1983

A history of the Big Trees and Avery School Districts, 1881-1940

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A HISTORY OF THE BIG TREES AND AVERY SCHOOL DISTRICTS: 1881-1940

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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August 22, 1983

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PREFACE

The history of a school district is usually presented as a local history. This type of history is very thorough in naming names, locating sites, and explaining events as they affected the local scene. History does not occur in a vacuum, and often the explanation for certain behaviors or events lies beyond the local phenomena. It is the intention of this study to present the history of the Big Trees and Avery School Districts within a larger context of national forces which were also at work and sometimes, dominated the events. It is hoped that the effort to bring education to the Big Trees Road area will be appreciated not only as a local struggle but also as a part of a greater movement.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Located high above the Mokelumne River, sprawled over "a bumpy terrrain" of remnants of the auriferous gravels of an ancient river, the mining camp of Mokelumne Hill in the early 1850's consisted of "uneven rows of alternated leantos, and canvas shacks housing the stores, and saloons, and gambling joints."[1] A deserved reputation of a rich mining region swelled Mokelumne Hill's mixed population to a corollary reputation of one of the toughest camps in Calaveras County as the many ethnic groups vied for the gold.[2]

In the midst of Mokelumne Hill's mining boom madness, Mrs. Isaac Fish founded Calaveras County's first school. Her school met in the Methodist Church--a tent church pastored by her husband, the Reverand Fish. She had five students in 1852, and she received seventy-five dollars per month as the teacher.[3]

A school in a mining camp is a study in contrasts. The mining camp environment is greedy, violent, and transitory. Out of this environment, housed in the same temporary dwellings, Mrs. Fish established society's testimony to the future, to order and permanence, to the giving of one generation to another; in short, it is the contrast of the frontier with civilization. Mrs. Fish's effort is but the

first example in Calaveras County of a signifcant struggle between these two forces that helped shape the American character and transform its institutions. L.B. Wright, in his book, Culture on the Moving Frontier, describes the conflict:

> The anarchistic and disintegrating forces of the frontier met another force less violent but eternally steady in its pressure: the determination of a few persistent men and women to recreate in the wilderness a stable order; with its traditional amenities. The conflict between anarchy and civilization was not dramatic so as to become the theme of a ballad, novel or movie, but the struggle was clearly defined and men could see what was happening. It was not a conflict left to chance. The forces of civilization were constantly planning campaigns and waging war in new places. Indeed, the struggle continues for California is a land of many frontiers from gold rush days to the present day.[4]

This study will describe one of those "campaigns" as it was waged to establish and maintain a viable educational program in the relatively isolated section of Calaveras County along the Big Trees Road (BTR) from 1881 to 1940. The history of the Big Trees and Avery School Districts is a clear illustration of the struggle described by Wright. It was not dramatic and only a few were invlolved, but in time, the tenacity of these few who truly believed in the importance of education, assisted in creating in the wilderness of the BTR area a relatively settled and civilized community.

These school districts were made up of at least three components: the land, the society, and the legal institution of education. They were the grist in the struggle for education. Each component contributed essential ingredients to the districts. Through the struggle they were modified,

adapted, and intermingled. The result was a school district that was a finely-meshed mixture of those ingredients brought about by the conflict between "the anarchistic and disintegrating forces of the frontier," and the educational beliefs of a "few persistent men and women." The question that flows through this history of the school districts is which side of the struggle predominated? Or were they, too modified in the encounter?

To provide a background to the particular struggle on the BTR, the two sides are described and analyzed as part of the much larger struggle described by Wright. Further information about the society, the land and the legal institution is presented so that the entire context of the BTR can be understood. From the meager primary sources it has been possible to describe a composite picture of the typical teacher, student, and community including their responsibilities, expectations, and requirements.

This educational history is but one facet of the history of the BTR area which, as yet, has not been presented in its entirety.

Chapter 2

A REVIEW OF THE BACKGROUND LITERATURE

The subject of education along the Big Trees Road from 1881 to 1940 has not been studied in thesis, dissertation, or any thorough scholarly discussion. Indeed, general histories of California, the Gold Rush, or similar topics rarely mention the area, let alone the school districts. However, this subject touches on two major themes in American history which are well documented, discussed, and analyzed: education in America and the significance of the frontier in American history. The history of the Big Trees and the Avery School Districts is dominated by these contending forces. Chapter Two discusses the controversial "frontier-hypothesis," and extracts those features which may have affected the society and education on the BTR. The educational milieu of the nineteenth century will be also generally described so that the motivation of those few who struggled to establish education on the BTR can be understood. Finally, the sparse literature that has dealt with the interaction of the frontier with education will be presented.

The Frontier

Early in its history, American writers saw in the vast empty land to the west a key that might explain the unique

American civilization that was apparently developing. But it was not until Frederick Jackson Turner presented his paper entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in 1893, that the concept blossomed into a national credo.

