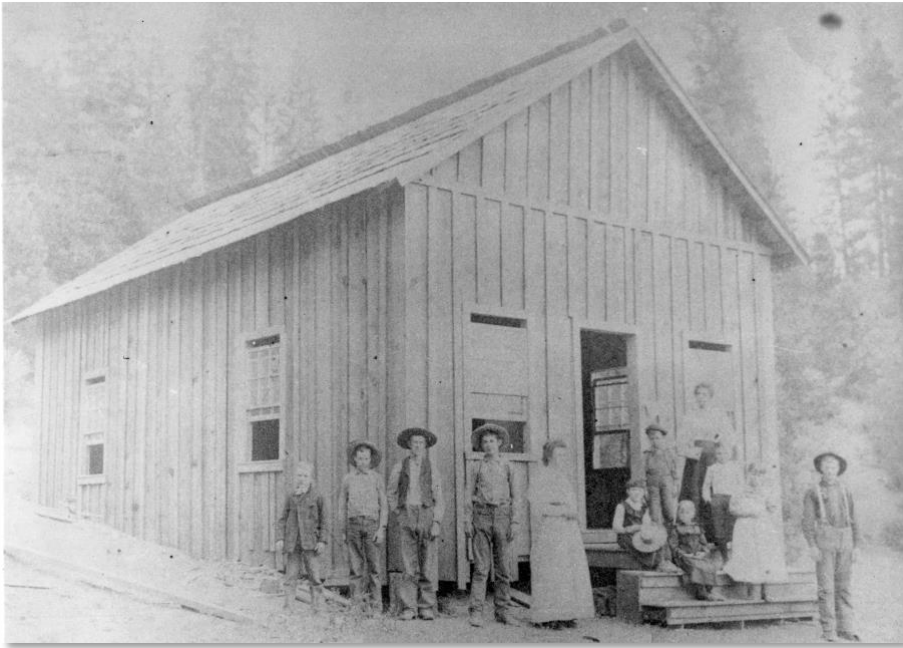


## Salt Creek School District (Also known later as “Peanut School”)

Near the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were a number of children who were of school age and living along Salt Creek in or near the community later to be called Peanut\*. The distance for these children to walk to schools located in Hayfork was much too great, so a school nearby was needed.<sup>1</sup>



Near the mouth of Dobbins Creek was a one-room log cabin with an open fireplace. The home belonged to Morgan Francis, a bachelor. The community-minded Mr. Francis agreed to allow his home to be used as a school for seven hours every school day. The only school equipment brought into the school was a few handmade benches which were arranged in a semicircle before the fireplace for warmth. Miss Fanny Doyle of Red Bluff was hired to teach at this community (private) school for the term of five months. The parents of her pupils paid her salary.<sup>2</sup>

Trinity County Board of Supervisors (who at the time acted as the Board of Education) were eventually convinced that a public school district in that area was necessary and, in January 1896, ordered the establishment of the Salt Creek School District. The new district boundaries were described as the following:

Commencing at the corner of A B Duncan’s ranch and thence running south along the west bank of Salt Creek (one half mile from said creek) to fourth crossing of Hay Fork and Red Bluff wagon road, thence east to top of ridge dividing the waters of Hay Fork and Salt Creek, thence north along said ridge to east and west section line between A B Duncan’s place and Ben Stinchacum’s thence west to place of beginning.<sup>3</sup>

From the first official visit to the public school by the County Superintendent of Schools, Lizzie Fox, we know that Miss Lizzie E. Rule was the teacher in May of 1897. She earned \$60 per month. Ten students were enrolled, but only five were present on the day of the visit. The students were doing fine in all subject areas. They were earning a “G” or “Good” in such subjects as Arithmetic, Language, Orthography, and Writing; they were earning an “A” or “Average” in such things as Reading, Geography, and History.<sup>4</sup>

Teachers usually boarded with the children’s families in the area. “Teacher’s Month” was said to be a great event at each home, and was eagerly awaited by the children when it was their family’s turn to host the teacher.<sup>5</sup> Some of the other early teachers were: Annie I. Fox (1900-1903 and younger sister to Lizzie Fox); Katie T. Weinheimer

<sup>1</sup> Duncan, Ora (Dolly), “Salt Creek School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan, Ora (Dolly), “Salt Creek School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 18, 1896.

