

## Hawkins Bar School District, The Traveling School

In March of 1904, the new Hawkins Bar School District was established by the Board of Supervisors as an independent district, and it merged with the New River/Denny School. They both left the Lower Trinity School District and formed the two-school district of Hawkins Bar.<sup>1</sup>

New River had been an existing school for many years, even sharing the district title with another school: “Lower Trinity and New River School District” (see the history of New River Area Schools and Lower Trinity School District). Hawkins Bar had been a school site within the Lower Trinity School District.

An article in a local newspaper confirms the receipt of a petition from George Irving, the father of several children, to the Board of Supervisors, requesting that a new district be formed called “Hawkins Bar School District.” The district was to “take in all of New River and Lower Trinity, between the mouth of New River and Quinby Creek on the North side of Trinity River.”<sup>2</sup> The paper reported that an American flag was raised over the Denny schoolhouse in the Hawkins Bar School District on August 8<sup>th</sup> that year. The new district began receiving apportionments (state funding) in 1905.

The newly formed district is confirmed in official school visit records, appearing for the first time in a visit on February 14, 1905. A handwritten note in the visiting report says simply, “District organized.” This school district was said to be held in a schoolhouse at Davison Point in the spring and held in the fall at New River.<sup>3</sup> In 1899, the tradition began when students attended Lower Trinity School for the first half of the year (which often began in July or August) and New River School for the second half of the year (the spring term usually began in April).<sup>4</sup> This was likely due to the bad weather in winter at the higher elevations of the New River School in the town of Denny during the fall and winter months. In fact, one miner reported to the *Humboldt Standard* that eight feet of snow had covered the New River area in 1894 and that the snow was still falling<sup>5</sup>. This tradition of switching school sites continued when Hawkins Bar and New River Schools merged to become one district.



*New River School in Old Denny, 1904. Nellie Ladd photo, Bartlett Family Collection, a copy housed at Trinity County Office of Education. L to R: Hazel Dulion, Grover Ladd, Georgie Thomas, Martha Noble, school teacher Floy Lloyd with Steve Noble in front of her, and Willard Ladd in back with William “Tumsey” Noble in front of him. Martha was Steve and Sally Noble’s youngest child, while Steve and Tumsey were grandchildren. Their oldest child, Annie, married a Thomas, and so George Thomas here could be a relative as well. The building used to be the old Herricks Saloon.*

In 1905, the new district was first taught by Miss Floy S. Lloyd. She was paid \$60 each month for three months and then \$65 for four months. There were 18 students enrolled although only eight students were present on

<sup>1</sup> “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, March 12, 1904; and Warrants Records, the History Center, Trinity County Historical Society, 596.

<sup>2</sup> “Board of Supervisors”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 23, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> “Rich History Revealed of Western Trinity County Schools”, *The Kourier*, 1991; and *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 247.

<sup>4</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 111.

<sup>5</sup> *The Trinity Journal*, February 3, 1894.

the day of an official visit in February.<sup>6</sup> The school was visited again in September 1905, and it was noted that the school was being held in New River for the autumn term. Mrs. Mertie Trimble was the teacher. She received a salary of \$70 per month, and there were 12 students enrolled “for the school year,” but only five were in class that day.<sup>7</sup> It is entirely possible that while many students “enrolled” were supposed to attend the two schools in the district during the different parts of the year, perhaps not all students found a place to board so they could not attend both schools in the different locations. Lizzie Fox, County Superintendent of Schools, must have been worried about the lack of students since this new school district had just opened. A minimum of six students were needed to maintain funding for each district in California. There was certainly concern expressed by Miss Fox about student attendance throughout the county in 1904, so much so that the Board of Supervisors resolved that all school boards in the county be notified that the “Compulsory [School] Act of 1903” might be strictly enforced in the future in Trinity County.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1906-07 school year, the district warrants suggest that an S. A. Holman taught at Hawkins Bar for \$75 per month from August to June. It looks as though he or she continued through the fall term of 1907 when a D. S. Buterbaugh was the replacement.<sup>9</sup> It must have been expected that the teacher would teach at both schools at different times of the year, and the two schools would never be opened simultaneously, as there is only one teacher at a time listed throughout Hawkins Bar District records.

Roswell Koon was listed as the Hawkins Bar School District teacher in September 1911,<sup>10</sup> but he resigned due to poor health. It was said he’d been an excellent teacher.<sup>11</sup> By December 1911, Ethel W. McDonald of Burnt Ranch was the teacher of record, teaching six students. She had been teaching at the district for \$70 per month for two months. She began teaching there with 22 months of teaching experience.<sup>12</sup> Ethel McDonald was still the teacher in 1912 and \$70 per month remained her salary.<sup>13</sup> According to warrant records, she was still teaching there during February of 1913, although Elberta H. Bassham was paid mid-January of that year, perhaps for teaching during the preceding Fall term.<sup>14</sup>

In June of 1915, two of the Irving children, twins Ralph and Blanche, 13 years old, graduated from Hawkins Bar. The graduation was held at the Irving Ranch.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1915 and 1917 there were at least three different teachers hired by the district, some only teaching for a month or two. They include Idell McDonald, Elberta Fontes, and Nellie Sheford. In 1917, Idell McDonald was back teaching in the Hawkins Bar School District on a more permanent basis. The salary was still \$70. Worryingly, there were only nine students enrolled with only four in class on the day of an official visit in October 1917.<sup>16</sup> Miss McDonald continued teaching the next fall in November of 1918, but now only two students were enrolled.<sup>17</sup> The lack of students at Hawkins Bar could have signaled an imminent closure, but by 1922 the school had grown to seven students – just over the threshold for a mandatory school suspension. The notes of an official visit say that the schoolhouse was being improved and that Stella W. Patterson was an excellent teacher. Not only were the students making good progress, but it was reported in a second note that the ‘school had improved’. It’s unclear if this meant that the students were doing better in their studies – although their progress

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<sup>6</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 247.

<sup>7</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 252.

<sup>8</sup> “Board of Education”, *The Trinity Journal*, January 2, 1904.

<sup>9</sup> *Warrant Records*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

<sup>10</sup> “Schools of Trinity Supplied With Teachers”, *The Trinity Journal*, September 2, 1911.

<sup>11</sup> “Lower Trinity Items”, *The Trinity Journal*, November 4, 1911.

<sup>12</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 418

<sup>13</sup> *1912 Warrant Records*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

<sup>14</sup> *Register of School Warrants*, February 28, 1913, Historical Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 292.

<sup>15</sup> “Rich History Revealed of Western Trinity County Schools”, *The Kourier*, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 574.

<sup>17</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 8.

had always been reported as good or very good over the years – or if it meant that school building improvements had been completed. It was, however, noted that the porch needed repairs.<sup>18</sup>

Sadly, it appears that teacher Florence A. Laughlin was the last teacher at Hawkins Bar. She taught there for the 1923-24 school year until the district was suspended on July 10, 1924. She made \$130 a month. There was only one student during that school year, and the district could not be maintained without at least six students as required.<sup>19</sup> In May of 1926, the Hawkins Bar School District merged with Burnt Ranch, Cox Bar, and Lower Trinity.<sup>20</sup> However, the New River/Denny School was not gone for good.

**See New River Area Schools History**

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<sup>18</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 113.

<sup>19</sup> *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1905-1918*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 139.

<sup>20</sup> "School District Disbursements & Receipts", Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education.

# the New River Area

