

## Lewiston School District

Lewiston, originally called “Lewis Town,” is in Wintu ancestral territory and is one of the oldest white settlements in Trinity County. It was named after B. F. Lewis, who built a trading post there “near the site of the old bridge” and operated a ferry across the river in the 1840s. Lewiston was a stop for the Redding-Weaverville Stage and for miners passing through.<sup>1</sup>



Lewiston School House 1897

What is known today as the ‘old Lewiston schoolhouse’ in Lewiston was initially erected on October 18, 1862, as a meeting hall for the Division Number 219 of the Sons of Temperance Lodge. At that time, the school was being held inside an old church that stood on the present (2022) site of the Congressional Church. When the building used as a school burned in 1865, the Temperance Lodge surrendered its charter, and the school moved into its building. That’s when the ‘old Lewiston School House’ was born. It was used as a school until the 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

One publication said that Lewiston School was created in 1856 and was the first school to be formed in Trinity County.<sup>3</sup> In other reports, the school district was said to begin operation during the 1862 – 63 school year. Likely that later date is due to the building of the now well-known school house in the same year.<sup>4</sup> In the official records of the school district, located at the Trinity County Office of Education, the district is listed as having been established as a public school on August 4, 1859.<sup>5</sup> It’s entirely possible that the earlier date mentioned was the beginning of a private school that took place in the church building.

Lewiston School, especially in the early days, had varying numbers of students enrolled. According to one source, on November 3, 1860, there were only 19 children between the ages of 4 and 18 in residence in the Lewiston community.<sup>6</sup> Just six years later, in 1866, there was a massive jump in children in residence in Lewiston, and likewise, enrollment at the school jumped to 46 students.<sup>7</sup> By 1869, there were 41<sup>8</sup> students enrolled, which increased by only two students in 1870<sup>9</sup>. By March 1878, the local paper reported an incredible 67 students attending Lewiston School.<sup>10</sup> Lucy U. Phillips taught at Lewiston School in December of 1883 for \$65 per month. The enrollment had decreased significantly to 31 students; eight students were in the first grade and 23 in the second grade.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, 17.

<sup>2</sup> “A Little About Lewiston” Compiled from the records and memories of Frank Ross and Commodore Kise, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1955, 11; and “Schoolhouse History”, <https://www.oldlewistonschoolhouse.org/web3.htm>, accessed October 25, 2022, 1.

<sup>3</sup> “TRINITY COUNTY HISTORY CHRONOLOGY”, <http://www.trinitymuseum.org/TRINITY%20CHRONOLOGY.htm>, accessed June 26, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> “A Little About Lewiston” Compiled from the records and memories of Frank Ross and Commodore Kise, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1955, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Handwritten establishment and boundary document, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education; and “Board of Supervisors August Term”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 13, 1859.

<sup>6</sup> <http://historyandhappenings.squarespace.com/trinity-county/?currentPage=3>, June 26, 2021

<sup>7</sup> “School Fund”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 6, 1866.

<sup>8</sup> “Apportionment of School Money For Trinity County”, *The Trinity Journal*, July 3, 1896.

<sup>9</sup> “Apportionment”, *The Trinity Journal*, December 17, 1870.

<sup>10</sup> “School Money”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 16, 1878.

<sup>11</sup> “Superintendent’s Record”, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society.

