

Zenia School District

The town of “Zenia” in Lassik ancestral territory, is said to be either the name given to it by a girl who lived at Blocksburg, a community some miles away, or was named “Zenia” by postmaster George Croyden, after a girl by the same name. Zenia was certainly a better option than the original name: “Poison Camp”. This was named by white men whose cattle were poisoned by larkspur in the area in the 1860s. In some references, it’s said that the school there was at one time known as “Poison Camp School”.¹

The Zenia School was said to have begun in July of 1897 upon the division of the Hettenshaw School District.² Because there are no official records of the school existing at this time as a public school, it had to have begun as a private school, paid for by the parents of the children who attended. This is also interesting information because in the records of an official school visit two years later in 1899, Hettenshaw School was noted as “Hettenshaw (Zenia P.O. Poison Camp)”. Similarly in the records of a visit in 1906, the title of the same district was given as “Hettenshaw, Poison Camp”.³ It’s clear that the early schools in Trinity County history were often moved due to the needs of the community and the changing number of children in specific areas. Sometimes the schools were renamed, sometimes not. It makes for complications in telling each school’s story. This appears to be one of those incidents.



The first Zenia Schoolhouse was said to be located a short distance outside of the town of Zenia on the south side of the road across from the Zenia Guard Station.⁴ The school was located on one acre of land donated to the “Hettenshaw School District” which was receiving state apportionments (funding) by 1876. This

appears to mean that the public school district, Hettenshaw, had claimed the private school called Zenia as one of its own schools. The land was donated for the Zenia schoolhouse by store owner, Samuel Ledgerwood in 1898 and was located on the Southwestern corner of his

¹ “Zenia”, *Trinity Historical Society Yearbook*, 1955, 28; and Durham, David, *California’s Geographic Names*, Quill Driver Books, 1998, 172 found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenia,_California, accessed September 30, 2022.

² Reneau, Susan, “Burgess Recalls Zenia School History”; unidentified newspaper article, undated, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education; and *The Trinity Journal*, January 26, 1856.

³ *Record of School Visits*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

⁴ Jones, Alice Goen, Ed., “*Trinity County Historic Sites*”, Trinity County Historical Society, Weaverville, 1981, 355-356.

property. The witness on the handwritten deed was E. F. Burgess and it was recorded by R. L. Carter (see a copy of the deed on page 78).⁵

Henry M. Marvel, later of Ferndale, taught the very first year, in 1897, for half a year.⁶ That year the ages of the students ranged from three years to eighteen years old, with about eighteen students in attendance.⁷ The most students enrolled at any one time was 35 or 38 students (depending on the source). Following Mr. Marvel was John S. Reid who later became the County District Attorney. Joseph McKnight was the next teacher who later became the Superintendent of Schools, completing the term of office for his predecessor in 1910. Following Mr. McKnight there was a long line of teachers coming from as far away as San Francisco, Oakland, and Gilroy.⁸

On February 7, 1898, one acre of land was deeded to the "Hettenshaw School District", donated by store owner, Samuel Ledgerwood⁹ and was located on the Southwestern corner of his property. The witness on the handwritten deed was E. F. Burgess and it was recorded by R. L. Carter (see a copy below).¹⁰ This land was set aside for the Zenia Schoolhouse. Hettenshaw District was well established and had been receiving state apportionments (funding) since around 1876, so it appears to mean that the public school district, Hettenshaw, had claimed the private school called Zenia as one of its own (public) schools.

In January of 1901, Zenia School *District* was established as its own public school district by the county and began receiving apportionments directly from the state. It was visited by the County Superintendent of Schools that same year. Miss Lillian T. White was the teacher at the time with 19 students enrolled and all were doing well in their studies. Her salary was \$65 per month.¹¹ For the spring term of the 1902-03 school year, the school didn't open until nearly the end of April in 1903.¹² In the fall of 1903, Miss. White was still teaching with Mrs. C. B. Rice as the Clerk of the school board.¹³ That fall term, the school closed for the winter vacation sometime before November 7, 1903.¹⁴ It was not unusual at that time in history to have a very long winter break between the fall and spring terms.

