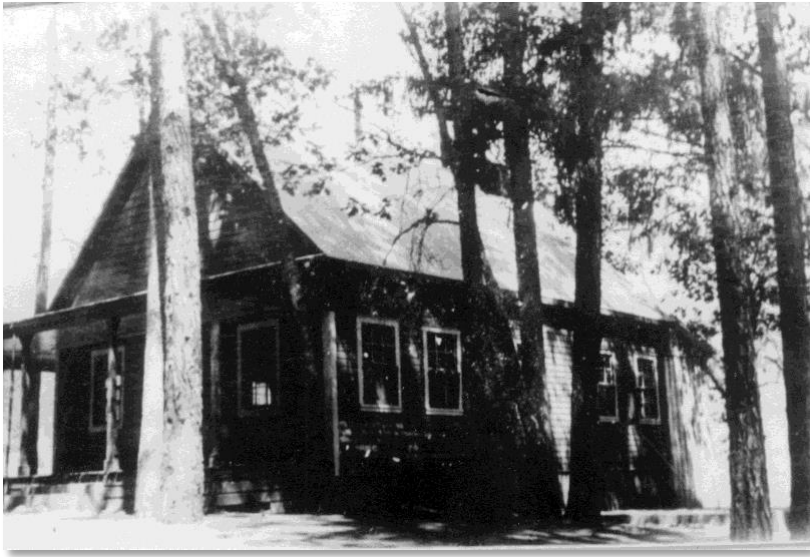


## Junction City School District

Junction City, first known as “Milltown,” is located at the confluence of the Trinity River and Canyon Creek at the intersection of the Chimariko and Wintu ancestral territories. It was named after the sawmill built by Seelye and Dowles in 1852. Later, it was also known as Messerville, and a post office was established in that name in 1860. In 1861, the name was changed to Junction City.<sup>1</sup>



One of the first mentions of Junction City School in the local paper was regarding the schoolhouse being demolished by a falling pine tree on November 18, 1865, in a large gale storm. The trustees of the district were said to have announced a Ball to be held on New Year’s night to raise funds to rebuild the school. The announcement also contained a warning that this is “a good way to avert a Special School Tax.”<sup>2</sup> Another fundraiser was held for the school on Christmas Eve of 1867. This time it was a “dancing party.”<sup>3</sup> This is all a little curious because there’s no indication that the school had, at that time, been an official *public* school that had a Board of Trustees and might require a tax to raise money for the rebuilding of a school. A lot of schools in the county started as privately funded by the families of the students who attended, and it looks as though Junction City was no exception. It was usual, but also not unheard of, for parents to form their own board to oversee their private school.



*Second School House, undated*

More evidence of the school starting as a private one is from a short article in the March 23, 1867 edition of the Trinity Journal. It was announced in the paper that the trustees of the district had hired the services of Mrs. Nathan H. Thomas “...a most excellent and accomplished teacher.” It was

also mentioned in the same article that the citizens of that “brisk town” had “subscribed about \$200 for school

<sup>1</sup> Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, and <http://historyandhappenings.squarespace.com/trinity-county/?currentPage=3>, accessed June 26, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> “New Year’s Ball”, *The Trinity Journal*, December 23, 1865.

<sup>3</sup> “School Party”, *The Trinity Journal*, December 21, 1867.

purposes.”<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Thomas’ salary appears to have been raised by the people of Junction City, not from public school funding.

Junction City School was believed by one source to have been established sometime between 1862 and 1867. This was likely referring to the establishment of the private school because the district didn’t receive public school funding until December of 1868, as evidenced by the announcement in the paper of the “School Fund Apportionments.” This means that it had become a public school that the state would fund. The Junction City School District has continued to receive state public school funds each year since never having been closed, even temporarily like other schools in the county.<sup>5</sup>

After the funding was received in December, on April 18, 1868, Hattie Morris was engaged to teach at Junction City for the spring term.<sup>6</sup>

The Junction City School District had terrible luck with its early school buildings. Not only did a fallen tree decimate it in 1865, but a new schoolhouse was built and occupied by May 20, 1871, following a previous school building having burned just a few weeks earlier in May of that same year:

[The burning of the school] was felt as a severe loss and a sore disappointment to our tax-paying citizens, the old house having been but recently refitted throughout for the reception of our accomplished young teacher, Miss Wadleigh. Our enterprising school directors, Messrs. George, Guptil and Laws, determined that, Phoenix-like, out of the ashes of the old one a new school house should arise, large and better in its appointments than its predecessor.<sup>7</sup>

The new schoolhouse was built and ready for use in less than two weeks after the fire. The building was constructed by Mr. John Whitmore, who also furnished the building materials and completed it within the time allotted to him by contract.<sup>8</sup> The new building, 24 x 36 feet, held a blackboard above a raised platform on which was the teacher’s desk, an organ, and a stand for the *Webster’s Dictionary*. In front of the platform was a bench used for students to sit on when they came up to the front of the room as a group to recite. A wood stove sat in the middle of the room and heated the building with two benches on either side for pupils to sit on when it was cold. Desks filled the rest of the room. At that time, an older



<sup>4</sup> “Junction City School”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 23, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> “Junction City School”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 23, 1867.

<sup>6</sup> “Schools”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 18, 1868.

<sup>7</sup> “Correspondence, Junction City”, *The Trinity Journal*, May 20, 1871.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

student, Elinor Chapman McCartney, served as the janitor. She was paid \$12 per year to sweep and dust.<sup>9</sup>

In those early years, as of now, the school served as a community center. For instance, it was used as a polling place and also a place for hosting evening dances, often to raise money for the school.<sup>10</sup> Following the fire in 1871, a social dance was to be held with funds raised to be applied to the indebtedness incurred in building the new schoolhouse. When the school reopened in May, 40 students were in attendance.



*Junction City School 1892 with Lizzie Fox, teacher*

The paper noted, "The Junction folks have had bad luck in having their school burned, and have shown considerable enterprise in building another. They deserve to be patronized, and we would advise all who can do so to go to their dance on the 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>11</sup> The dance was a success. It was described this way:

[it was an] an old-fashioned neighborhood dance, one of those joyous gatherings that none can appreciate so well as one who has been used to the restraint and etiquette of the more fashionable ballroom. Our school dance was a party where our citizens brought their good wives and blooming daughters, each vieing [sic] with the other to make it a pleasant reunion of friends and acquaintances. The music was furnished by Messrs. Simonds and Smith, who very generously donated their services. I am told that a handsome sum was realized for the school fund of the District.<sup>12</sup>

Another dance was announced in the paper to be held at the school, this time on the Fourth of July in 1871. The proceeds from this event were also to be applied toward the cost of the new school building.<sup>13</sup> Another school ball was held in July of 1873. Two interesting comments were made about this dance besides reporting that it was "a pleasant little affair." Dancing was "kept up until nearly daylight," and the school made about \$70 over expenses.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Meckel, Henry C., "Memories of My Trinity County Education" *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1983 Yearbook, 34.

<sup>11</sup> "Junction City", *The Trinity Journal*, May 20, 1871.

<sup>12</sup> "Correspondence", *The Trinity Journal*, May 20, 1871.

<sup>13</sup> "Fourth of July Dance at Junction City", *The Trinity Journal*, June 10, 1871.

<sup>14</sup> "School Ball", *The Trinity Journal*, July 26, 1873.

A former student, Henry C. Meckel, wrote about his time as a student at Junction City School. He mentions that the teachers used a county manual of instruction published by the board of education that contained very precise statements as to what was to be learned by students. For instance, specific poems were to be taught at each grade level and were to be memorized and recited. When he attended, there were from 21 to 30 students, five of whom were from the Dawson family. Some of the Dawson children could play the organ and had talents in art and music, which benefited all the students.<sup>15</sup>