Turner's central contention, which flows throughout his rather sparse writings was, "The existence of an area of freeland, its continuous recession and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development."[5] Turner felt that the frontiering experience answered Michele St. John de Crevecoeur's question of "What is an American?" Turner's answer was that the American was a product of the frontier. Each successive wave of westward-facing pioneers moving into the wilderness experienced a transformation,

> and to study this advance, the men who grew up under these conditions and the political, economical, and social results of it is to study the really American part of our history.[6]

Turner's so-called "frontier-hypothesis" proved to be one of the most influential pieces of historical writing in America.[7] For nearly a generation, American history was written in the frontier perspective and schools of the frontier proliferated. But a new generation of historians began to question Turner at his weakest point: his cavalier use of the pivotal term "frontier." Although his writings abound with definitions, he unfortunately describes different aspects of the frontier experience, such as the frontier as an area, or a process, or an abundance of natural resources

with the same term--frontier. A hypothesis that is unclear in its most key term is a vulnerable one, open to criticism. "As an analytical device, the frontier thesis was a blunt instrument."[8]

Most criticism[9] centered on this problem without really attempting to see beyond the trees and appreciate Turner's initial insight--that society is changed on the frontier:

> When Turner's thesis, which is essentially a geographical interpretation of history, is cut to its marrow, it stands forth as the simple assertion that when people move into a new geographical setting they alter their mores. This proposition has been amply documented and repeatedly demonstrated for a variety of environments.[10]

Turner's critics attacked him as if he were the cause of the frontier experience rather than merely its expounder. When cooler heads prevailed, a more constructive, balanced process brought forth several important ideas from the ashes of the hypothesis.

Ray Allen Billington, author of the standard textbook on the American west, Westward Expansion,[11] was one of Turner's most sympathetic supporters. Upon reading Billington one becomes aware of a struggle within the author to discover the proper place of the "frontier-hypothesis" within the flow of American history. As an outstanding historian, he continued to evaluate and challenge his own frontier bias. His lifetime search seems to have been to find support for Turner's views and thus give them the legitimacy that was tarnished under the barrage of the critics. He was aware

that it was no-longer a tenable position to attribute unique American characteristics to one cause. In the preface of one of his many books on the west, he wonders if the environment described by Turner was the most important factor in forming the unique institutions of the United States. He then explains that,

> if the record shows that each band of frontiersmen responded in its own way to the strange new world of the Far West, a fragment of evidence has been produced in support of the frontier hypothesis. [12]

Clinging to "fragments," Billington wanted the importance of the frontier to stand among the many other forces which have contributed to the American civilization.

One of Billington's more important contributions was his study of the persistance of frontier traits which he identified in the frontier American character that are still influencing behavior today:

> The passing of the frontier did not end its influence on the the American people and their institutions. Three centuries of pioneering had endowed them with certain traits and characteristics that were too firmly implanted to be rapidly discarded; these remain today as the principal distinguishing features of the unique civilization of the United States. For the frontier was more than a westward-moving area promising individuals a greater degree of economic and social upward-mobility than they could find elsewhere; frontiering was a process through which artifacts, customs and institutions imported from the Old World were adapted to suit conditions in the New.[13]

In the frontier, Billington saw an explanation for the American penchant for optimism, his blind belief in progress, his wastefulness, his materialism, his individualism, his ingenuity, and his faith in democracy.

Another important interpretation of the significance of the west is presented by Henry Nash Smith in The Virgin Land. Smith takes Turner's frontier and follows its influence into the realm of symbolism and popular myth. Smith feels that:

> Brilliant and persuasive as Turner was, his contention that the frontier and the West had dominated American development. . . it could hardly have attained such universal acceptance if it had not found echo in ideas and attitudes already current. . . . The recent debate over what Turner actually meant and over the truth or falsity of his hypothesis is much more than a mere academic quibble. It concerns the image of themselves which many--perhaps most--Americans of the present day cherish, an image that defines what Americans think of their past and therefore what they propose to make of themselves in the future.[14]

Whereas Turner emphasized the west as a physical reality that acted upon the emigrant, Smith traced the "impact of the West, the vacant continent beyond the frontier, on the consciousness of Americans."[15] The idea of the west was another force of the frontier which helped form the emigrant.

Turner, Billington, and Smith described several aspects of the frontier which affected the emigrant and his institutuions. Two of these aspects: the frontier as an area and the frontier as a process are especially germaine to a study of the BTR area. Physically the area fits the definition of a frontier, and in conjuction with that, the society which came and developed appeared to be under the influences of the frontier process.

The Frontier as an Area

A discussion about the frontier as an area is

essentially exploring the importance of geography and environment on history. What is the relationship? Because history is incarnate; it happened somewhere, it uses the raw materials that are present to weave the rich tapestry of events that is later recorded as history. Since the Greeks, environment has been noted as an important factor affecting people and their character, but it cannot be the sole determining factor. There are numerous examples where similar environments have produced diametrically different cultures.[16] Clearly, geography is not everything; but it is the arena in which history plays out its events; geography presents limits and possibilities. It can be both lure and repellant; succor and death. Will Durant has poetically concluded that, "Geography is the matrix of history, its nourishing mother, and disciplining home."[17]

The frontier is basically understood to be an area of relatively vacant land (hence the term "freeland" used by Turner, refers not to the cost but to the fact that it had relatively sparse population.), offering a variety of abundant natural resources waiting to be exploited by the hardy pioneer willing to face the extremes, inconveniences, and isolations that life on the frontier represents. As the discussion of the BTR area continues, it will become clear that these characteristices of the frontier as an area were (and still are) evident and that they played an essential part in the pace of development of the area and consequently, affected the school districts.

The Frontier as a Process

The aspect of the frontier which selects only the more daring to migrate, creates an altered social environment, and instills certain, co-called "frontier traits" is the process which occurs in a frontier area.