Miss White had continued as the teacher in Zenia during the fall of 1904. She was still paid \$65 per month.¹⁵ By June 21, 1904, a person by the name of Aldah L. Levato was listed as the teacher of 16 students. This information was hand-written on lined paper and pasted into the school visit book. There was also a handwritten expense claim addressed to Superintendent Lizzie Fox, stating that it took three days to make the trip to the school for the official visit by the Deputy Superintendent, Harry C. Jeans, and the cost was \$3 per day with the "expense on horse" an additional \$1.50. The report of that visit listed the student's reading and arithmetic progress as

⁵ "Deed of Grant", Civil Code of California, 1092, 25/657 Deeds, signed February 7, 1898, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Reneau, Susan, "Burgess recalls Zenia School History", unidentified newspaper article, undated, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education; and "Trinity County Schools Growing With California", *The Trinity Journal*, January 28, 1956, Centennial Edition.

⁹ Ibid.; and a copy of the Deed of Grant, recorded on March 9, 1898, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

; and "A Short History of the Schools in Trinity County", *The Trinity Journal*, 1956, 7.

¹⁰ "Deed of Grant", Civil Code of California, 1092, 25/657 Deeds, signed February 7, 1898, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

¹¹ *Warrant Records and A Record of School Visits*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 159.

¹² "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, April 18, 1903.

¹³ "Districts, Clerks, Teachers", *The Trinity Journal*, October 17, 1903.

¹⁴ "School Notes", *The Trinity Journal*, November 7, 1903.

¹⁵ "Districts, Clerks, Teachers", *The Trinity Journal*, November 5, 1904.

only “Fair” but their language was “Extra good”. Curiously, the official recording of a visit just a day later listed the teacher as Miss Lillian White¹⁶ also with 16 students, so the hand-written notes had to have either been pasted under the wrong year, or Aldah Levato was a substitute for Miss White or Aldah Levato had resigned suddenly. Confirming the information in another official visit, this time in October of 1904, the record indeed states that Miss Lillian T. White continued from the spring of 1904 to teach the autumn term of the same year as well.

Miss Ethel McRae taught in the spring of 1905. That year the school had gained a student and all were doing well in each of the subject areas.¹⁷

Miss Harriet N. Deering was teaching in June of 1906 for \$75 per month. She was an experienced teacher of 12 years. The length of the spring term that year was four months. There were 14 students enrolled and they were reported as being attentive and studious. They also had a set of new “Readers” and their math books were from the state series, however they had no library and no shelves to hold books, and the condition of their schoolhouse “should be improved”.¹⁸



In September of 1911, Miss Leah Guthrie of Rohnerville was teaching at Zenia.¹⁹ But by the fall term of 1912, Laura E. Thayer was teaching there for \$75 per month. In the spring of 1912 Edward F. Burgess Jr. returned to teach at Zenia, also for the same salary.²⁰

Miss Mary Louise Joseph from Douglas City was teaching in the spring of 1914.²¹ A year later, in the spring of 1915, Miss Joseph (who became Mrs. Albert Burgess) was still teaching at Zenia, but in 1916 Edward Burgess returned yet again to Zenia to teach there.²²

¹⁶ *A Record of School Visits*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 224.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 230; and “School Notes”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 5, 1904.

¹⁸ *A Record of School Visits*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 273.

¹⁹ “Schools of Trinity Supplied with Teachers”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 2, 1911.

²⁰ *Warrant Records*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, and *The Trinity Journal*, April 6, 1912.

²¹ *The Trinity Journal*, July 4, 1914.

