

## La Grange School District

In September of 1911, the La Grange school was opened as a brand new school in the county, with Miss Katie T. Weinheimer, “one of Trinity’s most popular teachers,” as the instructor. She was also very experienced, having taught for more than 10 years. It was first organized and maintained as a private school with 13 students of school age. According to the local newspaper:

...The school will be supported by private subscription and maintained as a private school until next July, when it will draw regular school money. The modest little school house was erected and donated by the La Grange Mining Company and is located beautifully on the hill side [sic] near the mine in a sequestered spot among the pines. Thus, while outside the miners delve for gold in the world-famous placer mine, inside the children will delve for knowledge; and who knows but that they, imbued with the spirit of the grandeur and greatness of their surroundings, may not too, some day [sic], become equally as great and famous. The bell which will call the little ones to school was donated by employees of the mine. This progressive step means much to the employees of the mine, as there are several children of an advanced age who have not yet attended school; it also reflects much credit on the company for their interest and cooperation in the undertaking. This new district makes the 26th for Trinity.<sup>1</sup>



*La Grange teachers Miss Katherine Clark & Celia Weinheimer on school steps, courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.*

The very first students to attend the new school were Merwin Givan, William Britton, Frankie Britton, Maggie Britton, Edna Tudor, Edith Tudor, Bertha Van Cleave, Thelma Van Cleave, Helen Griffith, Jack Griffith, Kenneth Ralph, Henrietta Firmegnac, and Daisy McKay. They ranged in age from six to 14. A flag for the school was donated by D. M. Riodan of New York, one of the stockholders of the La Grange Mining Company.<sup>2</sup> The new school building was also built by the mining company.<sup>3</sup>

Following the opening of the private school, on November 18, 1911, a petition was presented to the Board of Supervisors requesting an official public school to be established at the mine, taking portions of the Weaverville and Junction City School Districts territories. The proposal was passed by the board unanimously<sup>4</sup>.

Katie Weinheimer was paid \$80 per month to teach at the school. She continued to teach at La Grange at least through May of 1913.<sup>5</sup> Rather than walking to the school each day like she had done when she taught at previous schools, Katie purchased a bay horse, “a bronco,” for transportation. During good weather, she rode horseback from “Weaver” (the town of Weaverville) to the school. Her nephew remembers her looking “smart,” riding with a divided khaki skirt, tailored shirt-waist, and a straw or soft khaki hat covering her dark red, upswept Gibson girl hair. She also wore riding gloves with crossed buggy whips embroidered on the gauntlets.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “La Grange School Will Open Monday”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 9, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> “La Grange Opened Monday”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 30, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> “New School District at La Grange”, *The Trinity Journal*, July 7, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> “The Board of Supervisors of the County of Trinity...”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 18, 1911.

<sup>5</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 437 and 449.

<sup>6</sup> Morris, Florence, “Auntie Cee Biography of a Trinity Schoolteacher, Cecilia Weinheimer”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1967, 51-53.

Miss Cecelia Weinheimer, approximately 41 years of age (unconfirmed relationship to the first teacher, but likely “Katie” was Cecelia’s mother, Katherine C. Weinheimer, who would have been approximately 61 when she started teaching at La Grange<sup>7</sup>), was teaching at the school at least from 1913 to 1916. She was not only a teacher but also, unusually, a member of the Board of Education. Today, this would be a conflict of interest and would not be allowed. She also regularly attended the Trinity County High School Board meetings held in Weaverville.<sup>8</sup> By 1919, “Celia” Weinheimer had moved on to teach in the larger Weaverville Elementary School District along with two other women.<sup>9</sup> Miss Mary Ellen Down replaced her at La Grange in 1919.<sup>10</sup>

Moon Lim Lee recalls in an interview in 1971 that Pauline (Zingle) Clark had taught at La Grange, following her mother, who also taught there.<sup>11</sup> The students had been taught by Mrs. Clark “for years.”<sup>12</sup>

The name “La Grange” is French for “the farm”. The La Grange School was located at the La Grange Mine on Oregon Mountain, in Wintu ancestral territory, across from the “Giant.”<sup>13</sup> The “Giant” was the name of the large water cannon that could shoot water out of a huge nozzle, nine inches in diameter, to help move dirt.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, whole mountainsides could be washed away by the power of these giants.<sup>15</sup> The school was said to be specifically located “right on the old road by where the boarding house was.”<sup>16</sup>