<sup>4</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Duncan, Ora (Dolly), “Salt Creek School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 14.

whose salary in 1904 was \$65 per month<sup>6</sup> (1903-1907); Carl H. Lange (1907-1908); Masie E Bigelow (1908-1910); and Margaret McDonald (1910-1911)<sup>7</sup>.

Two of the very early graduates of Salt Creek School were Richard Cuff and Lydia Smith having passed their examinations and graduated in 1909.<sup>8</sup>

In 1911, a benefit dance was to be held in Kellogg's Hall, Hayfork, to raise money for the Salt Creek School. The dance was organized by "the ladies of that district". The dance was supposed to be held on March 17<sup>th</sup> but owing to "death and sickness" in the neighborhood it was postponed until April 21, 1911.<sup>9</sup> Holding fundraisers was not an unusual occurrence because the year before on April 15, 1910, also at Kellogg's Hall, an "entertainment" was held for the benefit of the school.<sup>10</sup>

In 1912, a portion of the former Wildwood School District, having been "Lapsed" (closed) by the Board of Supervisors, was attached to the Salt Creek School District, expanding its territory.<sup>11</sup> And in 1913, repairs were made to the Salt Creek schoolhouse by A. R. Ickert. He was paid \$15 for his services.<sup>12</sup> Possibly this was one of the reasons the school was trying to raise money.

Miss Ora Duncan of Peanut began teaching at Salt Creek in 1911.<sup>13</sup> In the fall of 1913, she was making \$75 per month.<sup>14</sup> She taught at Salt Creek for six years until she moved north to teach at the Trinity Center School.<sup>15</sup> During her employment at Salt Creek, she also attended courses during the winter vacations of 1916 and 1917 at the Chico Normal School (a teaching school).<sup>16</sup> She also sat on the Board of Trustees for the Trinity County High School District in 1916 and 1917.<sup>17</sup> She appears to have been a very dedicated and hard-working teacher. Miss Florence Fagan followed Miss Duncan as teacher at Salt Creek School in September 1917. That same month it was announced that Miss Fagan "gave a nice paper on Making the School a Social Center giving personal experiences to illustrate her subject" at the Trinity County Teachers' Institute.<sup>18</sup> She was followed by Miss Sadie Lowden who taught at Salt Creek in 1918 and through the end of the school year in 1920 when Agnes Rourke took over in July



<sup>6</sup> "Districts, Clerks, Teachers, Trinity County, 1904-1905", *The Trinity Journal*, November 5, 1904.

<sup>7</sup> Duncan, Ora (Dolly), "Salt Creek School", *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> "Board of Education", *The Trinity Journal*, July 3, 1909.

<sup>9</sup> "Benefit Dance", *The Trinity Journal*, April 15, 1911, and "Hayfork Notes", March 18, 1911.

<sup>10</sup> "Hayfork Items", *The Trinity Journal*, March 12, 1910.

<sup>11</sup> "Supervisors' Proceedings", *The Trinity Journal*, July 7, 1912.

<sup>12</sup> *Register of School Warrants*, February 28, 1913, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 292.

<sup>13</sup> "Local Brevities", *The Trinity Journal*, August 5, 1911.

<sup>14</sup> *Register of School Warrants*, February 28, 1913, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 320.

<sup>15</sup> "In the Local Field", *The Trinity Journal*, August 4, 1917.

<sup>16</sup> "In the Local Field", *The Trinity Journal*, January 15, 1916 and January 6, 1917.

<sup>17</sup> "In the Local Field", *The Trinity Journal*, June 3, 1916 and June 2, 1917.