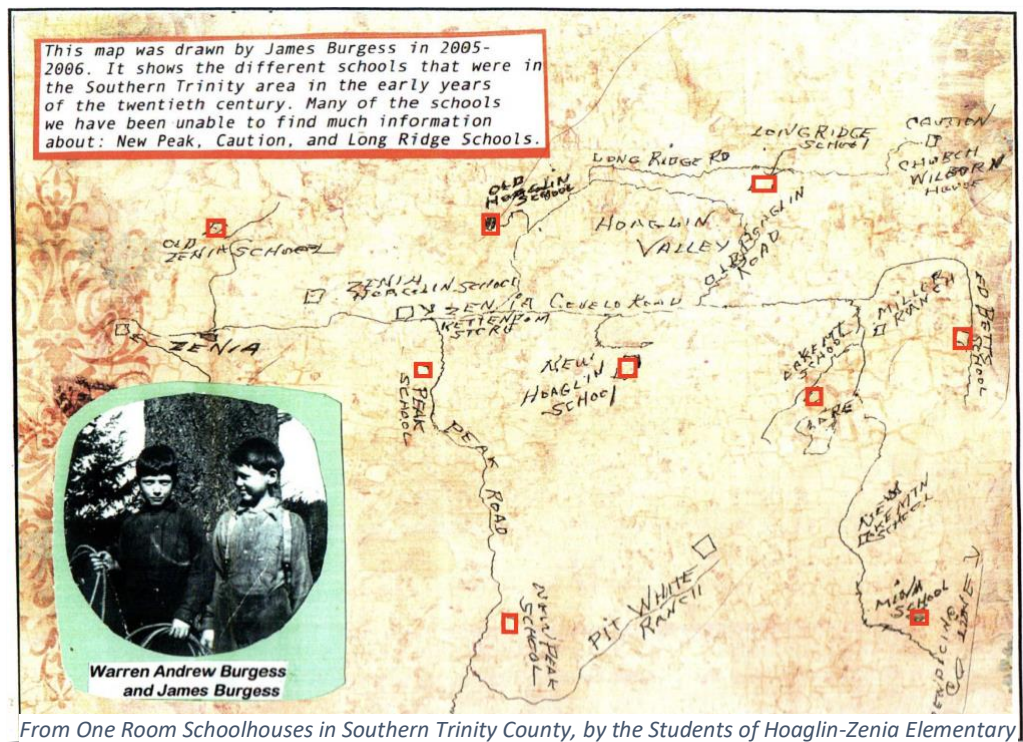
²² *The Trinity Journal*, April 3, 1915 and April 1, 1916,

Another Zenia schoolhouse was said to be built north of the current post office in 1916²³ or the summer of 1917²⁴ In an official school visit on October 11, 1916, a note says that a new schoolhouse “will be constructed for Zenia School in [school year] 1916-17”.²⁵ It was also said it would be erected in a better location²⁶. The new schoolhouse was built by Edward F. Burgess, George W. Counts, and Tomas C. Records, and the lumber and materials were paid for through a special school tax.²⁷

In March of 1919, the school underwent repairs. The floor was re-laid and the school house was finished in oak, “making it very attractive. It [was]... one of the best school houses in the county”.²⁸ The school had originally been built of split sugar pine brought from Grizzly Mountain. At the same time, the teacher’s and students’ desks were also made of sugar pine.²⁹

On May 3, 1919, another deed was filed regarding land for “the use and benefit of the Zenia School District”. The use of the property would cost “Ten dollars Gold Coin of the United States of America” and was given to the Zenia School “as long as said land shall be used for school purposes” by Henry Miller, Maybelle Miller, and Samuel E. Ledgerwood. The description of the property

begins: “at a black-oak tree, 25 in. in diameter, Scribed ‘B. M.’ being a Bench Mark tree on the survey of the Pauls Point-Mad River Road, Near the Zenia Store in Sec. 15, Town. 3 South, Range 6 East, Humboldt Meridian...”³⁰ It was this new building, built on this



From *One Room Schoolhouses in Southern Trinity County*, by the Students of Hoaglin-Zenia Elementary School, 2008

²³ “One Room Schoolhouses in Southern Trinity County, A Project By Hoaglin Zenia Elementary School”, 2008; Jones, Alice Goen, Ed., *Trinity County Historical Sites*, Trinity County Historical Society, 1981, 354; and Supahan, Sarah, email communication with Canale, Peggy, Superintendent of Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District and teacher at Zenia School, August 31, 2022.

²⁴ “Schools are opening”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 27, 1917.

²⁵ *A Record of School Visits*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 548.

²⁶ “Schools are opening”, *The Trinity Journal*, August 27, 1917.

²⁷ Reneau, Susan, “Burgess recalls Zenia School History”, unidentified newspaper article, undated, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

²⁸ *The Trinity Journal*, March 8, 1919.

²⁹ Burgess, Edward Francis, “Zenia School”, *Short History of the Schools in Trinity County*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 7.