The La Grange Hydraulic mine, four miles northwest of Weaverville, was said to have once been one of the most important mines in the state, and by 1915, (at that time called the “Ward and Trinity” mine) was reported to be the largest hydraulic mines in the world in active operation.<sup>17</sup> One source said the mine was opened in 1851 and closed during the First World War.<sup>18</sup> In other information, the mine first operated in about 1862 under a different name, “The Oregon Mountain Group of Claims.” In 1892, it was purchased by the La Grange Hydraulic Gold Mining Company, whose president was Baron E. de La Grange<sup>19</sup> and which was to have ceased operations in 1918.<sup>20</sup> The different dates of operation likely stem from the different owners and the renaming of the mine. Given the large mining operation, it’s no wonder that a school needed to be in operation for the children of the miners.

<sup>7</sup> “1910 United States Federal Census”, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1899974:7884>, accessed March 10, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> “In the Local Field”, *The Trinity Journal*, December 4, 1915.

<sup>9</sup> “Several Schools are Open, Others Will Open Soon”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 3, 1919.

<sup>10</sup> “Some Items of Local Interest”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 5, 1919.

<sup>11</sup> Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Karen, Marian, Information located in historical files, Trinity County Office of Education

<sup>14</sup> “La Grange Mine... A Picture Tour”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1969, 33 - 35.

<sup>15</sup> “Shasta-Trinity National Forests Trinity Heritage National Scenic Byway. A Self Guided Auto Tour” map, US Department of Agriculture. No date.

<sup>16</sup> Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College,

<sup>17</sup> “History and Happenings”, Southwest Shasta County Historical Group, <http://historyandhappenings.squarespace.com/trinity-county/?currentPage=2>, Accessed June 26, 2021; and

“La Grange Mine” <https://visittrinity.com/history/mining/la-grange-mine/>, accessed November 18, 2022 and Diller, J. S., “Auriferous Gravels in the Weaverville Quadrangle, California”, *Gold and Silver*, 1912, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Kyle, Douglas, *Historic Spots in California*, Stanford University Press, 380.

<sup>19</sup> “The News Back Then” for June 27, 1896, *The Trinity Journal*, June 30, 2021, 17.

<sup>20</sup> “California Historical Landmarks in Trinity County; California Historical Landmark 778”, <https://noehill.com/trinity/cal0778.asp>. Accessed June 26, 2021; and the plaque found on Oregon Mountain, Trinity County.

Unfortunately, the school did not last long. In the 1919-20 school year, “no school was held” as there were no longer any children to teach since “the mine shut down this last year and all the families departed.”<sup>21</sup> The school officially lapsed (closed) during the 1920-21 school year, along with several other small schools in the county.<sup>22</sup>

For complete lessons on the La Grange Mine, see the following websites.

Grade 7:

<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/environmental-analysis/documents/ser/lagrange-historical-site-lesson-plan-grade7-a11y.pdf>

Grade 12:

<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/environmental-analysis/documents/env/lagrange-historical-site-lesson-plan-grade12-a11y.pdf>



<sup>21</sup> "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.





*Photo courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.*





*La Grange School about 1911-12. L to R Helen Griffith, Jack Griffith, Tudor, ?, ?, ?, Van Cleave, ?, ?, ?, Teacher Catherine (or Katherine) Weinheimer Clark, ?, ?, Britton. Courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.*



*1913, Mrs. Louis McClellan, Mrs. Nettie Tudor, Mrs. Louis Ralph, Mrs. Charles Van Cleave, Mrs. Katie Clark, Mrs. Irene Box, Mrs. Mary Griffith, Mr. Jack Griffith, Mr. Henry McClellan, Miss Celia Weinheimer, Mr. Frank Britton, Miss Edna Tudor, Miss Edith Tudor, Miss Maggie Britton, Miss Alma Box, Henry Griffith, Thelma Van Cleave, Gertrude Britton, Bertha Van Cleave, Kenneth Ralph, Bertha Van Cleave, Kenneth Ralph, Florina Griffith, Bernal Van Cleave, William Tudor, James Griffith, Vernice Van Cleave, Gwendolyn Tudor, Evelyn Van Cleave. Courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.*



*1918, Front Row, L to R: Edith Teedor, Edna Tudor. Back Row: Teacher C. Weinheimer, Helen Griffin (Griffith), Thelma Van Cleave, Helen Brown Courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society.*