

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

Introduction to History of the Schools of the Sierra Valley

In this issue of the Sierran we are beginning a series reprinting several of the articles included in a publication titled History of the Schools of the Sierra Valley which the Sierra County Historical Society published in 2004. It was a collaboration of contributions by many members of the historical society. In this first installment we are featuring the history of the Sattley School (Rocky Point).

Historic Overview of Sierra Valley Schools

Schools of Sierra County
Farris & Smith - 1882

Sierra County is divided into twenty-six* school districts, in all of which excellent schools are taught. The districts were named and numbered February 23, 1871, since which time but one new district has been created . . . Twenty-eight teachers are employed in the county, of which fourteen are males and fourteen females. There are twenty-five schoolhouses build of wood in the county. Ten grammar schools are taught, and eighteen primary schools, the average salary paid to male teachers being \$84.53 per month, and \$68.75 to females. The number of school children in the county between the ages of five and seventeen is 1,172; number attending school, 961; total value of school property, \$19,515. The receipts in the school fund from taxes collected in the county during the year 1881 were \$8,379.40; receipts from state fund, \$10,187.73; total for 1881, \$28,787.01, which includes moneys received from other sources. The tax levied for the support of public school in Sierra County for 1881 was fifty cents on each one hundred dollars of taxable property. The total expenditures for the year ending June 30, 1881, were \$18,000.

*Seven of the 25 schools were in eastern Sierra County; the remainder were west of Yuba Pass.

Sierra County School System

(Taken from The Sierran, Vol. XII, Number 1, Fall 1982)

The school system in the late 1800's was divided into primary and grammar departments. The smaller communities had only primary departments; larger communities also had grammar schools. The grammar schools were similar to our junior high schools.

Before 1908, few people sent their children to high school, as they had to be sent too far from home. In that year, the Sierra Valley Joint Union High School District was organized which included five districts in Sierra County and five in Plumas County. Loyalton had the first high school in Sierra County - in 1908. A branch high school was started in Sierra City in 1917. A high school was incorporated into the Sierraville School in 1918. Forest City had a high school in 1932. Alleghany started a high school in 1937, which the Forest City students then attended also.

Teachers for all schools had to pass an examination that was administered by the Superintendent of Schools. Sierra County did not recognize certificates from other counties, but a temporary certificate would be issued until the next teacher's exam was given. It was possible for a student, upon graduation from a good grammar school, to pass the teacher's exam and at the age of 16-18 become a teacher.

Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Cont. on Page 3) ➤

— THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY —



The Sierra County Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, holds an annual meeting, publishes a newsletter and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of Society activities, receive THE SIERRAN, and are admitted free-of-charge to the museum and stamp mill tour. If you would like to become involved in these activities or would just like to give your support, please join us!

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Become a Member!

Membership in the Sierra County Historical Society is open to any interested person, business or organization. Members need not be residents of Sierra County. Dues are due and payable each January for the calendar year.

Membership categories are as follows:

- INDIVIDUAL \$20.00
- FAMILY & INSTITUTION..... \$25.00
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In addition, Museum Renovation Project donations are gratefully accepted.

Please send dues and donations to:
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Sierra County Historical Society 2016 Annual Meeting

The Sierra County Historical Society will hold its annual meeting on Sunday, September 11, 2016 at the Loyalton Social Hall. The event will begin at 1:00 with lunch and a musical performance by the Stringalongs. After a short business meeting, there will be a tour of the Milton Gottardi Museum. The luncheon and the museum visit are free. Old-timers and newcomers alike are welcome to attend this afternoon of honoring Sierra County's rich history.

The social hall is located at 105 Beckwith Road, Loyalton, and the museum is at 605 School Street, site of the former middle school.

For lunch reservations contact Mary Nourse at (530) 862-1123 or mnourse46@gmail.org.



Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Cont. from Page 1) —

Sattley School (Rocky Point) 1860's – 1937

by William Copren

Sierra Valley was discovered by mountain men and gold rushers early in the 1850's. By 1860, when the Church family members started the town that would become Sattley, there were many ranches in the valley. At nearly the same time Halsey J. Yarrington, a Veterinarian, moved his family to the Sierra Valley and settled at a "spring fed meadow". This area became the town of Rocky Point. These New Englanders (i.e. Humphrey, McElory, Kutsen, Freeman, Yarrington, McNair, Newman, Chandler, Robbins, Ebe, Hale, Turner, Craycroft, Church, Hathaway) from Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts and New York who were the early arrivals brought with them a value system that placed education high on the list of priorities.



Sattley school children and teacher sometime between 1896 and 1907 holding up a large American flag.

Sierra County saw its first school founded in 1853, within a year of the establishment of the county itself. In 1856 the first County Superintendent, F.S Seabury, was elected to office. During the late 1850's and early 1860's schools were built in western Sierra County and in Loyalton and Sierraville.

The story of the Sattley school begins with the community of Rocky Point and the construction of the Rocky Point school. The Community of Rocky Point was located at a place called Yarrington's Meadows presently along Highway 89 east where the road turns off to go to Carmen Valley. James and Kimberly Johnson presently own the remnant of private property there. H.J. Yarrington had a tavern and a livery stable there. A post office was established in Rocky Point in May, 1876, and remained there until September, 1897, when it moved to Sattley.

The Rocky Point school, however, was nowhere near the community of Rocky Point. The school, located just south of the boundary between Sierra and Plumas counties on the west side of Sierra Valley on the road between Beckwourth and Sattley, was constructed in the late 1860's. Rocky Point School District is one of first, It was established on February 23, 1871 when Sierra County was divided into twenty-six school districts.

Here, though is one of the problems with understanding exactly how the school system worked in the late nineteenth century. Also included in the list of the first school districts is the Alpine (Sattley) School District. The Clare School District was created in 1881. This latter district covered the same area as the Rocky Point district. In 1881 all three of these districts existed. This is somewhat confusing because the Alpine District used the Rocky Point school building when the population of the area centered more on Sattley than on the north-central ranches.



Rocky Point School located in Sierra Valley. Students identified in picture from right to left: Jim Humphrey, Halsey Yarrington, and Lester Yarrington. Photo courtesy the Yarrington family.

Nevertheless, the exact location of the Rocky Point School has been identified through the use of a photograph that shows rocks and a tree in the background. The rocks remain and the stump of the tree still stands. The School was located in front of a small ravine directly in the middle of what is now Sierra County highway A-23 six miles north of Sattley and about a quarter mile south of the county boundary. This location is two miles northeast of the location of the community of Rocky Point. A wagon road connected the community to the location of the

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Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Cont. from Page 3) —

school. Another wagon road connected Sattley to the school location. Students from both communities of Sattley and Rocky Point attended this school along with students from the ranching families.

The Rocky Point School appears in 1872 in the Plumas County Records, quite possibly because students from both Sierra County and Plumas County attended. The 1892 Official Map of Plumas County shows the Rocky Point School District as a "Joint" District.

The first teacher at Rocky Point School was Mary Campbell or John Preston, both of whom taught there in the late 1860's. Educators who followed at the school included H.C. Hall in 1872, J. N. Mead in 1875; Mrs. C. Kendall, 1885-87; Mr. Stevenson, 1877; Miss. Etta Meily, 1887-91; Mrs. A.C. Coleman 1887-88; Alice S. Kingdom 1891-92; and finally Josephine Humphrey in 1890 and 1894. Hattie Hale, daughter of George Hale, also taught at Rocky Point School, quite possibly in the late 1870's or early 1880's. Miss. Hale was married to Frank Campbell in 1873. Miss Etta Meily also taught in the Clare School District during this period. At one time Rocky Point School had an attendance of 52 students. Raymond E. Yarrington attended Rocky Point School with two of his sisters, Ellen (Vann) and Jessie (Roberson). The school may have had more than one teacher occasionally. The Yarrington Photograph discussed above shows fifteen people, two of whom appear to be adults. Three of the students have been identified. The boy on the far right is Jim Humphrey. Next to him is Halsey Yarrington (1874-1923) and then on Halsey's right is Lester Yarrington. In 1881 Rocky Point District had 19 students and school property worth \$550. Alpine School District had 24 students and \$550 worth of property. It is possible that students from both districts went to the same school. Clare School District was formed in February of the same year and had 11 students and no school property. County Superintendent, F.H. Turner apportioned county school money to the districts in 1895. Both Alpine and Clare districts received county funds but Rocky Point District is no longer listed. In January 1896, the state school money was apportioned to the districts. Alpine received \$221.44, Clare got 177.16, and Rocky Point was listed but received no state funds.

