

A HISTORY OF
THE LAKE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Henry Mauldin, County Historian
December 1977

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ALCOVE SCHOOL

Some 4 1/2 miles south of Kelseyville is Alcove Valley which has Kelsey Creek running through it. April 4, 1892, an Alcove School District was formed. From 1893 to 1903, school was held in one room of Judge W. Thompson's home. The Thompson family lived in the home during school terms.

The Alcove School District was two miles south of Kelseyville. The teacher at first was Miss Ella Stimson of Lakeport who boarded and roomed during the school term in the same building that school was being taught in.

February 7, 1900, the Alcove School District voted \$400 to buy lots, build a school house and furnish it. April 3, 1906, they voted an additional \$275 worth of bonds to improve the school house and grounds. In 1903, a small school house was erected on a small knoll only a few hundred yards from the Thompson home and the west side of the valley and west side of Kelsey Creek Drive. The school house was used until it lapsed August 8, 1917. It was consolidated with Kelseyville School District October 17, 1919, and the Alcove School District was suspended about the same time.

An interesting sideline relative to the Alcove School was the John Mahnke family. In 1887, they homesteaded a mountain ranch not far from the county line, which was to the south. They built a log house out of nearby timber and lived and raised a family of nine children in it until a lumber home was built in 1896.

Their only way out from 1887 to 1912 was by trail -- 25 years of trail only. The children of this family had

to walk 3 1/2 miles each way to go to school. John Mahnke was Clerk of the Board of Trustees from 1892 to 1919.

The school house was abandoned and was moved a few hundred yards nearer the road and with a couple of small additions was made into a barn.

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ARNOLD KNOLL SCHOOL

One mile east of Finley and only a few hundred feet south of Finley Road East are the remains of an Indian knoll some six feet higher than surrounding land. Early settlers for Big Valley came into our area in volume during 1854, many with children. That part of our territory was then a part of Napa County and remained so until 1861 when Lake County was organized. In 1856, the Napa County Board of Supervisors established that part of Big Valley as a school district.

A school house was erected of rough lumber on the above Indian knoll with only backless benches for school furniture. Rev. Davis had taken up the land and as he was religiously inclined, he started a Methodist Church. South and church services were held in the little school house. There were less than 20 members.

Just when school ceased to be taught in this little school house is not known for all such records were destroyed when the County Courthouse burned in the 1860's. The building was still standing in the 1870's.

It is reported that there were a few burials on that knoll but all markers have since been removed or destroyed.

It may have contained the first burials for whites in Lake County.

Much later, a bachelor by the name of Arnold moved onto the property and built himself a small home. For lack of a better name it is known as Arnold Knoll and the school as Arnold Knoll School. The property now contains the home of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Dimauro.

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ARGONAUT SCHOOL

After the first school in Lake County started, east from Finley, there became too many children for the small building. It was then divided. One building named the Kelsey Creek School, was erected west of Kelsey Creek; another named Big Valley School was built 1/4 mile east from the present P.G. & E. substation which is at the junction of Big Valley Road and the Highland Springs Road.

At the latter school, it was questioned as to whether it should or should not be used for other than school purposes. During the period of ill feeling, the little school house burned down and each side accused the other side of burning it down to settle the argument.

Immediately west of the Lake County Fruit Exchange, now called Konocti Growers, Inc., a trading post was set up about 1866 which contained a store run by Gus McKoski and a blacksmith shop by Benham. Also, the first cheese factory was set up by Dan Giles for Lake County. Good reason also exists to believe that it was the first Post Office for our County.

At the time the school house burned as above mentioned, the very small building used as a store and dwelling near the above cheese factory was vacant. This location is known as the Argonaut Ranch. Children from the area which had been served by the burned school then went to this little vacant building for several years until the 1870's. Two of the known teachers were: Mrs. Joseph Boggs and Mrs. Cora Houston. The old building was destroyed recently.

