

## Hyampom Elementary School District

The name Hyampom is believed to come from the Wintu word “xayiin-pom” or “slippery place”.<sup>1</sup> The area has always been the ancestral territory of the Nor-Rel-Muk Wintu Nation and was also an area frequented by the Chimariko.<sup>2</sup>



In one source, the Hyampom school was said to have opened sometime between 1867 and 1871.<sup>3</sup> In another, it was simply said to have been “organized prior to 1876.” However, we know for sure that the school district was receiving public school apportionments (public school funding) as early as September 1872.<sup>4</sup> It’s entirely possible, in fact, quite likely, that there were private schools open in Hyampom before this time.

The school had many teachers over the years, however. Often, different teachers taught in the same school year, which was not so unusual in Trinity County, especially when the winter break could last several months. Miss Lucy Phillips was the teacher when the school closed rather early for “the summer” on April 24, 1896.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, a note in the local paper said that Miss Mary L. Olsen reopened the Hyampom school

on May 11, 1896.<sup>6</sup> She then closed it again on June 12, 1896.<sup>7</sup> It’s possible that Miss Phillips had left her position early, yet perhaps the school hadn’t reached the required number of days in order to receive funding that year. Consequently, a new teacher had been found to continue the school for another month.

A list of other teachers in the 1880s and 1890s, stated or inferred from various sources, is as follows:

1883 – (Spring) J.T. Farrar [paid \$65 per month, 12 students enrolled]<sup>8</sup>

1883 – 1884 J.T. Farrar [paid \$70 per month; 9 students enrolled]<sup>9</sup>



*Hyampom School House with bell tower, 1903*

<sup>1</sup> Bright, William, *1500 California Place Names, Their Origin and Meaning*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, 69.

<sup>2</sup> “Hyampom, California”, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyampom,\\_California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyampom,_California), retrieved July 15, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> “125 years ago, Saturday August 3, 1895”, *The Trinity Journal*, as reprinted in the September 16, 2020 edition.

<sup>4</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, January 6, 1966, July 7, 1869, and September 7, 1872.

<sup>5</sup> “Hay Fork Locals”, *The Trinity Journal*, May 2, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, May 30, 1896.

<sup>7</sup> “Local Brevities”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 20, 1896.

<sup>8</sup> Superintendent’s Record”, Trinity County History Center.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

1884 – 1985 Nellie Lowden [paid \$60 per month; 12 students enrolled]<sup>10</sup>  
1885 – 1986 Mary Tinsley  
1886 – 1987 (not listed)  
1887 – 1988 Alice O’Neil  
1888 – W.H. Browning of Humboldt County (fall/winter)  
1889 – 1990 Miss Mertie Jordan of Douglas City  
1890 – 1991 [and possibly off and on until 1912] Mertie Jordan  
1891 – Mertie Jordan (fall) / D. J. Hall (spring)  
1894 – Edith Richards (spring) [She reported that there were 14 students enrolled.<sup>11</sup> ]  
1896 – Miss Lucy Phillips (spring) / Miss Mary L. Olsen (spring)  
1897 – Miss Belle Jordan (fall) / Winnie Blakemore (spring)  
1898 – Miss Belle Jordan (spring)

It's interesting to note that no teacher's name could be found for the fall term of 1895 in the local paper or elsewhere. But the school was willing to pay \$65 per month to teach 12 students.<sup>12</sup>

Two special events were held in August 1895 to raise funds for the Hyampom School, specifically to build a new schoolhouse. Tickets were \$1.50 and included “a good Supper”. The local newspaper described the events in detail:

On the night of August 16th, a dance was given at Olsen's Hall for the purpose of raising funds for building a new schoolhouse. In the afternoon of the same day a tournament was held and the prize, a thirty-dollar saddle was awarded to Robert McKay. A large crowd had gathered to Witness [sic] the proceedings, and some skillful riding was done. Of course, the boys exerted themselves, as the girls were interested spectators of the performance.

