

Wildwood School District

Before its official opening as a public school, Wildwood School was functioning as a private school as there is a record of Cecilia Weinheimer leaving the North Fork School (Helena) in 1893 when her fiancé was killed in a mining accident, to start working at Wildwood because the school needed a teacher at that time.¹ Wildwood School was just one of the many schools in which Cecilia taught in Trinity County.

In the record of school district visits, located at Trinity County Office of Education, it is noted that the district was officially established on January 10, 1898, and indeed the County Superintendent of Schools visited the district on October 13th of that year. At the time of the visit, the school was taught by Miss Mary M. Hygelund who made \$60 per month and had 20 students enrolled, although only 9 were present at the time of the visit.² The Wildwood School was presumably located in Wildwood just east of Post Mountain off State Highway 36 in Wintu ancestral territory. The Wildwood School District was created by order of the Board of Supervisors who acted as the County Board of Education at that time in history. It opened along with the Cinnabar and Mad River School Districts.³



In 1901, Miss Mary M. Hygeland was still teaching at Wildwood and opened the Wildwood School on Monday, April 22 for the beginning of the spring term. She continued teaching into the fall term which began in July.⁴ In 1902, the teacher at Wildwood School was Miss Emilie Meckel for both the spring and fall terms.⁵ That year there was also an election for board members and Mrs. Wilson was elected to the Wildwood Board of Trustees, thereby ensuring that the school was still a public school at that time (usually private schools do not have officially elected board members).⁶ In addition, a note in the meeting minutes of the Board of

Trustees indicated that the election was held in the “new” schoolhouse. It also reported that Miss Meckle began the school term on July 7th and closed on October 31st. Her salary was \$65 per month. That fall, Miss Myrtle Birch was hired “to finish Miss Meckle ‘s term”.⁷ This began a period of time when a great deal of turnover in teaching staff occurred.

By the spring of 1903, Myrtle Birch was called in to teach at the school once again, this time substituting for Miss Martha Rowley of Cottonwood.⁸ In the fall of 1903, Miss Kathryn Parker was the teacher at Wildwood. She had 17 students enrolled for the term and the students were reported as “attentive, and [they] manifest much interest in the good work accomplished”.⁹ According to the warrant records, Miss Parker was quickly followed by Mary Price as teacher.¹⁰ Then in September 1904, the school was taught by Miss Clara B. Garoutte for \$65 per

¹ Morris, Florence, “Auntie Cee, Biography of a Trinity Schoolteacher, Cecilia Weinheimer”, *Trinity County Historical Society Yearbook*, 1967, 51-53.

² *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 85.

³ “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 20, 1898.

⁴ “Local Brevities”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 27, 1901, and July 13, 1901.

⁵ “Schools Closed”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 28, 1902 and “School Notes”, November 1, 1902.

⁶ “Election of School Trustees”, *The Trinity Journal*, May 31, 1902.

⁷ “Minutes of Board of Trustee of Wildwood School District”, *District Clerk’s Record Book, Wildwood School District*, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society.

⁸ “Schools Closed”, *The Trinity Journal*, June 27, 1903; “Apportionment of School Money”, May 30, 1903; and “School Notes”, March 21, 1903.

⁹ “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 7, 1903.

¹⁰ *Warrant Records*, The History Center, Trinity County Historical Society.

month. Miss Margaret Strouse taught at the school in April 1905 and opened the new school year in August of that same year. Miss Beatrice June Johnson of Redbluff was mentioned in the local paper as having opened the spring terms of 1906, and 1907 at Wildwood, as well as the fall term of 1907 on the early date of July 1st.¹¹

In 1908, Miss Flora Cotterill was teaching at the Wildwood School District and closed the spring term.¹² In 1909, Miss Nina L. Tipton was to open the spring term of the school on April 19.¹³ However, Wildwood School was suspended just three months later in July of 1909 by County Superintendent of Schools, Nellie M. Jordan, due to an average daily attendance of fewer than five children during the 1908-09 school year.¹⁴ The results of a school census were reported in May of 1909 and it counted only 13 children in the Wildwood area with only 6 of those between the ages of 5 and 17 (i.e.: school age).¹⁵

Following that time, not much mention is made of Wildwood School in the local paper except that we know it received public school apportionments on January 5, and May 29, 1910, but not in the immediate years following.¹⁶ We also know that it was used frequently as a polling place in 1910 - 1912 for various elections.

On July 7, 1912, Wildwood School was lapsed (closed) having previously been suspended. At that time, a portion of the school district's territory was attached to Ruch School District and another portion to Salt Creek School District, while all of the furnishings and supplies were sent to the Tule Creek School District.¹⁷

In other records, Wildwood School District was noted as being "new" in 1929-30¹⁸ and the school was listed, once again, in the School District Directories until the 1939-40 school year.

Interestingly, when the school reopened, Wildwood School District had the mailing location of "Knob", a hamlet about 8.5 miles away on current roadways. It's not clear if this was a location change for the school or if it was just the place where the Wildwood School received mail.¹⁹ In 1939-40, Wildwood was suspended once again

and its funds left over that year (\$73.00) were transferred to Hayfork Valley Union School District.²⁰ Intriguingly, Wildwood was still suspended the next year while a "Wildwood Emergency School, Knob" was created.



Wildwood about 1899

¹¹ "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, April 16, 1905 and April 20, 1907; "Schools Opened", July 27, 1907; and "Local Brevities", November 9, 1907, and "Districts, Clerks, Teachers, Trinity County, 1904-1905", *The Trinity Journal*, November 5, 1904.

¹² "Schools Closed", *The Trinity Journal*, June 27, 1908.

¹³ "Local Brevities", *The Trinity Journal*, April 10, 1909.

¹⁴ "School Districts Suspended", *The Trinity Journal*, July 24, 1909.

¹⁵ "School Census", *The Trinity Journal*, May 22, 1909.

¹⁶ "Apportionment of School Money", *The Trinity Journal*, January 8, 1910 and June 11, 1910.

¹⁷ "Supervisors' Proceedings", *The Trinity Journal*, July 13, 1912.

¹⁸ "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 1929-30, 2.

¹⁹ "School District Directories", Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

²⁰ "Detailed report of transfers of school district funds", 36.

Wildwood School had to have been open again in 1951 because, it's noted in other sources, that a new building for the school was constructed that year. An additional room was added in the spring of 1955. In 1956 there were 50 children enrolled with Mrs. Winifred Bridge and Mr. Wesley George as teachers.²¹ By 1955 the school was absorbed into the Hayfork Valley Union School District which operated it, among others.²² There were 37 students at the Wildwood School in 1969, and in 1970 the student population was reduced to 24.²³ According to the California School Directory, the school, "located in Platina", was closed in 1989 as part of the Hayfork Valley Union Elementary School District.²⁴

See also **Hayfork Schools.**

²¹ "A Short History of the Schools in Trinity County" *The Trinity Journal*, 1956, 4, (NOTE: This was obtained from the Trinity County Historical Society; may also have been published as "Trinity County Schools Growing With California", Printed in the Trinity Journal, January 28, 1956, Centennial Edition).

²² "Trinity County Schools Growing With California", *The Trinity Journal*, January 28, 1956, Centennial Edition.

²³ "County Schools Enrollment Shows Little Change", *Trinity County School Bulletin*, October 1970.

²⁴ "School Directory", California Department of Education, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/SchoolDirectory/details?cdscode=53717046053748>, accessed March 8, 2024.