Not all of the American population are beckoned by the call of "freeland":

> The frontier appeals less to the secure, the contemplative, and the cautious than to the restless, the men and women of action, and the venturesome; those who traded the known comforts of the East for the hazards of the unknown West were men and women who were willing to gamble against nature for the chance of self-betterment.[18]

Emigrants, basically, do not represent a cross-section of the general American population. They were usually young and in their prime. They were mainly single or in the early stages of family development. They may have been better educated and more intelligent than those who stayed home.[19] The California Gold Rush created a new migrant with new reasons for moving. The burgeoning population on the West Coast during the early 1850's was there to get rich quickly and depart "back to the States." They were not necessarily agriculturally oriented like the Oregon emigrants had been. Instead, the gold fever spread through all walks of life and consequently California experienced a greater variety in human potential than in previous migrations.[20]

Concentrated on the many frontiers were these kinds of individuals who commonly believed that they were going to improve their station because of their move. the key to

understanding why these individuals chose to migrate is found in the expectations that most of them had because, "People move in conformity with the real or fancied differences or advantages between geographical sections."[21] Usually, migrations flow from areas of large population density with greater competition for advancement, with less resources and worn out attractions, to areas of cheap and empty lands which offer greater opportunities due to richer resources--all of which may provide a more exciting life.[22] Although material wealth may have been the sole objective of many of the emigrants--especially the miner of the California Gold Rush--others were seeking an escape from the evils of civilization and hoped that the frontier experience would purify them.

Henry Nash Smith, in The Virgin Land, discusses an apparent paradox in the perception of the emigrant and his reasons for moving held by the general American population. The popular image of Daniel Boone, the trailblazer, opening the wilds of America, by constructing towns so the civilization could flow into the uncharted west, contrasts with the equally popular stories of Boone, the incessant mover, escaping the pressures of civilization, continually moving deeper into the wilderness. These paradoxical images of Boone developed side by side in the American mind with little concern for the contradiction, for it would appear that the frontier does evoke two purposes. On the one hand, the overwhelming faith that Americans have in progress calls the

"developer" into the wilderness areas with the express purpose of transforming it into an area for civilization to flourish--the ultimate goal of progress. But on the other hand, there is the belief that it is in the wilderness that salvation of mankind is still possible and that it must be be preserved.[23] These contradictory ideas continue to guide emigrants as they enter their own perceived frontiers.

The social environment which develops as a result of the concentration of individuals with great expectations is usually a modified form of the social environment that was left behind. The main ingredient that apparently shaped the society on the frontier was the fact that the population was sparse and the land great. The chances of success were viewed as greatly enhanced in an environment where the old social structures were obliterated. Such a society tended to alter the old ways, replace them, or even ignore them if they did not work in the new environment.[24]

With these two aspects of the frontier at work in the BTR area, a few far-sighted individuals had to struggle to establish an educational program. The dynamic environment of the frontier did not enhance the other force of civilization--education.

Education

The history of education in America is the study of the development of a basically English educational heritage as it adapted to the forests and swamps of America. The

educational type which came to dominate the American scene of the nineteenth century was that which developed in New England: a local school district, democratically controlled and publically financed.

The philosophical foundations of American education were laid in a reform movement of the 1830's called the "common school movement." Reformers waged a largely successful campaign to promote free, universal, public schooling at the elementary level within the New England framework. The commom school idea began in Massachusetts in 1647, but its influence had not spread further until reformers in response to several new developments in America, began to agitate for more universal education.[25]

With the rise of Jacksonian Democracy, the so-called "common man" had become more involved in his government and tasted the results of political power. It became clear to all that if the United States was to have a truly republican form of government, an educated electorate was a necessary prerequisite. Furthermore, the workingman saw education as the great leveler of society. To avoid a rigid class structure, he wanted his children to have an equal chance through education. The final development that spawned the "common school movement," was the sudden influx of foreign immigrants during this period. Many reformers realized that the most effective way to turn them into Americans was through public education.[26]

Social reformers were convinced that education could

assure for the majority of Americans a part in the nation's progress. Major changes were necessary:

> ...the reformers placed great faith in a system of schooling in which children from all classes, from all walks of life, together, and in common, would be exposed to the rudiments of learning and the virtues of patriotism and morality.[27]

The public schools were a means of elevating the whole condition of society and facilitating human progress.

The campaign for the common school idea was a state by state battle that was still going on in 1849 when the California Constitution was being drafted. Although the concept was included in the article on education, it was not until many years later that the reality of free education in California was established.

The importance of education on the American mind and character has been discussed in several general histories, and they help illustrate the mind-set that motivated the few who attempted to bring education to the BTR area. A chapter in the Vineyard of Liberty, titled "Temples of Freedom," by James MacGregor Burns, explores the question of education in American life. He states that,

> ...cultural change that touched and transformed most Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century was the emergence of a common uniform public school system.[28]

He sees the movement as a paradox of ideals with no clear idea of its purpose. Are schools the "temples of freedom," or the agents of a powerful central government? Both attitudes were evident in the public sentiments.

Page Smith, in the The Shaping of America, discussed in his chapter on education the same influence it had on the American mind: "If there was an area of American life that was to rival religion in its influence on the American mind and character it was education."[29] He feels that Americans saw in free universal public education an answer to all the failures and inadequacies which seemed to persist in the country, despite the proliferation of democracy. Echoing the same sentiment, Carl N. Degler, in Out of Our Past, feels that the American belief in progress is tied in with the American belief in free education for all. Education was ". . . the key to everything, to successful democracy, to progress, and to indivdual enrichment."[30]

These writers described the American penchant for education that became an overwhelming belief that necessarily caused the pioneers to establish schools in the forests of Wisconsin, the prairies of Kansas and the gold fields of California. The New England model of the district school became the standard form and the New England curriculum furnished the content. These two points explain why the families struggling to survive on the BTR were willing to take on the added burden of school and the particular form it took.