<sup>18</sup> "Teachers' Institute was a Successful Gathering", *The Trinity Journal*, September 15, 1917.

of the same year.<sup>19</sup> For a complete list of teachers and their years at the Salt Creek School District, refer to the Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook, 1984, pages 50-52.<sup>20</sup>

It was typical for the school to close in the winter due to severe storms and heavy snow. As it was, children trudged to school through mud and storm in early spring, and in the dust and heat of the summer. Very few children rode to school on horseback; most of them walked a distance of several miles.<sup>21</sup>

At some point in the early years, with the establishment of the United States Forest Service, a special use permit (one of the first issued in the Trinity National Forest) was granted to Salt Creek School District Trustees for the use of the land for the school.<sup>22</sup>

At Salt Creek, recess often consisted of playing baseball and “Darebase”. Darebase, also known as “prisoners’ base” or “Chevy Chace”<sup>23</sup>, is a tag game between two or more teams on an open field and is somewhat similar to Capture the Flag. The ball used in baseball was often made by winding a cork with yarn, usually scavenged from an old sweater, and then covered with home-tanned buckskin and sewed tightly with twine saved from parcels. The bat used was a narrow, flat board that had a handle that had been carved to the right size by a pocket knife. Lunches were eaten out of tobacco or lard pails and often eaten under the pine trees near by.<sup>24</sup>



*Youngsters who attended Salt Creek School in Peanut about 1916. Left to right: back row; Wilma Shock, Lester Cuff, Leal Patton, Leslie Halley, Hugh Duncan, Willis Patton. Front row: Elvia Halley, Edith Patton, Ina Belle Shock, Harvey Duncan, Ralph Patton and Howard Duncan. Note: pine tree in this picture is still standing. Courtesy Ken Olsen.*

*Photo and information courtesy of the Trinity County Historical Society*

One former student recalled how some of the boys would imagine themselves to be grey squirrels and would climb the trees as far as they could go to eat their lunches, “chattering and scolding the while”. However, the game came to a tragic end when one of the boys fell out of a tree and did not regain consciousness for more than three days.<sup>25</sup>

In 1951, after 54 years, the Salt Creek School was absorbed into what was called at the time “the Hayfork Valley Unified School District”. The USFS special use permit was canceled, the old building

<sup>19</sup> “Hayfork Locals”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 16, 1918, “Trinity Nuggets”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 6, 1920, and “Schools of County Commencing Work”, *The Trinity Journal*, July 31, 1920.

<sup>20</sup> Duncan, Ora (Dolly), “Salt Creek School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Duncan, Ora (Dolly), “Salt Creek School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> “Darebase”. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darebase>, extracted June 19, 2021.

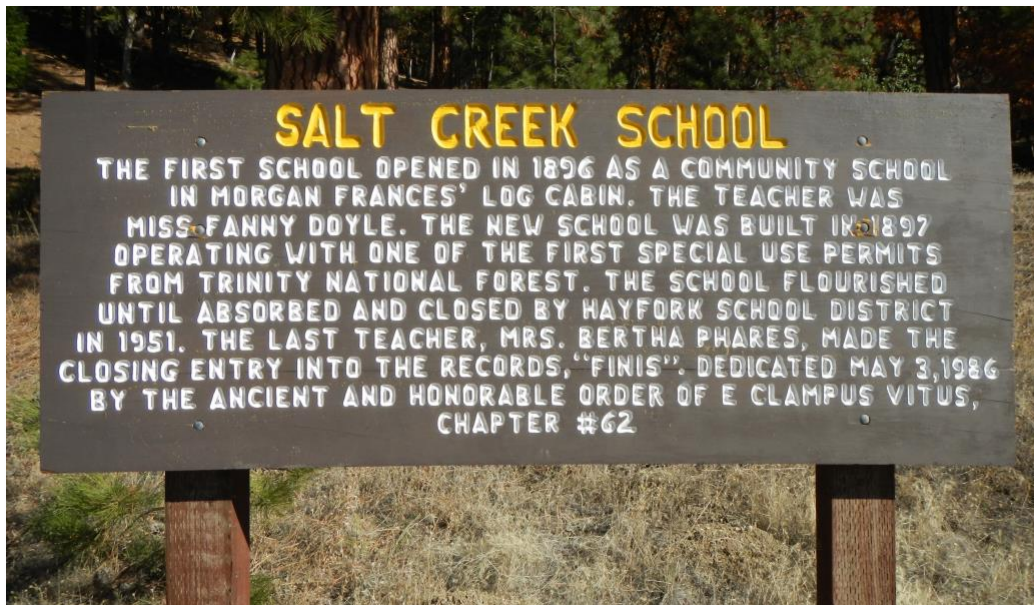
<sup>24</sup> “Duncan, Ora (Dolly), “Salt Creek School”, *Trinity County Historical Society Year Book 1966*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

was torn down, and the lumber was used to build bus shelters for students waiting to travel to the large, modern school in Hayfork.