There exists a report of the Trinity County Superintendent of Schools' official visit to the Lewiston School District in 1885. In it, we see that Lucy Phillips was still teaching there at the time. It also mentions that the length of a school term at this time was eight months. Lucy had a first-grade teaching certificate and was paid \$65 per month. The school had 38 students enrolled, but only 26 were present on the day of the visit. Only seven students were in the first grade, and the rest were all in the second grade. With that many second-grade students, it's possible that it was simply the second year of education for all, or at least for some of them. It's impossible to know for sure, although there is evidence in other districts that some older students were in much lower grades than their age would seem to suggest due to their lack of educational opportunities. In any event, the students were all doing well in their studies, and the teacher was keeping order in the classroom. In December of 1886, a different teacher was working at the school, C. G. Elkin, who also had a 1<sup>st</sup>-grade teaching certificate and received the same salary as Miss Phillips the year before. The students numbered 26, likely those attending regularly the year before. While the students were reported as doing well in all subject areas, their attention was reported as only "fair."<sup>12</sup>



1894, Front row: Gene Lowden, Allie Hammond, Rady Hammond, Irvin Scott, Fred Paulsen, Dovie Van Cleave, Freddie Domenici, Tommy Baker, Elizabeth Wilson, Julia Dominici, Louisa Domenici, Dolly Flynn, Jean Wilson, Ida Klein, May Scott, Ora Lowden, Harriett Wilson; Second row: Louis Dickey, Henry Paulsen, Emily Domenici, Elsie Taylor, Howard Hawk; Back row: Roy Lowden, Edna Newland, Agnes Wilson, Ray Ralph, Letha Hammond, Ed Paulsen, Gertie Ralph.

By 1887, student enrollment at Lewiston jumped again significantly to 65 students, which is similar to the enrollment in 2024. In the fall of 1892, it appears that Winnie Blakemore was the new teacher at Lewiston, given the repeated \$70 payments to her in the warrant records each month during that school year – the going rate for teachers. However, in August 1895, no teacher was yet named for Lewiston in the local paper, although the district was prepared to pay as much as \$75 per month, and there were 43 students enrolled (with an average attendance of 33 in the spring) and waiting for school to start.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes, local schools had difficulty finding teachers to hire, much like they still do today.

In 1896, it was reported that the Lewiston School House had been re-shingled, thoroughly repaired, and repainted inside and out "under the superintendency of Mr. George Klein, one of the trustees who has taken great interest in the improvements." The article declared, "With the school house in its beautiful location, and the new Congregational church just completed near by [sic], Lewiston can boast of public buildings second to none in the county".<sup>14</sup> Also, in 1896, the school district hired teacher L. P. Dunkley, who opened the spring term on Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> of that year. He taught the very next fall term as well.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Dunkley returned to teach some years later in the winter of 1903 when there were only 16 students enrolled. His "efficiency as a teacher is evidenced by the high character of the school room work and the enthusiasm enkindled among the pupils that is inspiring a number to advanced study."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Superintendent's Record", The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society.

<sup>13</sup> "Our Public Schools", *The Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1895.

<sup>14</sup> "Local Brevities", *The Trinity Journal*, November 21, 1896.

<sup>15</sup> "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, February 29, 1896; and "Schools Closed", *The Trinity Journal*, December 19, 1896.

<sup>16</sup> "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, December 12, 1903.

Miss Lucy F. Phillips was teaching at Lewiston in the fall of 1899 when 25 students were enrolled; however, only 16 were present during another official visit. Her salary was \$70 per month. The student's order and attention were reported as "Good," as was their progress in all subject areas.<sup>17</sup> In October of that year, the students of Lewiston school, led by Miss Phillips, provided a successful entertainment night to benefit the library fund. "The well-rendered program consisted of pretty songs, numerous recitations and music, and at its conclusion ice cream and cake were served and a pleasant social was held till a late hour." The event generated \$36.40 for the benefit.<sup>18</sup>

For many years, the old schoolhouse had no plumbing or running water. Water was gathered from a nearby well, and the students drank water from a bucket with a common dipper. The schoolhouse also served as a town hall, a meeting place, a polling place, and a venue for performances, balls, benefit dinners, and church socials.<sup>19</sup> In later years, girls' and boys' anterooms were added along with other additions.<sup>20</sup>