Rocky Point School closed finally in 1896 or 1897. Based on the idea that it was easier to take the school to the children than to take the children to the school, the school building was moved closer to Sattley. The

Sattley School was the lone school in the Alpine School District. The school began in Sattley in the Fall of 1885 even though the Alpine School District existed in 1866 and the district was one of the original twenty six officially established in 1871. Alpine district received state and county funds in 1881. The district also owned school property by 1881. There is no physical evidence that there was a school building other than the Rocky Point school in the Sattley area. However the SCHS Sierran, 1991 reports that "Issac S. Church was responsible for establishing the first schoolhouse near his property and naming it the Alpine School. Obadiah Church was one of the first teachers." (It should be noted that an O.S. Church is listed as Sattley's first teacher by Sinnott's, Sierra Valley, Jewel of the Sierra [p. 178] in 1885.) The Sattley Sesquicentennial Story, 2002, p. 7, states that Issac Sattley Church helped build the first schoolhouse at a site known as Rocky Point. Finally, in 1895, Minnie Northrop was teaching in the Alpine District and Josie Humphrey was teaching at Rocky Point while Miss. Lizzie Glaster taught in the Clare District.



School children and their teachers in front of the Sattley School located one mile north of Sattley. This is the second location of the building.

Despite this confusion, all extant sources agree that the Rocky Point School was moved from its original location near the county boundary to Sattley. Some sources claim that the school was moved three times before coming to rest at its present location in Sattley. It is noted that the first move was to the Freeman Ranch. This location is just North of Sattley on property presently owned by Jim Dobbas, but prior to him by the Dargies, the Dottas, Devines, Freemans, Churchs and Hales. The school was moved using

Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Continued on Page 5) —

Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Cont. from Page 4)

teams of oxen. The list of teachers at the Sattley School is fairly complete however there does remain some confusion. There is a photograph in Sinnott, Sierra Valley, p. 175, showing Belle Alexander as the teacher with her students in front of the Sattley school in 1909. Belle Alexander was the County Superintendent at that time. She may have been substituting because Margaret Algar is listed as the Sattley teacher in 1909. It could also be that Ms. Alexander taught at Sattley until Ms. Algar could be employed since there is no teacher listed for 1907-08 and 1908-09 for the Sattley School. A second photograph of the Sattley School, when it was located just north of Sattley, (circa 1892) identifies the teacher as Bradford Newman. However the listing of Sattley's teachers shows that Anne E. Danby was teaching there in 1892 as was Minnie Northrop. Mr. Newman is not listed as a Sattley teacher at any time.



Gate in present fence west of Sierra County Road A-23 believed to have replaced a wood gate leading to the Sattley School's second location.

The new location of the Sattley (Alpine) School was north of Sattley hill in the meadow west of the Sattley-Beckwourth wagon road. The most probable location for the school appears to be in the field just west of a metal gate set in the fence along present-day Sierra County Road A-23. Sattley Resident, Emil "Bing" Dotta explained to this author that the metal gate was placed at its location (today without any visible reason) to replace a wooden gate that was in the fence when Sierra County rebuilt A-23 in the 1970's. The wooden gate led to what Mr. Dotta explained was the remains of the foundations of Sattley School that Mr. Dotta, himself, removed when his family lived on the ranch there.

