

Trinity Center School District

Trinity Center was named because it was situated at the center of the Shasta-Yreka trail. Originally the land of the Wintu, the first white community there was said to have been created by Moses Chadbourne in 1851. One hundred years later, several of the town's buildings were moved to the present location after the Trinity River Dam's construction and the original townsite's flooding in 1962.



Trinity Center School is one of the earliest schools established in the county. It was in operation with one teacher during the 1862 – 63 school year. The 1862 county school census indicated that thirteen four- to 18-year-olds lived in the community of Trinity Center. By January of 1866, the school district received state apportionment funding for 28 school-age children.¹

In 1867, the school was looking for a teacher and advertised in the local paper on October 12th:

Teacher wanted – A school teacher is wanted in Trinity Center District for two months. Salary: \$50 per month.²

In January of 1871, another advertisement for a teacher was posted, however, this time the salary had been reduced:

TEACHER WANTED – The trustees of Trinity Center School District want a teacher for five months and offer to pay the liberal salary to one well-qualified, the sum of \$45 per month and board. There is [SIC] only about 10 scholars in the district and no danger of fever or ague this season. This is an excellent opening for some enterprising young lady.³

A few years later, in 1883, Miss Hayes taught at the school. The salary had increased by \$25 to a total of \$70 per month in twelve years – which was the going rate at the time. The 30 first- and second-graders who were enrolled at that time were all reported to be doing well in their studies.⁴

In March of 1894, two “entertainments” were held at the school a few weeks apart, delivered by the students through organ, guitar, song, and recitation. The first was held on the 2nd of March and was called a “Whittier Day” (possibly for John Greenleaf Whittier, poet). The following was a “Longfellow Day” (for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow):

¹ “School Fund”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 6, 1866.

² “Teacher Wanted”, *The Trinity Journal*, October 12, 1867.

³ Trinity Center Elementary School Board of Trustees, “Educating Trinity Center Chapter VIII”, *Trinity Center Now and Then*, 57.

⁴ *Superintendent's Record*, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society, 1883.

The selections for both days were all made by the teacher, Mr. S. C. Garrison, and the manner of their delivery gave evidence of his thorough understanding of, and love for, his work. Each child has in his mind a number of gems from each of our great poets, worthy of life-long remembrance and an impression from the whole never to be forgotten.⁵

At the last “entertainment,” there was also an “enjoyable” game played in some manner not recorded, whereby aphorisms (the most common sayings) from the German language were recited by the students.⁶

A school census report for the next school year (1894-95) shows that the number of children in the Trinity Center community between the ages of 5 and 17 was a total of 72, 35 boys and 37 girls, with an additional 33 children under the age of five. While 72 students could have enrolled, only 38 students attended school that year.⁷

An article about the school appeared in the local paper in May of 1895. The report said that Trinity Center’s school was “surpassed by no other district in the county in the length of term, [and] regularity of attendance.” This was a real achievement, especially due to



Trinity Center School children 1887 from the David Purdue Collection

Trinity Center
Address Trinity Center

	COUNTY	STATE	DATE
Sch. Fund Appmt (Apr)	12745	1211	5/1/08
Gen. Fund Appmt (Apr)	3063	4595	
Sch. Fund Appmt (May)		7658	
Gen. Fund Appmt (May)	3063	4595	
ad. Tuition (3rd quarter)			52.
Sch. Fund Appmt (June)		7660	
Gen. Fund Appmt (June)	3064	4596	
		11973	56

Federal Indian Aid Fund

From 1934-1938, Trinity Center received Federal Indian Aid funding indicating that a significant number of students enrolled were Native American.

the severity of the winter and the distance students needed to travel, usually on foot. Under the teacher, Miss McGregor, the enrollment was 30, with an Average Daily Attendance (yes, “ADA” was a thing even then!) of 29. There were three students promoted to the 9th grade: Lena Larsen, Viola Mathews, and Ettie Parry. Miss Ettie Parry also received a prize for the best work in spelling, and nine students attained regular attendance of over 95 percent.⁸ That August, Miss Anna McGregor was hired to teach there for \$80 per month. This was a very high salary for the time when most teachers in the county were receiving between \$60 – \$70 per month. There were 34 students enrolled, with an average attendance of 29. By spring, the highest enrollment for the year was at 42.⁹

⁵ “Trinity Center School Entertainments”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 7, 1894.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Trinity Center Elementary School Board of Trustees, “Educating Trinity Center Chapter VIII”, *Trinity Center Now and Then*, 57.

⁸ “Trinity Center School”, *The Trinity Journal*, May 11, 1895.

⁹ Trinity Center Elementary School Board of Trustees, “Educating Trinity Center Chapter VIII”, *Trinity Center Now and Then*, 57-58.

The next teacher hired by the school was Miss Lucy G. Phillips, who taught for two school years, from 1896 to 1898. Under Miss Phillips's guidance, a new flag was raised at the school, and exercises were performed. Eventually, the schoolhouse needed some work, so by 1899, the school building had also been repainted and renovated, and "Its attractive appearance reflects credit on the community."¹⁰

The teachers following Miss Phillips were:

- Miss Helen Jewell who taught the 1898-99 school year
- Miss Winnie L. Blakemore who taught the 1899-1900 school year
- F.L. Hutchins who taught the 1900-01 school year
- Louis DeBrish who taught the 1901-02 school year
- Miss Ethel G. Marston, who taught the 1902-03 school year

There was more stability during the following school years of 1903-04 to 1905-06 when Mrs. E. E. Flower was the teacher. With the exception of Miss Anna McGregor, all the teachers listed above earned \$70 per month and taught between 30 and 51 students in multiple grades.