Mrs. Bertha Phares was the last teacher at Salt Creek who made the very last entry in the school register and wrote “Finis” when the school closed.<sup>26</sup> Raymond (Ray) Earl Patton, Wintu Tribe of Hayfork, who passed on June 24, 2021, was said to be the last graduate of the Salt Creek School District.<sup>27</sup>

*\*Note: Apparently Peanut was named around 1898 by the Weaverville postmaster. He was asked to suggest a name and was eating peanuts at the time.<sup>28</sup>*



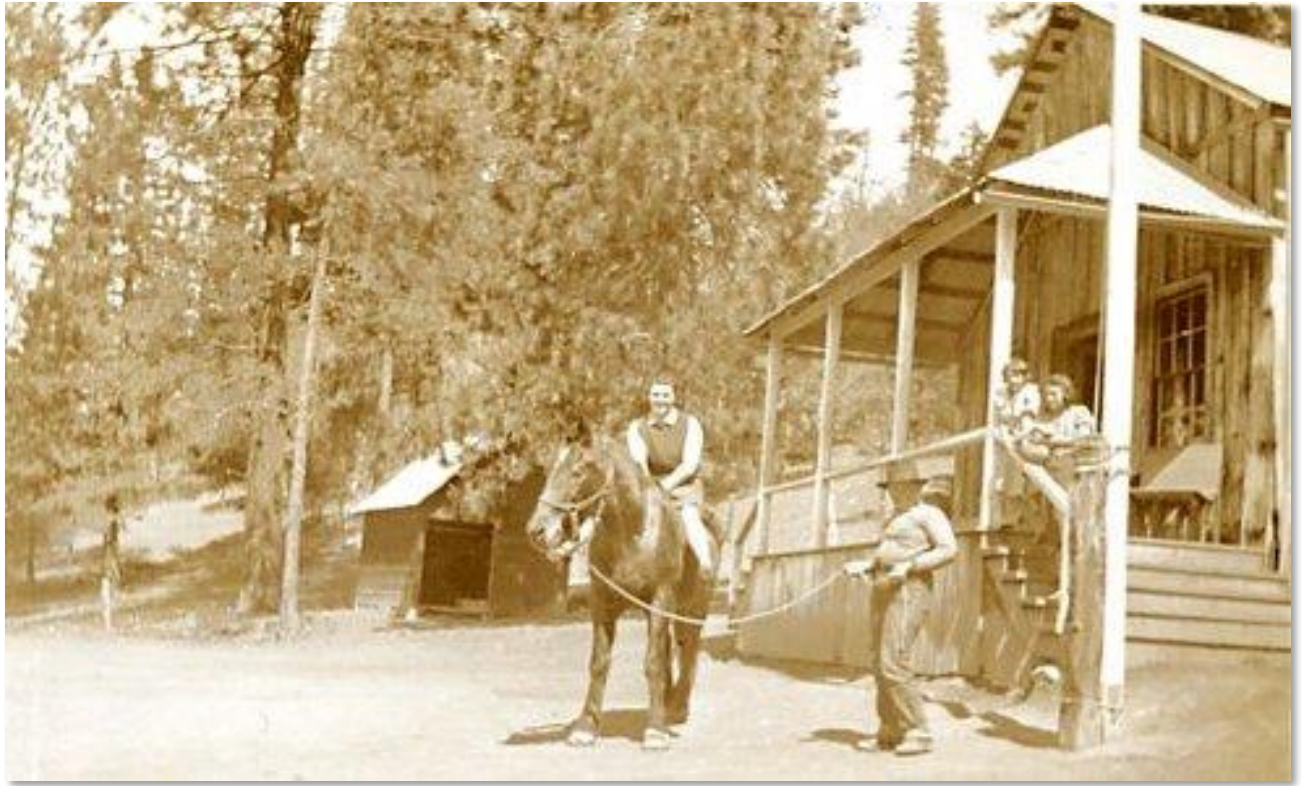
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[www.hmdb.org/results.asp?Search=County&County=Trinity%20County&State=California&StartAt=201&nu=2](http://www.hmdb.org/results.asp?Search=County&County=Trinity%20County&State=California&StartAt=201&nu=2)