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ARABELLA SCHOOL

Some 5 1/2 miles due north of Clearlake Oaks is beautiful Long Valley. As families started coming into that area there came need for a school. No other school was within a reasonable distance so the ranchers took care of this need by setting up a private school in 1878 financed entirely by themselves. After about three years the little school was closed and the building moved to the Kennedy ranch and from there to the Dow place.

September 13, 1868, a Post Office was started in Long Valley called Arrabella or Arabella. One member of the Kennedy family was Belle Kennedy. Trying to use her name for the title of the Post Office, they arrived at the name Arabella and the name was used for years. The location of the Post Office was moved but within the valley. At first it received mail but twice a week. It was discontinued in 1930.

When the private school in Long Valley closed, it was then replaced by their first public school and near the center of the valley. It was held in a hall-like building. A Miss Woodward taught there a while and during her time a kitchen was added. The John family lived at such a distance that they

could not come and go each day. The father brought the children to school where Miss Woodward and the children lived in the kitchen. The school became known as the Arabella School and was held in that building for around 20 years. Two Indian children attended.

The next move was to the upper end of Long Valley near the Garner place about 1892. John R. Garner built the last school house and the building stands today. Children from the other end of the valley then attended another school which was on the old road into the valley. Meantime the name Arabella School was changed to Long Valley School.

Lack of children was a problem. It opened and closed at various times. On November 6, 1913, the Long Valley School District was formed. After a period of being closed the school was reopened in 1927 and ran until about 1934 when permanently closed. The last year the teacher had credentials so that 1st to 9th grades were taught and three pupils received their first year of high school education there -- perhaps the only one room school to ever teach the 9th grade in Lake County.

Wishing the building to be used for community purposes, Garner added a steeple and bell so for a period of time it was a church headquarters. It was then used as a granary and is now privately owned.

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ASHLAND SCHOOL

The Big Valley School district covered quite an area

south of Lakeport. In 1871, a new district was formed from the southern end of the Big Valley School District. It was named the Ashland School District. In 1881 records tell us there were 45 pupils.

Many of our schools received nick-names. Ashland was known by some as "Hog-Wallow". Indians had dug a lot of holes to acquire the roots of the sweet anise. In digging for roots they left a hole that looked as if hogs had rooted it out --hence the name.

In 1892, Ashland School District bonded itself for \$1,000 to build a new school house which was built across the road from the present Lampson Airport. The bonds were paid off January 3, 1905. The building with modifications still stands.

The Ashland School was used continually for school purposes until the 1920's when it consolidated with the Lakeport School. After the building ceased to be used for school, it was jointly used by the Big Valley Farm Center and the Women's Club and was called the Big Valley Community Club House. The building was enlarged and for many years was enjoyed in that capacity. It was eventually sold and is now privately owned.

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BACHELOR VALLEY SCHOOL

From 3 to 4 miles west and a little north from Upper Lake is Bachelor Valley. This name came from the fact that in the mid-1850's the first four settlers were all bachelors

May 25, 1870, the Bachelor Valley School District was formed from the Upper Lake School District. Their first school house was some 3/8th mile northeast from the Bachelor Valley store and Post Office, on a small hillside. The building is now gone.

The exact date when classes were changed from the first school to the next and last site is not known. We do find the school district, July 10, 1906, voted bonds for \$1,000. This may have been for a new school house at the new site. Also reported is that the change from the first to the final site was done near the turn of the century.

The last school house built in the district was on a hill alongside the Bachelor Valley Road West. There was never a large attendance at either school. In 1881, there were reported to be 27 pupils. The last school had a bell, tower and only one room.

In 1920, the Bachelor Valley School District consolidated with the Upper Lake School District; that was the end of school life in Bachelor Valley. During its life there was one boundary change.

Some years ago the last Bachelor Valley School house burned but was rebuilt by the Bachelor Valley Community Club as a club house. It was the center of social life for the area, also Sunday School was held there and church if a preacher could be found.

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BARKERVILLE SCHOOL

One mile upstream from Indian Valley and on the north side of the North Fork of Cache Creek is a small flat on which was once the toll gate for the Epperson Toll Road, which is now the Bartlett Springs Road.