Education and the Frontier

The interaction of the two forces of the frontier

and education has not been adequately studied. The affects of each on the other, the dynamics and interplay have only been touched by scholars. In 1969, a doctorial dissertation by Clinton B. Allison, entitled "Frontier Schools: A Reflection of the Turner Thesis," studied the development of education in the Middle West with the purpose of discovering the influences of the frontiering experience, as defined by Turner, as it affected education. He found that,

> except for democratization of educational opportunites, this study found that the frontier experience did not produce the changes that might be expected.[31]

Allison, unfortunately, dwelt upon disproving Turner, rather than discovering any affects of frontier on education in its own terms.

Wright, in Culture on the Moving Frontier, studies the impact of the frontier on the "cultural baggage" of the pioneer. Contradicting Turner, who saw the pioneer shedding all vestiges of his previous culture only to recreate a new one adapted to the wilderness, Wright demonstrates that the pioneer carried along intact certain cultural traits, education among them, which remained relatively unaltered in the transmission across the continent. In fact, in the case of education he pictured a war being waged between the two forces. The main contention of this study about the Big Trees and Avery School Districts follows Wright's description of a struggle between the frontier and civilization, but the question to be answered is which side dominated.

Chapter 3

THE LAND, THE SOCIETY, AND THE LEGAL INSTITUTION OF EDUCATION

John W. Caughey, in The American West, has stated that, "The ingredients of Western History may be set down as these: the land, the people, and the institutions."[32] This chapter will analyze these factors in the perspective of their overall affect on education as it developed on the BTR. The land provided the raw materials which tended to attract a particular type of individual interested in exploiting them. The society that developed brought the "cultural baggage" that guided the educational development. The legal institution of education in California as it was set down in the California State Constitution and subsequent legislation, gave the basic form of the education program. The interaction of these three ingredients in the struggle for education provides the framework for the history of the Big Trees and the Avery School Districts.

The Land

School districts are physical statements of a cultural ideal, set in a particular natural setting with size and

space. In the area above Murphy's on the BTR, the natural environment is a dominant feature that passively conditions those who choose to live there, by presenting choices which limit or promote opportunities. The influential components of the land are not only space relationships, but also the topography, climatic conditions, and the natural resources of soil, water, and life forms. Although men have exploited, modified, and adapted these components, they remain the key to understanding the general development of the BTR area, and consequently, the growth of education.

The two districts of Avery and Big Trees were located in the higher eastern section of Calaveras County, and their history was dominated by the dramatic rise in elevation that is evident in the area. The elevation factor contributes to the climatic conditions, the flora and fauna types, and ultimately, the relative social and political isolation of the BTR.

Combined, these two districts encompassed an area of about 162 square miles, stretching in a basically elongated shape along the North Fork of the Stanislaus River. The official boundaries of the districts, while changing, were basically regarded as the Alpine County line in the east, the Mokelumne River in the north, the North Fork of the Stanislaus River in the southwest, and various section lines which run through the fourteenth and fifteenth ranges east and west.

The rugged topography created by the complex geologic

history of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, limited and controlled travel and road construction into and through the area so that there was only minimal human occupation and use until the mid-1950's. It is a journey of approximately thirty-five miles from Murphy's to the Alpine County line along the BTR, starting at an elevation of about 2200 feet in the foothills and rising to elevations of over 8000 feet in the high mountains, an elevation gain of about 6000 feet. To the south and east, the steep, deep canyon of the North Fork of the Stanislaus yawns to form a natural boundary with Toulumne County. The Stanislaus, as well as most of the major streams and creeks in the area, runs in a southwestwardly direction. It has formed a high northwest canyon wall which eventually forms a divide with the Calaveras and Mokelumne River drainages to the north. Most of the streams above the Big Trees flow into the Mokelumne and those below flow into the Calaveras River. There is one major exception: Mill Creek near Avery. This creek makes an abrupt turn to the south, falls over a steep precipice into the Stanislaus River, taking Love and Moran Creeks along with it. It appears that at some time, probably in the last ice age (ca. 10,000 years ago), Mill Creek captured those creeks from the San Domingo Creek drainage through stream piracy due to the increased canyon cutting of the Stanislaus. The swampy area around Avery is an area that is still adjusting to this altered drainage.[33]

The Stanislaus has cut a deep V-shaped canyon of the youthful stream variety, as a result of the rapid erosion