The local paper reported in 1882 that Mr. Henry H. Banks of Red Bluff, “one of Tehama County’s most popular teachers,” was the new Junction City School District teacher. He was to be opening the school for the spring term on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>16</sup> The paper reported that “...[Mr. Banks] called on us this week. He expressed Himself as exceedingly pleased with the appearance of Weaverville, having expected to find a dead, dull town instead of the live and beautiful one it really is.”<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, while Mr. Banks had planned to remain at Junction City longer, he had to give up his position in May of 1882 due to his wife’s severe illness.<sup>18</sup> In June of 1883, the Superintendent of Schools made a two-hour official visit to the school to observe. Mr. Stiles was teaching then for \$80 per month. The length of the school term was four months, while Mr. Stiles had been teaching for a total of seven months. Strangely, the number of students was recorded with a plus sign except for the “Number of First-Grade Scholars,” which was recorded as 1+. It’s not clear what to make of this.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the other early teachers at the Junction City School District were reported to be:

1879	Tillie Whitmore <sup>20</sup>
1882	Henry H. Banks
1883-84	Ruth Benjamin (Salary was \$80 per month; 25 students enrolled) <sup>21</sup>
1884-85	Ruth Benjamin
1885-86	Mary N. Wadleigh (Salary was \$75 per month; 29 students enrolled) <sup>22</sup>
1886-87	Mary N. Wadleigh
1887-88	Kittie O’Neil
1889-90	Kittie O’Neil (Salary was \$70 per month; 22 students enrolled). <sup>23</sup>
1891-92	Lizzie Fox <sup>24</sup> (In 1895, she became County Superintendent of Schools, serving in that position for over ten years)
1892-93	Winnie Blakemore (Salary was \$75 per month; 13 students enrolled) <sup>25</sup>
1895-96	Edith Griswold, \$75 per month, 45, average attendance only 28 (“Our Public Schools,” <i>The Trinity Journal</i> , August 17, 1895)

<sup>15</sup> Meckel, Henry C., “Memories of My Trinity County Education” *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1983 Yearbook, 35.

<sup>16</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, March 4, 1882.

<sup>17</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, March 11, 1882.

<sup>18</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, May 13, 1882.

<sup>19</sup> “Superintendent’s Record”, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society, 1883.

<sup>20</sup> “To the City”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 15, 1879.

<sup>21</sup> “Superintendent’s Record”, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society, 1884.

<sup>22</sup> “Superintendent’s Record”, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society, 1885 and 1886.

<sup>23</sup> “Schools Closed”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 28, 1890; and “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, October 24, 1903.

<sup>24</sup> “Teachers Employed in Trinity County”, *School Directory and Warrant Records*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

<sup>25</sup> “Teachers Employed in Trinity County”, *School Directory*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education; and “Town and Country News”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 11, 1893; and “Superintendent’s Record”, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society, 1893.

Remarkably, several of the teachers above remained at the school for more than one term, and some remained for more than one school year. This was unusual at the time for most schools in Trinity County which often had several teachers during a single school year.



*Junction City School in 1898. Top row, L to R: Gussie Haas, Irene Douglas, Allie Wilson, Marie Haas, Nellie Ryan, Mr. George Culver (teacher), Belle Post, unknown. 2<sup>nd</sup> row standing: George Chapman, Fred Schaffer (tall one), Rachael Dedrick, Girl next to teacher Schaffer, Ernest Chapman, Frankie Douglas. Sitting: Unknown, Henry Haas, Arthur Schoffer, Bert Gelzean [Gilzean]. Mr. George Culver later became a very fine skin specialist in San Francisco. Courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.*

In October and November of 1895, there was a disagreement, published in several consecutive articles in the local paper, regarding a payment made – or not made - to the librarian at the Junction City School. The librarian claimed in a statement published on October 26, 1895, that she had not received \$22.50 for librarian services at the school from the Junction City Library Fund. An apparent accountant, referred to as “an expert” who provided an auditing report for the district, said that a warrant had indeed been “drawn in favor of Miss Winnie Blakemore,” with her signature as payee for \$22.50. This, he insisted, followed a requisition from the Trustees for services as the librarian for two months and two weeks at \$5.00 per month. D.J. Hall, the expert, reiterated these points from his report and published them in the paper.<sup>26</sup> Trinity County Office of Education has been unable to locate the warrants from this period to confirm or deny the claims despite the very public disagreement.

---

<sup>26</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, October 26, 1895 and November 9, 1895.