There were teachers at the Sattley (Alpine) School prior to the 1880's but only a few of their identities are known. Maggie Williams was one of the first Alpine School teachers (C.G. Church history). Mary Calista

Turner-Miller also taught in Sattley (Sierran, 1991). The list of teachers from 1885 to the closing of the school in 1937 is more complete. These include O.S. Church, 1885-86; Miss Anna Emigh, 1885-87; Anne E. Danby, 1887-92; Minnie Northrop, 1892 (94?); Josephine Boyle, 1898-1900; William J. Copren, 1900-01; Ethel Perryman, 1901-1903; Helen C. Wight 1903-04; Jennie Shafer, 1904-05; Edna Hamlin, 1905-06; Jeannette Shafer, 1906-07; Margaret Algar, 1909-11; Mrs. Ida Olsen, 1911-1913; Mrs. Helen (Wight) Turner, 1913-15; Phebe Eicher, 1915-19; Mrs. Ida Olsen, 1919-20; Mrs. Rosa Merrill, 1920-22; Mrs. Helen W. Turner, 1922-26; Mrs. Rosa Merrill 1926-36; Miss Jean Innes, 1936-37.



Sierra Valley School (Circa 1892) Sattley School – Alpine District. Back row: Arthur Strang, John Burney, Harriet Church Humphrey, Edwin Church, Lottie Turner, Daisy Turner, Parker Miller, Frank Copren, Charlie Toomey, Suzette Copren, Jennie Toomey. Seated in front: Jennie Church Copren, Hattie Beaton, Alice Church Robertson, Agnes Berry. Two Boys: John and Charlie Copren. Group of three: David McNeer, Grace Foules, Charlie McNeer. Teacher: Bradford Newman.

The careers of school teachers in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries in Sierra County was relatively short. The students at the Rocky Point and Sattley Schools had a new teacher nearly every year in the early years. However, for the quarter of a century lasting from 1911 to 1936, Sattley had only four teachers. It was fairly common for women teachers to leave the profession for periods of time to bear and raise children and then return to teaching.

The students were a varied group coming from the families that lived in the immediate area or within three or four miles. The Circa 1892 photo of the Sattley

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Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Cont. from Page 5) —

school found in Sattley Sesquicentennial Story, 2003, p7, shows the following students: Arthur Strang (Note: Mr. Strang's birth date of 1881 is given on the photo and has been used to date it to approximately 1892. Many of the female students are identified with their future married names along with their given names.), John Burney, Harriet Church Humphrey, Edwin Church, Lottie Turner, Daisy Turner Parker Miller, Frank Copren, Charlie Toomey, Suzette Copren, Jennie Toomey, Jennie Church Copren (born 1883), Hattie Beaton, Alice Church Robertson, Agnes Berry, John Copren, Charlie Copren, David McNeer, Grace Foules, and Charlie McNeer. This photo is unusual for this type of picture in that each of the students is clearly identified.



Sattley School with teacher Rosa Merrill and class. Freda Church is oldest student pictured in the rear. Photo courtesy Russell Turner.

During the 1929-30 and 1930-31 school years at Sattley we have a fair record of the students in attendance from record of the different programs put on by the students for the special occasions as reported in the local paper, the "Mountain Messenger". For Washington's Birthday the children sang "Mount Vernon Bells", "Yankee Doodle", and "Our Own Lincoln". "America", "Tenting Tonight", and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" were also sung. There were recitations by Dorothy Martinetti, George Biaggi, Ida Biaggi, Ralston Adams, Francis Turner, Freda Church, Edward Turner, Albert Adams, Rita Martinetti and Margaret Biaggi.



Sattley School with teacher Edna Hamlin and 1905-1906 class. Photo courtesy Russell Turner.

Two short plays were performed by casts made up of Vivian Humphrey, Evelyn Biaggi, Albert Adams, Edward Turner, Elizabeth Turner, Elwina Martinetti, Freda Church, Margaret Biaggi, Ida Biaggi, Ralston Adams. A third play was an incident of Civil War days and was entitled "The Little Patriot in Hoops". It told of how a little girl got important papers to the President. Elvie Adams took the part of the little girl; Rita Martinetti, the mother; Gene Turner, the father and northern spy; and Marion Biaggi, who took the part of Abraham Lincoln. After the program Mrs. Merrill and Mrs. F.H. Turner served hot chocolate and cake. (Sinnott, SV, pg176.

