a portion of the Hettenshaw School District was carved out for a new school to be called Hetten School District by order of the Board of Supervisors.²⁵ This is presumed to be later known as the Hetten Valley School District.

Interestingly, in 1915, Caution School was referred to as “Caution (Hettenshaw)” in the disbursement records. In another source, it says that Caution became known as Hettenshaw.²⁶ To clear up this confusion, an article was found in the local paper, in January of 1915, that the Board of Supervisors had approved a petition to rename the “Hettenshaw School District” the “Caution School District”.²⁷ Indeed, in April of 1915, a note was made in the warrants, “Hettenshaw changed to Caution”, with the address of Hoaglin.²⁸

By April of 1916, the school was fully referred to as Caution, location Caution in all educational records.²⁹

A school bell was purchased originally for the Hettenshaw School District, then given to the Caution School (which was likely the Hettenshaw School renamed Caution), and then it was

¹⁷ “Local Brevities”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 19, 1910 and December 10, 1910.

¹⁸ “Local Brevities”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 6, 1912.

¹⁹ “Local Brevities”, *The Trinity Journal*, July 7, 1912.

²⁰ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 433.

²¹ *Register of School Warrants*, February 28, 1913, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 292.

²² *Disbursements book*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

²³ *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 496.

²⁴ *The Trinity Journal*, October 17, 1914.

²⁵ “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 10, 1914.

²⁶ Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College. 31.

²⁷ *The Trinity Journal*, January 16, 1915.

²⁸ *Warrant Records*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 1915.

²⁹ Disbursement Records, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

moved on to the Long Ridge School. The bell was said to be over two hundred pounds and was moved by pack mule.³⁰

Michael Frasier, the brother of Peggy Canale, long-time Superintendent of the Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District, and Michael's wife Tammy (Willburn) Frasier, now own the parcel where the last Hettenshaw School stood. It is also believed by the local community that the last students who had attended Hettenshaw School were eventually sent to Mad River/Ruth School when Hettenshaw closed. Mad river/Ruth School then closed around 1969 and the students were sent to Van Duzen School which is now a part of the Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District.³¹

See also **Caution School, Hetten Valley School, Ruth School, and Van Duzen School Districts.**



Hettenshaw School 1915

³⁰ 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, 151 & 158.

³¹ Supahan, Sarah, email communication with Canale, Peggy, Superintendent of the Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District, January 4, 2022.