Seaton and Ephrim Barker, brothers, came into that area. Seaton located about one mile downstream while Ephrim moved to the old toll house site. Later this became known as Barkerville. To some Seaton was known as "Poor Barker or Little Barker," while Ephrim became known as "Rich Barker or Big Barker". These titles originated from the fact that Seaton and his wife had a moderate sized family while the brother Ephrim and his wife had a family of nineteen children while living there; later it totaled twenty-two children. This is believed to have been the largest family in Lake County with one father and one mother.

To teach their children, a school was necessary. So, for a couple of years or so, the Barker children went to school at nearby Hough Springs and then to a building in Barkerville. It was known as Barkerville Emergency School or as Bartlett Springs Emergency School.

Dates vary and we are not sure of when school was set up for the Barker children but it was closed in 1949. Previous to the establishment of Barkerville, there had been a small cemetery there.

BARTLETT SPRINGS SCHOOL

The Bartlett Springs Resort started in the 1870's and grew like a weed to finally become the largest mineral spring resort in Lake County. Some of the workers had children, so on May 7, 1873 the Bartlett Springs School District was formed with 19 pupils. The territory for the district extended to Clear Lake.

At the time, Green Bartlett was part owner of the resort. He objected to certain types of business being located within the establishment, so his partners set up a little settlement to the west of the resort down in what many call Bartlett Flat. In this new little settlement there are today a few locust trees; this is where the little one room school house was set up. The little flat was known by some as New Town or Tail Hold.

November 12, 1875, the Fairview School District was formed from the Bartlett Springs School District and took on much of the mountain south of Bartlett Springs and down to Clear Lake.

June 30, 1894, there were less than 5 pupils at Bartletts so the territory was attached to the Indian Valley School District.

August 20, 1894, the school furniture was sold for \$82.95 and possession of the Bartlett School was given to the Indian Valley District.

April 4, 1900, again the Bartlett Springs School District was formed. For a time one half a term was taught at Bartlett

and the other half at Twin Valleys School. Something happened, for from the Supervisor minutes we have the Bartlett Springs School District lapsed at two different dates --July 5, 1906, and September 10, 1909. You guess.

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BARTLETT LANDING SCHOOL

In the 1850's, Samuel Morrison took up land where Lucerne now is. He established a private school where his own children and a couple of neighbors could be taught. The teacher got \$12 per month and board. In the 1860's a Lakeshore School District was formed and a public school established.

It moved several times and always had trouble for lack of attendance. At one time, to keep up the proper number of pupils, Mr. Morrison would send one of his three year old children in a child's wagon to school to attend.

One of the sites for the public school was at the foot of the Bartlett Springs Road. This road today takes off between Nice and Lucerne to start the mountain climb.

Within the last century, Bartlett Springs Resort was going ahead by leaps and bounds. Many customers would take a stage from the railroad to Lakeport, then take a boat to the foot of the road mentioned, where a landing had been made for the boats.

Only a short distance from the lake and alongside Bartlett Road and on flat land, a school house was erected and school held. The school lapsed in the 1880's. In 1881

there were only 11 pupils. The school was known as the Bartlett Landing School and at that site it ran for a few years and then closed. No sign of the school house remains.

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BERRY RANCH SCHOOL

In the 1860's, a family named Berry had a ranch about one mile north of the north junction of the main Scotts Vally Road with the West Scotts Valley Road. On a small hill just east of the Berry Ranch and the county road, a primitive building was built for school purposes in 1864. About a dozen children attended and it was the only school in Scotts Valley until 1870. The only name as copied from records was the Berry Ranch School.

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BIG CANYON SCHOOL

The Big Canyon and Big Canyon Creek head is near Adam Springs and runs for several miles toward the southeast where it empties into Putah Creek north of Middletown. About five miles downstream from Adam Springs and on the south side of Big Canyon county road and the stream, was located a small one-room school house known as Big Canyon School.

It was established February 5, 1913. The Arthur Copsy family lived nearby and Arthur erected the little school house. It only operated four or five years. After a few years all that remained were a few foundation stones and pieces of a stove.