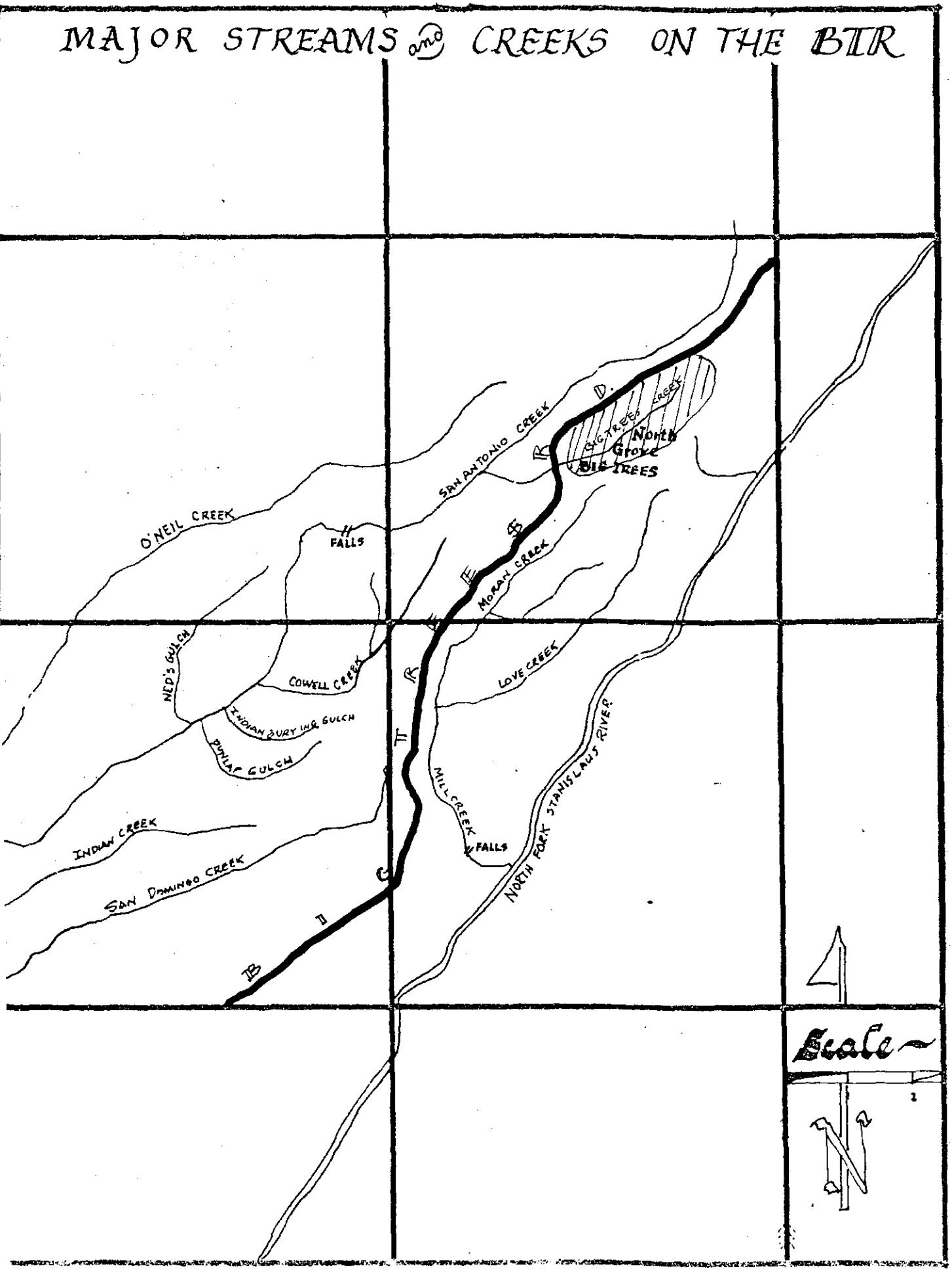
MAJOR STREAMS and CREEKS ON THE BTR
O'NEIL CREEK
FALLS
SAN ANTONIO CREEK
BIG TREES CREEK
North Grove BIG TREES
MORAN CREEK
NED'S GULCH
COWELL CREEK
INDIAN JURY INN GULCH
PINLAP GULCH
LOVE CREEK
INDIAN CREEK
SAN DOMINGO CREEK
MILL CREEK
FALLS
NORTH FORK STANISLAUS RIVER
Scale

FIG. 1

caused by the uplift of the Sierra Nevada fault block. At some places the canyon has been cut to depths of over 2000 feet below the surrounding area. The other streams and creeks have also adjusted to the uplift by creating their own deeply, incised valleys and canyons divided by narrow ridges.

Traveling east and west along the ridges, the Indians established the basic routes that were later followed by the road builders. North and south travel was arduous and time consuming because of the steep valleys and canyons that had to be crossed. With the discovery of the Big Trees Grove a road was constructed to facilitate the tourist traffic from the Central Valley. The silver strikes in Alpine County and Nevada of the 1870's and 80's made it financially wise to extend the road over the summit at Ebbett's Pass into the Carson Valley. Modern Highway 4 follows the basic east-west course of this old turnpike and toll road, and it remains the major artery connecting the Central Valley to the west and Nevada to the east. The fact that it connects the area with no major, easily accesible population in the east and that it is closed by the snowpack for over five months per year, tends to continue to isolate the area as much as open it up.[34]

North-south roads from Avery wound their way in tortuous routes which even today as paved roads are not a delight to travel. The only major connection with the northern part of the county and the county seat of San Andreas was along the road from Angels Camp which later became State Highway 49.

A trip to the county seat from the BTR area was a major undertaking. The BTR area has been denied major markets because of its location and the difficulty in travel and transportation It remained mainly a local hinterland used by the immediate communities of Murphy's and Angels Camp.