By the spring of 1901, the teacher had changed to Miss Cora Woodbury with a salary of \$70 per month. She only had 18 students enrolled.<sup>21</sup> Miss Lucy Phillips of Lewiston was once again teaching at her hometown school in the fall of 1901 when there was a significant increase to 25 students. She was still teaching there in 1903 until her death in September of that year due to a severe illness. Teacher Mrs. Cora Woodbury-Gehm had already died in 1902 from a stomach issue.<sup>22</sup> Both were only in their early 30s. The other teachers of Trinity County wrote that these two women were "two of the brightest minds and kindest natures, who have engaged in the work of education in Trinity County, and who had shown diligence and industry and patience and love in the training of our youth...". They also stated that "the teachers of Trinity County extend their deep and heartfelt sympathy to members of the bereaved families..."<sup>23</sup>

In 1917, teacher Miss Rosalind Johnson opened the school in August. Miss Johnson had also taught in the district two years previous.<sup>24</sup> In the 1918-19 school year, there were only 19 students enrolled.<sup>25</sup> By the school year 1920-21, two teachers were listed in the District Directory: Anita L. Wise and Florence R. Clayton.<sup>26</sup> Likely, the first woman taught the fall term, and the second taught the spring term. This was often the practice in the county at the time, especially given the long winter break between the two terms, which sometimes lasted three or four months. In the 1929-30 school year, there were still 19 students.

A few other teachers of Lewiston School District are listed below. As can be seen, unlike many other districts in the county at the time, several teachers remained for more than one term, or they returned to Lewiston for another opportunity to teach there.

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<sup>17</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 113.

<sup>18</sup> "School Entertainment", *The Trinity Journal*, 1899.

<sup>19</sup> "Schoolhouse History", <https://www.oldlewistonschoolhouse.org/web3.htm>, accessed October 25, 2022, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, and "A Little About Lewiston" Compiled from the records and memories of Frank Ross and Commodore Kise, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1955, 11.

<sup>21</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 139.

<sup>22</sup> "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, March 7, 1903; and "Schools Closed", June 20, 1903.

<sup>23</sup> "Teachers Institute", *The Trinity Journal*, October 10, 1903.

<sup>24</sup> "Schools are opening", *The Trinity Journal*, August 27, 1917.

<sup>25</sup> "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 19.

<sup>26</sup> "Directory for 1920 - 1921", "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

1911-12 Charlotte M. Crocker<sup>27</sup>  
 1912-13 Isabel Campbell<sup>28</sup>  
 1913-14 Isabel Campbell<sup>29</sup>  
 1915-16 Rosalind Johnson  
 1916-17 Isabel Campbell<sup>30</sup>  
 1917-18 Rosalind Johnson  
 1918-19 Edith Larison and Anne Paulsen  
 1920-21 Anita L. Wise and Florence R. Clayton  
 1921-22 Florence Clayton  
 1922-23 Winnie C. Koll  
 1924-25 Winnie C. Koll<sup>31</sup>



Teacher Edith Larison

On September 1, 1930, Mrs. Florence R. Clayton opened Lewiston “with a dozen pupils answering to roll call.”<sup>32</sup> Enrollment fluctuated again as the years progressed. In the 1937-38 school year, there were 29 students. In 1938, the “Grass Valley Emergency School” was formed under the Lewiston School District even though that school had been closed since 1929. One source said that all the Lewiston children were taught at the Grass Valley Schoolhouse nearby that year.<sup>33</sup> However, the schools’ Annual Reports prove that information is inaccurate. It’s more likely that several children lived closer to the Grass Valley Schoolhouse than the Lewiston Schoolhouse, so to accommodate those children, the Grass Valley Schoolhouse was opened temporarily. In the 1938-39 annual report of schools, 15 children are listed in both schools, Lewiston and Grass Valley (with a different makeup of girls and boys). In the 1939-40 school year, Lewiston had 16 students enrolled, whereas Grass Valley had 10. In 1940-41, enrollment was 11 at Lewiston and three at Grass Valley. With only three students, it’s unsurprising that in the school year of 1942-43, the Grass Valley Emergency School was no longer listed as operating.<sup>34</sup>