The need for a school was that a few families with children worked in the joining timber and there were a few

resorts nearby. As war workers were needed for World War I efforts, many of the men left for other employment which caused the school to close.

Teachers were Florence Badger, Ada Stipp, and Gertrude Copsey.

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BIG VALLEY SCHOOL

When the first Lake County School, on Arnold Knoll east from Finley, became too small, the district was divided on August 10, 1860: the eastern part into the Kelsey Creek District and the western part into the Big Valley District.

The first building used by the Big Valley School District was within a few hundred yards east of the present junction of Big Valley Road with the Highland Springs Road. It was a school house and not a dwelling. This building was also used as a church by the Church of Christ from 1861 until the building burned in 1868.

Pupils for the Big Valley School District went to an abandoned store and dwelling on the Argonaut Ranch which immediately joins the Lake County Fruit Exchange (now known as Mt. Konocti Growers, Inc.). There were 63 pupils in 1869 but due to other school districts being formed from it, there were only 34 pupils in 1881.

School was held at the Argonaut until the 1870's and then pupils were moved to a dwelling three-eighths mile east from Finley. In the early 1880's a new building was erected on the same location. School was taught there until it

consolidated with the Kelseyville School District July 1, 1920.

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BIG VALLEY INDIAN SCHOOL

In 1914, the Indians of Big Valley became settled on the present Big Valley Rancheria. The Mission fathers moved the Mission Church building to the rancheria from its former home on the Mission which was by Lakeside Park in Big Valley.

Regular government school was taught in this building for several years. Then the Indian classes were moved in the 1920's to the then-vacant Big Valley School house in Finley. The school was run by the Kelseyville Grammar School Trustees, but not financed.

The U.S. Indian Department had been paying the cost of running the school. The Indian Agent gave notice to the trustees of the Kelseyville Grammar School that the government would continue to pay for the education of the Indian children only if they were bussed and put in our then all-white schools, as the Indian children were receiving little or no learning in the all-Indian School. The trustees agreed to the move.

As Indians were considered to be dirty, there was objection raised in the Kelseyville District. A protest meeting was held in a well-packed auditorium. The effects of the depression were still being felt, and raising funds by taxes was objected to. Unless the Indian Agent's decision was upheld, the taxpayers of Kelseyville School District would have to foot the bill.

A compromise was then agreed upon; to have the County Physician examine all children at the grammar school, both Indian and White. If any child was found to be out of line then that child would not again be allowed to enter until the condition had been corrected. On examination three girls, all white, were found to have lice. The Indian children were all clean. There was no further issue and ever since the school contained both races.

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BINKLEY RANCH SCHOOL

In 1918, C.K. Binkley, a Bay Area high school teacher brought his large family to a homestead in the mountains one-half mile west of Glenbrook and the county road in Cobb Valley. For some years he continued to teach in the Bay Area, working on weekends putting up fences, clearing land, and building a home in the Cobb Valley. The first house burned to the ground. He built a second. Some member of the family always stayed at the Lake County home.

The Binkley family started a public campground at the mountain site in 1930, followed in 1934 by a private school which was known mostly as Binkley Ranch School. There they taught from the first grade to middle of high school.

There were two teachers employed and students numbered up to fifteen. This school ran until 1941 and closed. After that there was never a school nor campground at that location. It is now a retreat for members of the Binkley family. The school house is gone.

This beautiful mountain location is now a regular home for Enrique Mahnke and his wife Elizabeth (Binkley) Mahnke. The grounds are kept in fine shape and they have a private museum that has some very interesting artifacts.

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BLUE LAKES SCHOOL

On the south side of Lower Blue Lake is Fosters Resort. March 3, 1867, the Blue Lakes School District was formed. A school house was erected on the lakeshore at a point on the present Fosters Resort. The District covered a large area and at the time of District formation, it had around 25 pupils in attendance. The number varied up when others moved in, and down when other Districts were formed from it.