Gold itself was never an attraction for the area for the underlying rock is mainly of metamorphic origin in the lower elevations and exposed granites in the upper sections, with little evidence of gold-bearing veins. There are various outcroppings of volcanic ash and breccias, reminiscent of the "days of fire" in the geoligic history of the Sierra Nevada. These deposits thend to be erosion resistant, and, in some locations, they have created spectacular falls like those on the San Antonio Creek, which were popular side attractions for visitors to the Big Trees.[35] Glacial activity is also evident in the moraine deposits and the glacial scoured canyon of the upper Stanislaus River. Glaciers may have contributed to the isolated nature of the redwood groves that dot the Sierra Nevada making the Calaveras Big Trees the rare attraction it was.[36] The BTR area is a composite picture of the geologic evolution of the Sierra Nevada range.

The elevation rise also contributes to the extreme climatic conditions which occur on the BTR. The seasons are divided between a decided wet and dry period with the amount of precipitation increasing in the higher elevations. Snow falls in the entire area but the snowpack seems to accumulate at about the 5000-foot level. The growing season

in the areas below 3000 feet is about six to ten months long compared to only four to seven months in the upper regions. The short season makes it difficult for many crops to flourish. The snows of winter essentially closed the area before the paving of the BTR in 1931 and the importation of the snow removal equipment in the 1940's. In the winter tourism ceased; the lumbering operations were closed down; the hotel communities moved to their wintering homes in Murphy's and Angels Camp; and the schools were closed until the spring. Therefore, the spring and the summer months became a period of intense activity in most of the BTR area.

The major lure attracting human occupation and development on the BTR was the natural resources. The forests, the water, the meadows, and the soils appealed to a variety of people who saw in these resources opportunities to succeed. Some came to the area only to exploit the resources and then depart, but others come to utilize them to create a new life.

The forest was praised in an 1885 tract called, Calaveras County:

> The timbered belt for grandeur, extent, diversity, and magnificent proportions, has no parallel in the entire timber belt of the western slope of the Sierras.37

The mixed forest of yellow pines, douglas firs, sugar pines, and cedars was subject to harvesting beginning in the early 1850's. Poor transportation that limited access to the large markets of the Central Valley restricted the growth of the lumbering business of the BTR and consequently saved the

forest from extensive over cutting and devastation. The same situation saved the Big Trees themselves from becoming redwood planks. It is clear that if it had been possible to bring better transportation into the area, such as a railroad, the forest and the Big Trees would have been throughly harvested.[38]

Water is an abundant source that was exploited early in the Gold Rush period of the 1850's. The towns of Murphy's and Angels Camp needed water to wash the gold ore. Water companies were formed, and flumes and aqueducts were constructed carrying the streams of the BTR area to the diggings. The first sawmills were constructed in the area to supply wood for the aqueducts. A hunter, tracking a bear for meat to supply the sawmill workers, stumbled into the North Grove of the Big Trees in 1852, initiating the tourist interest in the area that still prevails. In later years the water companies employed local men to be ditch tenders.[39]

The winter snows soaked deeply into areas between the ridges so that in the spring meadows grew deep in lush grass. The ranches below Murphy's lose ther green grass early in the spring, and it became the regular practice for the ranchers to drive their animals up the BTR to take advantage of the free and verdant pasturage.

The soils of these meadows were the subject of much praise in the decades following the 1880's as vociferous land promoters sought to tempt potential agriculturists to Calaveras County. Indeed, the soils along the BTR were

thought to be of the riches kind, even in the 1850's:

> The soil, being constantly shaded and annually over spread with a deep covering of fallen foliage as well as kept moist by snow 7 months in the year, is altogether richer than anything to be seen in the lower hills.[40]

Yet, as several hardy homesteaders discovered, these soils were sparsely distributed, and the short growing season seemed to limit extensive use of the soils for the production of most yearly cash crops.

The natural environment of the BTR provided both limits and lures to human occupation, use, and development. The location isolated it from the rest of the county and state. The topography and climate rendered the area difficult for travel and year-round living. On the other hand, it was the natural resources that called those few to the mountains for exploitation, use, and living.

The Society

The social milieu that developed on the BTR as a result of the attractions the area had to offer was not conducive to the development of education. Most of the population lived there for only the short summer season, and then they were there only to exploit the area and not foster it as a place to settle. But from out of that milieu came those few persistent men and women described by Wright, and demonstrated in Mokelumne Hill in the 1850's, who were willing to struggle against the forces of the frontier to bring education to the BTR. This section will provide a

general description of that society and how it was using the land.

Human occupation of the BTR began with the seasonal migrations of the Miwok and Washoe Indians, who took advantage of the cooler climates in the summer months and an abundance of acorns. The Miwok traveled up the ridges in the early summer and returned in the late fall to their winter camps. The Washoe came over the passes in the east to trade. They set both the direction of travel and the seasonal use of the BTR that are still evident today. Following the disruption of the Gold Rush on the foothill Indians, several communities moved up the hill and attempted to continue to live according to the old ways. A camp of nearly fifty inhabitants was reported near Avery in 1905. Another camp was located in the Big Trees. Their numbers steadily declined until only a few remained after the late 1920's.[41] Several half-breed families continued to live in the area, and some of their children reportedly attended school.[42]

The economic activity that dominated the BTR from the 1850's to the late 1950's was lumbering. The lush forest was dense, and, as the tract, Calaveras County predicted:

> The day is close at hand when this lumber region will be sought after and profitably utilized, and its valuable woods enjoy large sales in the valleys below.[43]