In February 1896, George D. Culver, who was engaged to teach the Junction City school for the spring term, arrived from Chico.<sup>27</sup> He continued teaching there for at least through the fall term of 1896, when he closed the school on November 27.<sup>28</sup>

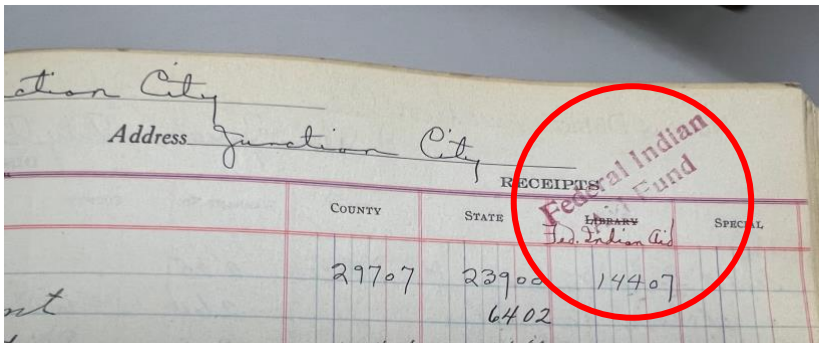
In 1898, two schools were reported in the district: one was a public school for white children, and one was, apparently, a private school located at the nearby mine for Chinese children.<sup>29</sup>

Miss Emma Dawley came all the way from San Jose to teach at Junction City School in the Spring of 1899.<sup>30</sup> By the Fall term of the same year, Miss Agnes O’Neil returned to start the school year on September 4, 1899.<sup>31</sup> She returned to the school again as a substitute to open it for the spring term on Monday, March 18, 1903.<sup>32</sup> She again returned to teach the entire school year of 1904-05 as a permanent teacher. Her salary was \$70 per month.<sup>33</sup>



Minnie Ellery Aldrich, date unknown

In the year 1911, the school began on August 5th with Katie T. Weinheimer as teacher. She quickly resigned just over a month later on September 30, 1911, providing her students with her own farewell party. It was left to the County Schools Superintendent, Minnie Ellery Aldrich from Trinity Center, to step in to substitute teach that year until she closed school for the winter break on November 18. Minnie was still teaching there in 1912 when she became Henry Meckel’s first teacher. She taught for several years. Later, according to Henry, she became a demonstration and supervising teacher in the education program at the University of California. She was the Trinity County Superintendent of Schools from 1911 to 1914.



The School received Federal Indian Aid funding 1919 – 1938 due to a significant number of Native students

In school year 1913-14, Masie E. Bigalow took over the position of teacher at Junction City. In 1916, Annie Hennessy, from Burnt Ranch, was teaching there for the next two years. Anne Hennessy was Henry’s second teacher, and she later became a secretary in the San Francisco school system. Masie Bigelow (who married Warren Gilzean) lived most of her life in Junction City and was also one of his teachers. She was later the local correspondent for the Trinity Journal. She

<sup>27</sup> “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, February 29, 1896.

<sup>28</sup> “Local Brevities”, *The Trinity Journal*, December 4, 1896.

<sup>29</sup> From untitled information, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 5; and from *The Trinity Journal*, March 4, 1882.

<sup>30</sup> “Schools Open”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 11, 1899.

<sup>31</sup> “Schools Open”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 9, 1899.

<sup>32</sup> “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 21, 1903.

<sup>33</sup> “Districts, Clerks, Teachers, Trinity County, 1904-1905”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 5, 1904.

taught 23 students from August 10, 1918, when the school year was 8 and one-half months long until A.W. Riley was hired for the position in September 1920.

Mrs. Gilzean returned on August 13, 1921, and remained to teach there until sometime in 1926, when Miss Virginia Brown came to Junction City to teach. For some reason, the student population had greatly decreased to just nine students by that time. One eighth-grader graduated that year.<sup>34</sup> Miss Brown was still teaching in 1928<sup>35</sup> when the enrollment had only increased to 12 students, three of whom graduated that June.<sup>36</sup>

The Junction City School was originally located near Oregon Gulch across Highway 299 from Junction City Park. It served the general area, including students living in the old town of Junction City (at the intersection of Canyon Creek and the Trinity River) and also those who lived up Oregon Gulch. Some had to be rowed across the Trinity River twice each day, and then they walked the rest of the distance to school.<sup>37</sup>