"On June 21, 1930, graduation exercises for those to be graduated from the eighth grade of the Sattley School were held at the school. Graduates were Elvie Adams, Elwina Martinetti, Elizabeth Turner and Gene Turner. County Superintendent of Schools, Miss Belle Alexander, presented the diplomas. Gene Turner, Hazel Adams, Edward Turner, Albert Adams, Frank Turner, Rollie Adams, Bert Adams, Freda Church, Gertrude Adams, Elvie Adams, Elizabeth Turner, Margaret Biaggi and Elwina Martinetti entertained the attendees with a program of song and plays. The same group of students, minus the graduates, put on a long Thanksgiving program on November 28, 1930 in observance of Thanksgiving and Book Week.

The school building was moved at least once more, and perhaps twice, eventually coming to rest at its present location on the small knoll along Highway 49 above downtown Sattley. Emil (Bing) Dotta told the author that, according to Frank Turner, the school was

Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Continued on Page 7) —

Sattley School (Rocky Point) - (Cont. from Page 6) —

first moved from north of Sattley Hill to a location on the west side of the hill between the Turner ranch home and the Holstrom mill site on the east side of the highway. It was then moved again to its present location on the south side of Sattley Hill above the downtown intersection. Mr. Dotta remembers going to the school with his mother when she took his aunt to school when it was located at its final resting place. Elver Martinetti was the last, and only student at the school for much of the last school year of 1936-37. Miss Jean Innes was the school's last teacher, teaching only one student. The school was discontinued after the end of the 1936-37 school year and the Alpine district was incorporated into the Sierraville district.

The school building had been moved either two or three times, and the site, were purchased from the school district by Frank Turner and George Leslie in the mid-1940's. Mike Beck acquired the school and resold it to Ray Lani in the middle 1950's. Around



The Sattley School at its final location near downtown Sattley. In 1970, Edward Turner retired as a teacher and principal in Fremont, California and returned to Sattley. He had attended the primary grades in the Sattley school. He purchased the school from Mr. Lani and after remodeling, he restored the structure as a residence. The building stands at its final site overlooking downtown Sattley.

Concert Series Finale at the Kentucky Mine Amphitheater

After a lively summer of dance inspired concerts that showcased the blues, country, Cajun and rock music, the Music at the Mine Summer Concert series will present the final show of the season on Sunday afternoon, September 4th at 3:30 PM at the Kentucky Mine Amphitheater. We are warmly calling the concert "An Acoustic Afternoon" and the show will feature three groups that may "turn down the volume" a little but will certainly perform music that will satisfy one's soul. Co-headliners The Juliet Gobert Band and The Rattlin' Bones will delight the audience with muscular Americana folk music and compositions that harken back to medieval Europe.



Juliet's Gobert's band will feature the legendary harmonica player Homer Willis who has performed with many of the folk, country and rock artists that have shaped the sound and direction of contemporary Americana music. Juliet is a singer/songwriter who possesses a strong, yet beautiful



voice and loves to perform her well-crafted songs. The Rattlin' Bones are a trio of superb musicians who, between them, play twelve various acoustic instruments. While I cannot name all of these instruments,

simply visualize the classic movie, "Braveheart" or the mythical time of the "Game of Thrones". Their songs invoke traditional Celtic stylings, "back porch Appalachia" and tunes that may have been played to both medieval royalty and the serfs who toiled on their kingdoms.

Keep in mind that a BBQ catered by the Red Moose Café of Sierra City will precede the concert and will be ready to be purchased (\$16) and enjoyed beginning at 2:00 PM. The concert will commence at 3:30 PM and conclude around dusk. Tickets (\$12adv/\$15door) and related information for the concert are available on-line at www.sierracountyhistory.org or by calling Chris @ 862-1076.

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Bibliography of Sources for Sattley Schools Article

The author interviewed Elver Martinetti, Emil "Bing" Dotta, Russell Turner, Randal Church and Rita Bradley in 2002 and 2003.

The Sierra County Assessor's Office has a series of hand drawn maps of the county apparently prepared during the 1930's and 1940's. "Assessors Plats, Sierra Township, Sierra County, Calif." Was the document used to locate the dimensions of school districts.

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Photograph of Rocky Point School, Yarrington Collection

Turner Collection of Sattley Photographs. Russell Turner.

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Letter from H.L. Blatchley and Mrs. R.E. Yarrington to Mrs. W. J. Copren written in White Pine, Calif. March 17, 1965.