Things changed for the better for Lewiston School when the Bureau of Reclamation began construction on the Trinity Dam in 1957, and workers brought their families with them to live in the area for the multi-year project. By September of that year, ten teachers were teaching in double shifts with 334 students!<sup>35</sup> In 1958, when the old Lewiston Congregational Church was no longer in use due to the building of a larger church, the school expanded into the old church building until the new Lewiston Elementary School District could be completed – essentially the same school building that exists today.<sup>36</sup> Of course, the enrollment dropped when the work on the dam concluded in 1962.

Jumping ahead a few years, a new gymnasium, which was 20 years in the planning, was finally to be finished by the start of the school year in 1996.<sup>37</sup>

People were beginning to think it would never happen, but after years of planning and saving, Lewiston students will return to school in the fall to see a new gymnasium.<sup>38</sup>

The 4,560-square-foot building was to cost a half-million dollars, a sum they had been saving for during the previous 20 years. Most of the money saved came from “Forest Reserve” funds. Since 1908, these funds have

<sup>27</sup> “Schools of Trinity Supplied with Teachers”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 2, 1911.

<sup>28</sup> “Teachers Travel 100 Miles to Institute”, *The Trinity Journal*, October 10, 1912.

<sup>29</sup> “Teachers and Clerks of School Districts”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 11, 1913.

<sup>30</sup> *School Directory*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, November 8, 1916.

<sup>31</sup> *School Directories*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

<sup>32</sup> “Personals”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 6, 1930.

<sup>33</sup> “Schoolhouse History”, <https://www.oldlewistonschoolhouse.org/web3.htm>, accessed October 25, 2022, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Annual Reports, 1939-1946*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education; and *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, 290.

<sup>35</sup> “Schoolhouse History”, <https://www.oldlewistonschoolhouse.org/web3.htm>, accessed October 25, 2022, 1.

<sup>36</sup> “Efforts take shape to restore the old Lewiston Congregational Church”, *The Trinity Journal*, February 9, 2022, 13.

<sup>37</sup> “The News Back Then” from June 26, 1996, *The Trinity Journal*, June 30, 2021, 17.

<sup>38</sup> “Lewiston School getting new gym building – at last!”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 26, 1996.

been provided to school districts in Trinity County (and many other counties in several states) from timber sold from national forests. This money is to compensate for the inadequate tax base in the county due to the high percentage (76%) of federally owned lands that are not taxed.

Armstrong Construction of Redding was the gym builder. The new structure was also planned to serve as a cafeteria and a site for plays and community activities. Until the new gym was built, students went outside during recess and PE or to a large aluminum building about a quarter-mile from the school. A classroom was also used as a multi-purpose room. The school board president at the time, David Klipp, gave a lot of credit for the new building to the former superintendent, Dave Taylor. At the time, the school's new principal was Sally Biggin.<sup>39</sup>



Lewiston, a one-school school district, is still alive and well today under the leadership of Mrs. Mary Thoreson.

See also [Grass Valley School District](#).

Lewiston, Calif

DISBURSEMENTS

WARRANT NO.	COUNTY	STATE	LIBRARY <i>Indian Aid</i>	SPECIAL
230 <sup>1</sup>			4 00	
314 <sup>2</sup>		140 00		
315 <sup>8</sup>	720			
322 <sup>5</sup>	70			
326 <sup>3</sup>	644			
353 <sup>5</sup>				3025
354 <sup>5</sup>	7			

Lewiston School District received Federal Indian Aid funding due to a significant number of Native students during 1927 and from 1933 to 1938

<sup>39</sup>"Lewiston School getting new gym building – at last!", *The Trinity Journal*, June 26, 1996.



c. 1875



*Lewiston School, side angle, date unknown, from the David Purdue Collection*