The dancers began to gather at an early hour and by the time the musicians arrived, all were eager for the dance to begin. Mrs. P. Griffiths and C. R. Trimble furnished good music on the piano and violin. A. J. Van Matre and E. Estil made excellent floor managers and aided greatly in promoting the success of the dance. The dance was attended by many people from Big Bar, Hay Fork and surrounding towns. Big Bar being [sic] especially well represented. Dancing commenced about nine o'clock and continued without interruption until the grand march for supper was called when the dancers filed out to the supper table and did fall justice to the fine chicken supper prepared by Mrs. Olsen and Mrs. Estil. After supper dancing was continued until broad daylight. About six o'clock a stream of tired but well pleased young folks could be seen wending their way from the hall. All expressed themselves as fully satisfied with the dance and sorry that it was over. Indeed some of the young folks were so sorry, that they spent several hours during the day in dancing and again resumed festivities in the evening. But an end must come to all things and the dancers retired to rest for their trip to their homes the next day.<sup>13</sup>

The fundraising must have been successful because, by that November, a new schoolhouse was in the process of being built. The local paper reported, “A pretty site has been selected and a good substantial foundation laid for a school house that will be a credit to the district when completed. Owing to the difficulty in procuring lumber, a part of the building was completed only temporarily for this winter's session of school.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “School Report”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 9, 1894

<sup>12</sup> “Our Public School”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1895.

<sup>13</sup> “Hyampom School Dance”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 24, 1895.

<sup>14</sup> “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 30, 1895.

In the spring of 1897, Winnie Blakemore taught at Hyampom. She closed instruction for the year on May 28th. Belle L. Jordan taught the fall term of 1897.<sup>15</sup> For the spring of 1898, Miss Belle L. Jordan returned and closed the term on April 22 for the summer vacation.<sup>16</sup>

In March 1902 an official visit was made to the school by Lizzie H. Fox, Superintendent of Schools. Miss Gertrude E. Robinson was teaching at the school for \$60 per month. Nine students were enrolled, and all were in the primary grades. The children were doing well in every subject area. The teacher's "Methods" and "Zeal" were also rated as being "Good," and so were the school building and grounds.<sup>17</sup> The very next year, however, during an official visit in October, the condition of the school building and grounds had deteriorated and was rated as "Poor," and it was noted that a new school building and furniture were needed. Specifically, it was determined that the school building needed to be repaired and "made more comfortable" and that suitable desks needed to be furnished for the students.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Mertie C. Trimble was teaching at the time and started out with 14 students in her class, but the number dropped to eight by November. The students' work was reported as being "interesting and painstaking."<sup>19</sup>

In 1904 and possibly into the spring of 1905, the school's teacher was Mrs. H. Deering, who was paid \$60 per month.<sup>20</sup> This would also be considered unusual because, in other areas of the county, married women were not allowed—or at least they were very much discouraged—to teach in the early years of education in the county.

In 1906, just eleven years after the last schoolhouse was built, an election was held to determine if a tax should be levied on property in the Hyampom School District to build a new schoolhouse and dig a well to supply the school with water. The total cost was \$700. All the votes were in favor of such a tax, and the Board of Supervisors levied 70 cents upon each one hundred dollars of the assessed valuation of property in the district.<sup>21</sup> The new building was better made than the last one and was said to be used last during the school year 1952-53.<sup>22</sup> Fifty years is a pretty good run for a building built so early in the last century.

Mrs. Mertie Trimble was back teaching at Hyampom in April 1912 and continued at least through the 1913-14 school year.<sup>23</sup> There's no explanation for her long absence or her unexpected return except that she was teaching in a completely different area of the county at the new Hawkin's Bar/New River School District (established in 1904) in September of 1905. (She went on to teach in Hayfork in the spring of 1915).

In the fall of 1915, Miss Clara E. Gribble of Hayfork taught at Hyampom. She was a graduate of the Trinity County High School, and this was her "first attempt at wielding the birch rod," as the local newspaper descriptively called her first teaching assignment. The paper also personally wished her success.<sup>24</sup> The Hyampom School opened for the 1917-18 school year with Mrs. Calla Williams as teacher. Mrs. Williams had been Miss Calla Canfield but was married on August 9, with her husband leaving immediately after the wedding for service in the army. She opened the school on August 20, just eleven days later.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Fox, Lizzie, "Districts, Clerks and Teachers", *The Trinity Journal*, October 2, 1897.

<sup>16</sup> Fox, Lizzie, "Schools Closed", *The Trinity Journal*, April 30, 1898.

<sup>17</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 173.

<sup>18</sup> "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, October 10, 1903, and November 7, 1903.

<sup>19</sup> "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, November 7, 1903; and *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 208.

<sup>20</sup> "Districts, Clerks, Teachers, Trinity County, 1904-1905", *The Trinity Journal*, November 5, 1904.