Scotts Valley School District was formed from the southern part of the Blue Lakes District March 12, 1872. August 8, 1872, as the Blue Lakes School District did not have 25 pupils nor an assessed valuation of \$75,000, no special tax was levied. April 8, 1890, the Glen Eden School District was formed from the Liberty and Blue Lakes School Districts.

While the Blue Lakes School house was maintained at the Blue Lakes, a boy drowned in the lake. It was decided to move the school house to another site, so in 1896 the little school house was torn down and rebuilt on the northwest side of present Highway 20 with its back directly against a very steep mountain and 3/8ths mile east by north of the lower tip of the Lower Blue Lake.

At that location, school was taught until 1946 when the Blue Lakes School District consolidated with the Upper Lake Union School District. Mrs. Aletha Smythe, who attended the Blue Lakes School as a child, bought the building and in 1951 converted it into a home.

Mrs. Smythe later married and became Mrs. Hilts, living in the remodeled school building until just a few years ago. The building is still there.

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BRADFORD SCHOOL

In 1890, a school house was erected by the Bradford Mine. This was later known as the Mirabel Mine, south of Middletown. There were plenty of children, for the mine was operating on a big scale and making money. There were 160 or more white men and many Chinese.

The little reddish-brown school house was on a hill on the west side of present Highway 29. As school had closed, the school house and some other buildings were torn down in 1924. In 1925, the Bradford School, which over the years had changed its name to Saint Helena School District, voted with three other Districts to form the Middletown Union School District. This they did and this later School District now serves a large area around Middletown.

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BRUNDIGE RANCH SCHOOL

Prior to 1871, there was a school house on the present Herb Rodgers ranch about one mile northwest of Kelseyville on Brown Drive Road. This was perhaps the forerunner for a future school in Kelseyville.

In 1871, school was moved from the above site to a location near the west side of Kelsey Creek and near the crossing of the stream on the Soda Bay Road. At that time Seth Rickabaugh owned the bulk of the present Quercus Ranch and he gave a small plot for the school site.

We do not know the legal name for the school. Later a small acreage of the land belonged to Al Brundige. Was the school on his property which is alongside the present Quercus Ranch or alongside on the Quercus Ranch? For whatever reasons, later citizens called it the Brundige Ranch School.

When water was high, pupils could attend the Henderson home in Kelseyville for classes. School was taught only a few years at the Brundige Ranch site.

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BURNS VALLEY SCHOOL

The Burns Valley School District was formed from the Lower Lake School District, May 5, 1868. It went as far north as Paradise Valley on the north shore of East Lake. In 1869, there were 28 pupils.

The first Burns Valley school house was on a rock hill opposite the Ed Moke place which was against the hills on the northern part of Clearlake Highlands. It was a small red building. It was not too long until there were too many children for the little building, so in 1885 the old school house was cut in two, put on running gears of wagons and hauled with horses to a new location near what is called Four Corners.

Population grew, and in 1889 bonds were voted to build a new school. The old building was torn down and a new one put in its place, at a cost of \$1000 to \$1200. To the new building was added a bell and bell tower. Later a second room had to be added and still later a third. About 1926 a small music room and modern plumbing were added.

In 1936-37, due to the heavy increase of children in that area, a modern stucco tiled-roof building was erected near the lake on the Austin Tract Addition at a cost of \$30,000. This took the place of the older building at the Four Corners.

Again and again more rooms had to be added. Soon after 1940, Kindergarten was added. More bond issues were passed, more rooms added, and more land purchased. In 1965, one of the newer buildings was named "Hale Hall" in honor of Mrs. Mary Hale who had taught so many years, finally retiring after serving as Principal. Much of the above information was gleaned from articles by both she and her husband "Babe" Hale.

The area served by the Burns Valley School is the fastest growing District in Lake County. As a comparison, in 1872 Burns Valley School District had an assessed value of \$183,754 with a tax rate of 14 cents. In 1977, it had an assessed value of \$52,063,270 and a tax rate of \$ 4.35. (These figures are for Konocti Unified and not the grammar school alone.)

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