In March of 1903, School Superintendent Lizzie H. Fox made a visit to Trinity Center School District on horseback due to the poor condition of the roads from her home in Weaverville to the school.¹¹ Miss Marson was teaching at that time and planned to close the school for the summer vacation on Friday, March 27, of the same year.¹² Later, in December of that year, when the Trinity Center School District was taught by Mrs. Flower, the number of students had increased to 35. It was noted in an observation of the school, "...it is gratifying to report the regular attendance of the pupils and the cordial co-operation of the parents with the progressive teacher and trustees in aiming to promote the efficiency of the school." Despite what work had been done in 1899, the report went on to say, "It is recommended that the necessary repairs be made on the school property, and the children impressed that beautiful grounds and active schoolrooms are recognized as important elements in the essential education of children, and stir to active life the spirit that dwells in them."¹³

Two women who would become Trinity County Superintendent of Schools also taught at Trinity Center. The first was Mrs. Minnie Aldrich, from Trinity Center herself, who taught there for three years (1908-11) and became County Superintendent immediately afterward in 1911. The other teacher at Trinity Center who became County Superintendent of Schools was Maude Schroter. She taught there in 1914 and became County Superintendent in 1915.¹⁴



Minnie Ellery Aldrich, date unknown

It took a few more years, but in 1912, an election was held to vote a tax to completely remodel and furnish the Trinity Center Schoolhouse. The amount needed to be raised for this effort was reported to be \$700,000, although this seems especially high given what other school buildings cost at the time. The measure passed. A

¹⁰ Fox, Lizzie, "Our Public Schools. Their Progress for the Past Year Has Been Gratifying", *The Trinity Journal*, September 9, 1899.

¹¹ "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, March 21, 1903.

¹² *Ibid.*, March 28, 1903.

¹³ *Ibid.*, December 286, 1903.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

tax was levied on each property holder in the amount of 22 cents on each \$100 of the assessed value of property in the school district.¹⁵

Skipping ahead to 1937, Miss Lillian Cline taught at Trinity Center that year and was recognized as “doing some outstanding work.” Miss Cline and the students had created a monthly school paper called “The Trinity Center Journal.” Due to a lack of equipment, they had been unable to supply a copy to the county schools’ office, but they had hoped to get out more copies in the future. They also had an English Club which provided every student “an opportunity to get up and express his ideas in correct English. They are doing some fine work in pantomiming, giving riddles, and giving short descriptions of characters for the members of the club to guess. They are now ready to proceed to more difficult forms of expression.” One of the poems they studied was “There Was a Proud Mysterious Cat” by Vachel Lindsay.¹⁶ (To read the poem, see *All Poetry*, <https://allpoetry.com/The-Mysterious-Cat>, or the University of Michigan Library, found at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAH8721.0001.001/1:8.5?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>).



Trinity Center 1880, notice the over-turned outhouse at the center-right.

While many early teachers stayed at the school for two years, Mrs. Ruth S. White should be recognized as the longest-committed teacher before 1950: She taught at Trinity Center for six years from 1939 to 1945.¹⁷

By 1950, four different school buildings had been built and/or used at Trinity Center. The first was the “Hoffman home”; the second schoolhouse was located ‘opposite Lodge Hall.’ The third was built in 1885, while another one was completed and dedicated in 1950.¹⁸ The school building from 1950 was relocated, via moving truck, up to the school's current site and served as the preschool until it burned down in 2001. Before that fire, the school was already in the process of building a

new, separate classroom, still in use in 2024. The current school’s main building has one original structure built in 1962 that has been added on over the years. That original building was the first building constructed at the current site, even before the separate classroom. Further, a major remodel and roof replacement due to a mold problem was completed in the 2014-15 school year.¹⁹

The 1996-1997 Trinity Center yearbook shows a staff of nine and a “Resource Staff” of an additional nine. There were sixteen K-2nd graders, twenty-one 3-5th graders, and twenty-two 6th-8th graders, with eight graduates that year for a total student body of fifty-nine. There were so many students that the 3-5th grade classroom had to be

¹⁵ “Special School Tax”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 9, 1912.

¹⁶ “Around the County Schools”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 29, 1937.

¹⁷ Trinity Center Elementary School Board of Trustees, *Trinity Center Now and Then*, Prodigy Press, Menlo Park, 1950, 57 – 58.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, and from “Trinity Center on the Old Oregon Trail”, *Yearbook of the Trinity County Historical Society*, 1955, 8; Also, Supahan, Sarah, email communication with Stewart, Veronica, current administrator, business and office staff, June 2021.

located in the old school. Some of the highlights of the school year listed in the 1996-97 yearbook were learning to swim the back crawl, the side stroke, and the breaststroke in a pool at Wynton (north of the new Trinity Center - see map below); doing scientific experiments with representatives of the Forest Service at Lake Eleanor (about four miles from Trinity Center); learning gymnastics; Holding a speech night and six students going on to give their speech to the Lion's Club, with two students moving up to give their speeches at the State-wide Academic Pentathlon where one student won second place. The school was so large it had a flag football team, a volleyball team, a basketball team, and a Club Live.

Today, the school is still fully functioning, although the student population has dramatically decreased since the 1990s and is now often found to have 15 or fewer students from kindergarten through eighth grade.

See also **Stringtown and Coffee Creek Schools.**