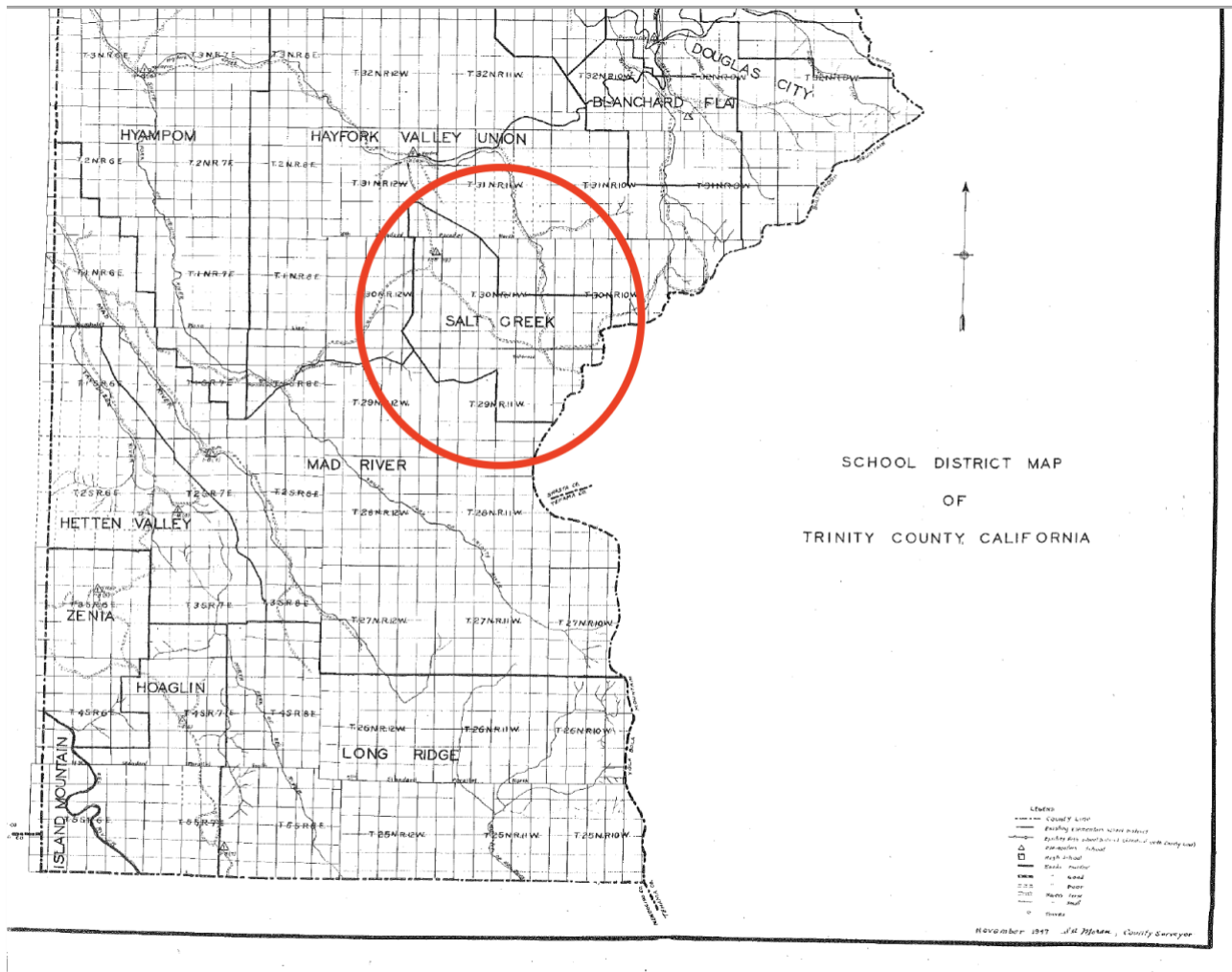
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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>27</sup> “Raymond E. Patten” (Obituaries), *The Trinity Journal*, June 30, 2021, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Bright, William, *1500 California Place Names, Their Origin and Meaning*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, 113.





School District map dated 1947, Trinity County Office of Education