<sup>21</sup> "Board of Supervisors", *The Trinity Journal*, September 22, 1906.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, Alice Goen, Ed., *Trinity County Historical Sites*, Trinity County Historical Society, Weaverville, 1981, 319.

<sup>23</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, April 4, 1912; and "Directory", *The Trinity Journal*, November 11, 1913.

<sup>24</sup> "In the Local Field", *The Trinity Journal*, September 11, 1915.

<sup>25</sup> "Schools are opening", *The Trinity Journal*, August 27, 1917.

On Saturday, May 17, 1919, it was reported in the Trinity Journal that Miss Lucy M. Young, Superintendent of Schools, and Miss Alice Anderson, County Librarian, traveled to Hyampom on official business, making the trip on horseback. It is of note that a wagon road was not constructed from Hayfork to Hyampom until about 1924.<sup>26</sup> It was also, apparently, newsworthy to report in the local paper in 1920 that Mrs. C. J. Musser of Alturas, engaged to teach at the School, passed through Weaverville on her way to Hyampom.<sup>27</sup>

WARRANT NO.	COUNTY	STATE	LIBRARY	SPECIAL
1355			125	
1356			175	
1369		508		
7682 ✓			2794 ✓	3170 ✓
8190			2794	3470

Hyampom School District received Federal Indian Aid Funds from 1929 – 1938 due to the significant number of Native students who attended the district.

In April of 1921, there was a four-hour official visit to the school by the Superintendent of Schools. Charlotte J. Musser was the teacher that spring, and she was paid \$120 per month. There were 28 students enrolled, but only 18 were present on the day of the visit. The students' "Order and Attention" were reported as being "Fair," but they were failing in all subject areas except Orthography (spelling) and History. A note says, "Teacher handicapped by deafness, otherwise very efficient."<sup>28</sup>

The report from an official visit on May 1, 1923, indicated that Mildred Wood was teaching at Hyampom at that time, and her salary was \$150 per month. The number of students enrolled was 26. While the students were doing well in all subject areas, the school's condition was poor, and the "wants of the

school" were simply "[a] New school house."<sup>29</sup>

In 1924, Mildred Wood was the teacher, also earning \$150. There was an increase in student enrollment (31), but only 23 were present on the day of an official visit. While the "Methods and Zeal of Teacher" was reported as being "Good," the students' "Order and Attention" were poor, as were their reading and language skills. All other subjects, on the other hand, were rated very high.<sup>30</sup>

Skipping ahead quite a few years, on September 11, 1947, the school opened in Hyampom with Miss Marilyn "Honey" Amort as the teacher with 16 students. Miss Amort said she planned to give the children a course in wood carving.<sup>31</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Bartlett, James W., *Trinity County California, Summary of its History*, News Publishing Co. Sacramento, 1926, 24.

<sup>27</sup> "The News Back Then", *The Trinity Journal*, October 7, 2020, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 63.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>31</sup> "The News Back Then", *The Trinity Journal*, September 11, 1947, 13.

Mr. Eugene Rude and Miss Lola Bradshaw both taught at Hyampom in 1956 when there were 41 students. The district trustees at that time were Mrs. Frances Moss, Clerk; Mr. Fred Phelps; and Mr. Glen Olives.<sup>32</sup>



Teachers Leon, and Susan Spiegel on the temporary cable system to get to school over the river until a new bridge could be built. 1970

In mid-January of 1970, the Hyampom bridge was washed out due to high water. Teachers at Hyampom School at that time, Leon and Susan Spiegel, along with approximately 15 students, utilized a “cable car” system over the river twice a day to get to and from the school until a new bridge was installed. The Trinity County School Bulletin rightly declared that the Spiegels could claim the distinction of utilizing the most unusual mode of transportation going to and from school. The cable car was the only transportation for about thirty families to get to the other side of the river. The Bulletin concluded, “The experience did not seem to dampen Leon and Susan’s spirit for teaching in Trinity County.”<sup>33</sup>

Hyampom eventually lapsed into the Mountain Valley Unified School District and was run by that district until 2017, when the school was closed for good due to a lack of students and the need for extensive repairs to the building.