³⁰ From a copy of the actual deed, May 3, 1919, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

property, which later became the Grange Hall also known as the Community Center. The Community Center had actually become somewhat controversial as the property was to revert to the original landowners should it not be used for the school. The issue was finally resolved and the original one-acre plot of land was recently (in about 2017) deeded back to the original owners.³¹

Other teachers who taught at Zenia School at various times include Mrs. Esther Short (Covelo); Miss Doris Mullins (Weaverville); Mrs. Isabelle Sanchez (Redway/Garberville); Mrs. Jane Hiends (Hoaglin); Hannah Watson; Verna Marshall (who became Mrs. Reynolds), and Don McRaw.³² Edward Burgess of Zenia came and went as the teacher there at least four different times. If there was an award for the person who taught the most school terms in one school in the early history of schools in Trinity County, Mr. Burgess likely would have won that award. In addition to his teaching in 1912 and 1916, he also shows up in school district directories as teaching in Zenia for at least the school years of 1920-21, 1921-22, 1922-23, 1924-25, 1933-34, 1935-36, 1936-37, 1937-38, 1938-39, 1939-40, and 1941-42. The gap in the school years between 1924-25 and 1933-34 may only be because those directories have not yet been found!

From 1935 to 1937, Zenia school received Federal Indian Aid due to the significant number of Native students enrolled there.³³

In the 1950s, there were two teachers, Mrs. Margaret Miller and Mr. Howard Miller, as the population of students had by then grown to require an additional teacher.³⁴ In 1956, there were 36 students at Zenia.³⁵ As there was no janitor, the students took turns sweeping the floor and cleaning the desks. Many students rode horses to school so a little barn was kept there with hay to keep the horses fed while the students worked.³⁶ In March of 1956, Mrs. Blanche Rumley wrote in the local paper that,

The Zenia and Hoeglin [sic] schools are in season now. It is rugged on the parents having to transport their children over several miles of our muddy and slick roads. The Zenia school is still in two sessions which makes six trips a day for the parents getting their children to school and back home.³⁷

On August 30, 1956, a newspaper article was published by Blanche Rumley stating that new school books had arrived at the Zenia Post Office and that the Zenia School opened on August 20 with Miss Louise McCormick as the teacher for the year, having returned from her vacation in Los Angeles.³⁸

³¹ Supahan, Sarah, email communication with Canale, Peggy, Superintendent of Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District and teacher at Zenia School, August 31, 2022.

³² Reneau, Susan, "Burgess recalls Zenia School History", unidentified newspaper article, undated, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

³³ "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

³⁴ Burgess, Edward F, "Zenia School", *Short History of the Schools in Trinity County*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 7; "Trinity County Schools Growing With California", *The Trinity Journal*, January 28, 1956, Centennial Edition.

³⁵ A Short History of the Schools in Trinity County", *The Trinity Journal*, 1956, 8; "Trinity County Schools Growing With California", *The Trinity Journal*, January 28, 1956, Centennial Edition.

³⁶ "One Room Schoolhouses in Southern Trinity County, A Project By Hoaglin Zenia Elementary School", 2008.

³⁷ Rumley, Blanche, "Zenia", *The Trinity Journal*, March 1, 1956.

³⁸ Rumley, Blanche, "Zenia", *The Trinity Journal*, August 30, 1956.

Discussions began in the spring of 1957 regarding the potential unification of Hoaglin and Zenia School Districts. A meeting was held on April 4th to discuss the idea and to answer questions. There was a very large crowd in attendance, and the meeting was declared “informative”. The procedure was then said to be underway to bring the unification to a vote.³⁹ A year later, in 1958, the Zenia and the Hoaglin School Districts merged, becoming one school district serving a larger area. The Andy Burgess Family donated property on which the new school was built. Inside the school building was an accordion partition dividing a large room into two classrooms. Later a kitchen and a small cafeteria were added and a wall was built in place of the partition. The first graduation was held at this combined school in 1959, graduating Barbara Sturgess, Dorothy McEwen, Jimmy Burgess, Sandy Whitney, and Ed Byrnes.⁴⁰

In 1977, Zenia was considered one of two one-room schools in Trinity County.⁴¹ Today the school is called Hoaglin-Zenia and is part of the Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District.