The building that is used today, in 2024, as the Junction City Community Hall, actually served as the school from the 1930s until 1989.<sup>38</sup> The “new” Junction City School opened in 1990 and was built on “Benjamin Flat” - its current location. Benjamin Flat had been the location of “one of the great hydraulic mines of the world.”<sup>39</sup> Doctor Albert H Hayes of Boston bought the mine in Junction City and hired E. M. Benjamin of San Francisco to supervise it. Benjamin built a good-sized house there. The flat on which the school was built was named after Mr. Benjamin.<sup>40</sup> Due to the flood of 1861, which took out the bridges over the Trinity River, the town moved to the highway side of the river near where the current store is located, freeing up Benjamin Flat for use by the school.<sup>41</sup>



<sup>34</sup> Annual Report, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Information provided by the Trinity County Historical Society.

<sup>36</sup> Annual Report, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Meckel, Henry C., “The Site of the New Junction City School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1989, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Supahan, Sarah, email communication from Christine Camara, long time Superintendent & Principal of Junction City School District, January 4, 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Meckel, Henry C., “The Site of the New Junction City School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1989, 44.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

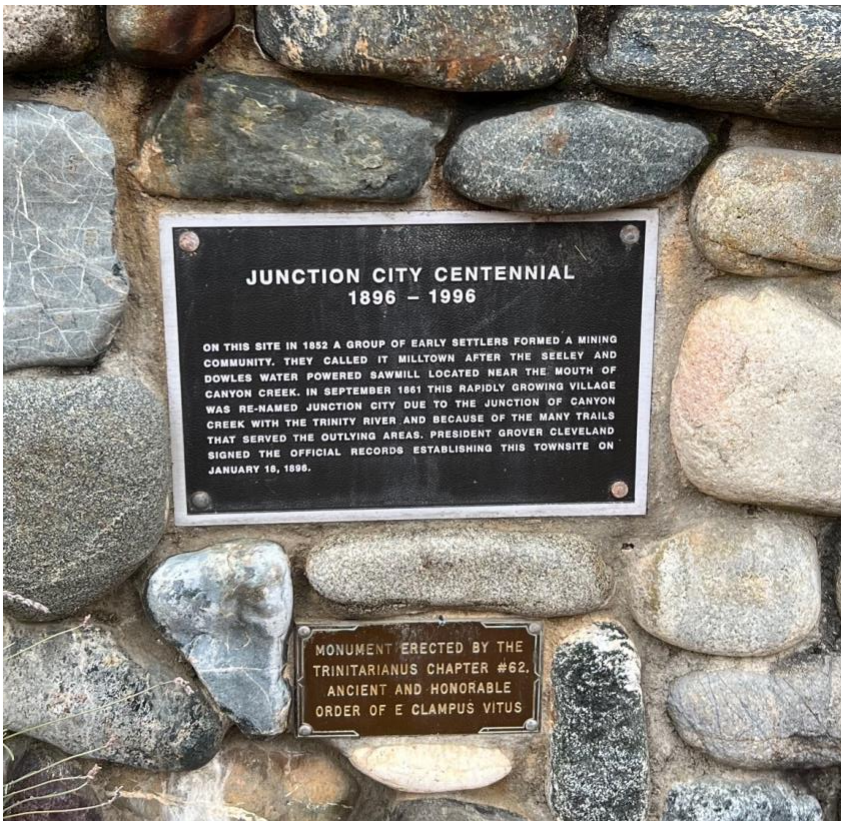
<sup>41</sup> Meckel, Henry C., “The Site of the New Junction City School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1989, 43.

By 1948, Junction City School and the rest of the county had an increase in students. They started the year with 31 enrolled.<sup>42</sup> Today, in 2024, the school is still small in enrollment, but Junction City School District is still thriving, with approximately 75 students enrolled under the decades-long leadership of Christine Camara, Principal/Superintendent.

See also [Red Hill School District](#).



*Junction City School District 1974*



<sup>42</sup> "County Grade Schools Enrollment is Record", *The Trinity Journal*, September 16, 1948.