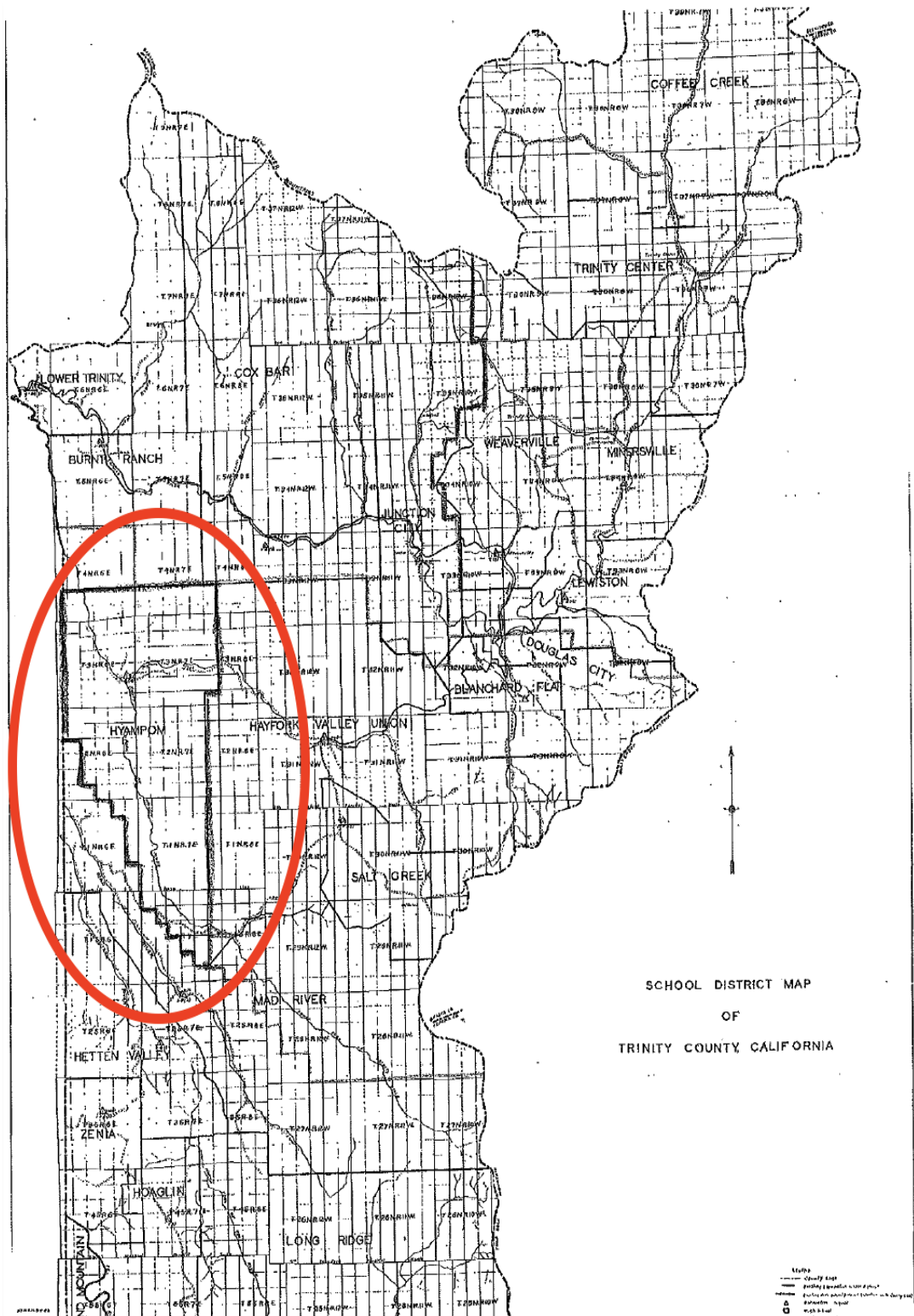
See also [Hayfork Schools.](#)



From <http://thechurchoftheopenroad.blogspot.com/2019/07/my-hyampom-moment.html>. As yet unable to confirm the fire in 1903. No article in Trinity Journal in 1903 or 1904 that includes mention of a fire at the Hyampom Schoohouse

<sup>32</sup> “Trinity County Schools Growing With California”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 28, 1956, Centennial Edition.

<sup>33</sup> “Hyampom School Stays Open Despite High Water”, *Trinity County School Bulletin*, Weaverville, CA, March 1970.



School District map, 1947



*Sign on the bus says "Hyampom Elementary School District" from the TCOE Collection*