Many landowners in the area either logged their land or sold the timber rights to a lumberman.[44] But it was the isolation that kept the area from enjoying "large sales in the valleys below." This fact tended to keep the operations small and in

the hands of a few family operations. Sawmills were located in strategic locations on creeks near the BTR. After one area was ravaged, they were quickly disassembled only to be reconstructed in another area. Most of these small concerns also ran lumberyards in Murphy's or Angels Camp. Transporting the logs down the steep grades of the BTR was dangerous work for the wagons which were pulled by teams of twelve to sixteen mules. Later a steam traction engine was introduced in the 1890's.[45] The heavy wagons created dust over a foot thick so that the BTR yearly suffered from the lumbering industry.[46]

The weather determined when operations commenced and ended. In the spring, lumber camps would fill with mainly young men who lived in the bunkhouse and either worked on the sawmill crew or the forest crew. The teamster who drove the large teams up and down the BTR received the most in wages, and the boys who cared for the teams the least.[47] Very few local people where employed by these operations, it appears, and when the winter snows closed the forest and the BTR the the crews departed for their homes down the hill.[48]

Before 1940, lumbering contributed very little to the BTR area besides some seasonal occupation for a few of the local residents and perhaps a market for some of the crops. The impact of the industry was mainly to scour the forest, to ruin the road, and spend the wealth elsewhere.

The BTR suffered from another abuse besides the heavy lumber wagons. Each spring, herds of cattle and sheep were

driven up the hill to the high meadows to take advantage of the summer pastures. Each rancher appears to have had a favorite grazing area that was honored by the others.[49] Children on their summer vacations often accompanied these summer drives into the woods. After tramping the meadows to dust and with the coming of winter, the animals were returned to the valleys below, leaving the meadows to recover under the winter snows. Like the lumber industry, the cattle and sheep industries provided only minimal occupational opportunities for the local residents.

A description of the wagon trip along the BTR paints a pleasing picture of the area:

> A journey through this timber is most enjoyable, the atmosphere growing rarer and cooler as the journey progresses, the scent of the pines and the sighing breeze through their lofty boughs, the pleasant little farms with bright green meadows, which are occasionally passed--all tend to refresh and invigorate.[50]

Unbeknownst to the refreshed and invigorated visitor, the "pleasant little farms with bright green meadows" represent a testimony to man's struggle with the extremes of nature. These farms supported the first residents of the BTR area who attempted to settle the BTR, make a living from the land and call it home. They were, for the most part, the committed few who supported education.

Large tracts of land had been accumulated by certain individuals long before 1880.[51] Ranches encompassed areas up to 2000 acres, and on one ranch there were reportedly 30 head of cattle as well as other animals.[52] The homesteads were substantially smaller in acreage and operation. The

following 1891 county tax assessment lists the assets and the value of items found on the Frederick Mentz holdings on Love Creek:

> House, Barn and Fence; Furniture, $20; Firearms, $5; S.M., $25; Family Utensils, $50; 2 wagons, $75; 2 Horses, $50; 2 Cows, $40; 2 Calves, $10; Hogs, $10.[53]

Ranchers and homesteaders had to be very diverse in their methods of making a living, for it is evident that mere ranching and farming were not sufficient to provide a living. Besides growing a variety of crops, to be marketed in Murphy's and Angels Camp or even at the local hotels, these industrious individuals also hauled wood great distances for sale, worked at the sawmills, worked as carpenters and blacksmiths, and sold hay to the freighters and stage-lines. Unlike the majority of those who were in the area only during the mild months, these hardy families had to stay in the area during the winter months as well. They lived off the stored wealth they had managed to accumulate during the brief sightseeing season, growing season and laboring season. They were snowed in and cut-off from the communities down the hill for at least half the year. They were the real settlers of the BTR and the main support of the educational programs. By the mid-1920's most ranchers and homesteaders had sold their holdings and moved to the lower communities of Murphy's and Angels Camp.[54] Aside from a few local street names and a barn or two, their real lasting influence on the BTR is the educational foundations they struggled to lay in the frontier.

Vacationers also came up to the BTR in the summer to fish, hunt, and commune with the wilderness. The area was rarely mentioned in the Angels Camp and San Andreas newspapers, but when it was, the subject was usually about the vacation aspect offered by the BTR area.[55] Some local families of Murphy's and Angels Camp constructed cabins in the high mountain region, and the area became a permanent vacation retreat for many generations.[56]

Along with the yearly vacationers, another seasonal visitor came up the road with the intent of viewing one of nature's wonders--the Big Trees of Calaveras County. Soon after their discovery in 1852, accomodations were built and stagelines maintained to meet the yearly increasing trade based on sightseeing. The Big Trees Road to the North Grove was first constructed to meet the growing traffic and facilitate the visitors. By 1880, J. L. Sperry was running a world renowned hotel catering to the more sophisticated traveler, and he was gaining a reputation as a congenial host.[57] The Halfway House of the George Avery family was named because of its halfway location between Murphy's and the Big Trees. The Averys not only catered to the sight-seeing trade by offering accomodations and a bar, but they also built corrals and barns stocked with hay for the stockmen and cattlemen. At one time, the Averys even tried their hand at lumbering.[58] About two miles above the Big Trees, at the Cold Springs Ranch of the John Gardners, a hotel was constructed to serve those travelers who were

continuing up the mountain on the Carson Valley Turnpike, which also served as a toll station. The Gardners ran sheep on their large meadow and under their auspices a sizeable community flourished, with Mr. Gardner marketing the shakes in Angels Camp.[59] The hotel came to be called the Dorrington Hotel in 1902, when a post office was established there of the same name. The hotel owners, like the ranchers and the homesteaders, developed numerous ways to generate an income from the seasonal influx of visitors. At one time or another schools were located near these hotels underlining the fact that these hotels were a focal point of the local society. The hotel families were a major force in developing education in the area. Although they would migrate down the hill in the fall to homes in Murphy's or Angels Camp, their actions reveal that, for the most part, they had a vested interest in the BTR.