See also [Hoaglin School District/Hettenpome](#)

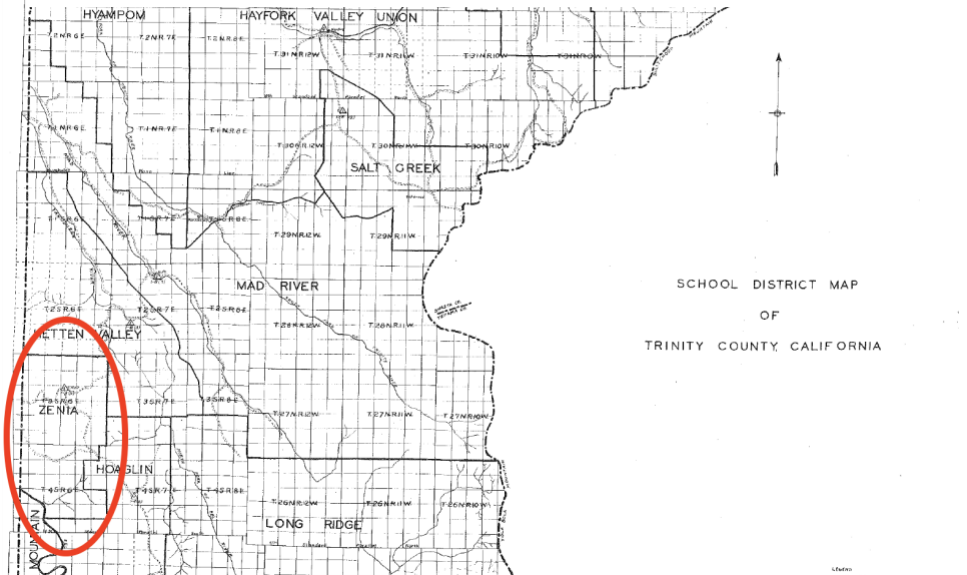
³⁹ Hall, Daretha, “Hoaglin Highlights”, *The Trinity Journal*, April 31, 1957.

⁴⁰ “One Room Schoolhouses in Southern Trinity County, A Project By Hoaglin Zenia Elementary School”, 2008.

⁴¹ Brown, Darlene L., (Administrative Assistant, The Office of the Trinity County Superintendent of Schools, Courthouse, Weaverville, CA.) 1977, Letter to Jan Parrott, Editor, CA School Boards Association Newsgram, Sacramento.



At one time this was the Zenia school building, but became housing for the teacher also known as a "teacherage". The car out front was the first car owned by the Trinity County Office of Education for traveling to school sites – a 1957 Chevy.



1947 Map found at the Trinity County Office of Education

Deed of Grant.
Civil Code of California Sec. 10927

I, Samuel E. Lidgren, do hereby grant to Wittershow School District free of all mortgages, liens and encumbrances, all that well known, situated in Trinity County, California, described as follows: In Township Three South Range Six East Humboldt Meridian described as follows: Commencing at the South East corner of South East quarter of North West quarter of Section 15. Running North, North West, North, North East, East, South East, South, South West, West, North West, North, North East, East to the place of beginning.

Witness my hand this fourth day of February, 1898.
S. E. Lidgren.

Witness
E. F. Burgess.

State of California,
County of Trinity

On this seventh day of February, 1898, personally appeared before me, Edward F. Burgess, a Deputy Notary Public in and for said County, Samuel E. Lidgren, known to me personally, known to be the individual described, and who executed the foregoing instrument, and he acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal this seventh day of February, 1898.

R. L. Carter Notary Public
E. F. Burgess Deputy.



Recorded at the Request of Lizzie A. Fox,
March 9th A.D. 1898, at 10:30 am. paid 11 am.

R. L. Carter
Recorder

Fee .80



Ready to board the Zenia School Bus, c. early 1960s. According to LaVerna Bartlett, the tall boy is Jimmy Burgess. Next to him is Tom Benninghoven. The students were very proud of their new school bus! Photo courtesy of Peggy Canale



The sign says "Hoaglin-Zenia School", photo dated 1974, made by the Zenia 4-H.