The shakemaker camp near Gardner's hotel created a "veritable wasteland of butchered sugar pine."[60] in the wasteful practice of taking only the heart of the best timber. Not surprisingly, the lumber industry looked down on these shakemakers for their waste of timber. The following quote, no doubt, reflects the lumber industry's sentiments:

> The timber in the vicinity of the Big Trees and miles beyond, is dense growth and the best quality. On the south and east of the Stanislaus it is even better and untouched by the vandal hand of the shakemaker who annually destroys millions of feet of the best sugar pine in their industry.[61]

The aspects of the frontier as an area and as a

process worked their influences upon the BTR community. The natural abundance of the land attracted the lumberman, the shakemakers, and the cattlemen. The "freeland" was appealing to the homesteader who by the 1880's had lost the opportunity to acquire better lands in the Central Valley.[62] General wastefulness by the lumber, shakemaker, and cattle industries attest to the spirit rampant in nineteenth century America, that felt that the natural resources were unlimited and their use was needed to fuel the inevitable progress that came with settling the West. The vacationers came to recreate in the wilds far from the stress of the cities. The survival ingenuity of the ranchers, homesteaders, and hotel owners, can be seen in the variety of ways they were able to capitalize on the seasonal influx of the summer populations that filled the mountains. The communities developed with the hotels at the center. They were an open, vibrant, and intense society, that lived in the shadow of a bleak winter season. The summer was the time to act. In all of this activity, there were only a few who saw the area as their home, as a place to settle and raise a family and provide educational opportunities.

The Legal Institution of Education in California

On the morning of September 25, 1848, delegates to the California State Constitutional Convention debated and finally approved an article on education.[63] The expectations and assumptions of that article reveal the influence of the

"cultural baggage" carried by the majority of the delegates, who were basically newly arrived immigrants and transplanted "Yankees." The article assumed a system of district schools based on the common school philosophy, financed by a public education fund derived mainly from the sale of public lands and overseen by an elected state superintendent of public instruction.[64] All of these characteristics are based on the New England model of public education, and most were non-existent in California in 1848. It took the State Legislature several decades to fulfill the assumptions found in the article. By 1867, the Legislature established and fairly well defined three levels of public education: the state, the county, and the local school district. Education in California conformed to the same basic overall form. Communities establishing and promoting education were legally bound to adhere to that form. Each level of the organization had specific duties and requirements.

The office of the state superintendent of public instruction was a political office rarely filled by a professional educator. He was expected to gather yearly attendance records from the various counties and manage the state school fund. His annual report (sometimes it was biennial) to the Legislature was expected to be distributed to all levels of the organization.[65] In it he gave suggestions to the Legislature, the county superintendents, the local school boards, and to teachers on a variety of subjects from curriculum to architectural design of the

school building.[66] Ultimately, the office helped to create a certain uniformity in California education.

The county superintendent of schools became an elected official after 1855. He was expected to visit the schools of the county, gather statistical information from all the districts in the county, submit these statistics to the state superintendent, disperse the state and county tax money to the districts, and be in charge of the fiscal management of the school finances. After 1880, he was expected to be assisted by an appointed board of four professional educators. This board was required to adopt textbooks, make rules and regulations for the conduct of the schools within the county, and provide the county with a course of study.[67] From this board, the county superintendent also created a board of examination charged with examining potential teachers and issuing county teaching certificates.[68] They also created the eighth grade graduation examination for the final year of primary education.

The local school districts were formed when families in an area petitioned the county board of supervisors that they had the required number of students to form a school district and that they could supply a school house. The supervisors granted the petition and defined the district boundaries, usually on the recommendation of the county superintendent. A three member board, elected or appointed from the local community, ran the school district. The board bought the land, built the school, hired the teachers,

and kept all the records of finance and enrollment. After 1879, they were expected to limit their expenditures to their income.[69] An individual from the community would be selected to take the student census of the children living in the district. One member of the board was named the clerk of the board. This member kept the board minutes, and carried out all communications for the board.

On the BTR, a small segment of the local society struggled to balance the demands of the land and the expectations of the community, within the legal perimeters set by the state and county. It was a process of adaption and modification that resulted in two school districts that were a fine mixture of the three components. The history of these districts chronicles that process.

Chapter 4

THE BIG TREES AND AVERY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Above the North Fork of the Stanislaus River, along the Big Trees Road, a fledgling lumber industry, limited only by crude methods and difficult transportation, ravaged the forests. The "vandal hand of the shakemaker" destroyed the best sugar pine in the area. An annual flood of cattle and sheep turned the mountain meadows into dust each spring and summer. A declining sightseeing industry catered to the needs of a seasonal influx of visitors drawn by the Big Trees or the wilderness. Homestead farmers attempted to coax a living from the isolated valleys. Displaced Miwok Indians continued to hunt and forage in the old ways. Into this social and economic environment a few dedicated individuals introduced public education.

Acting on a petition submitted by citizens residing in the Big Trees voting precinct and on the recommendation of the County School Superintendent, T. G. Peachy, the County Board of Supervisors approved the formation of the Big Trees School District on March 10, 1881.[70] The attendance boundaries were to coincide with the voting district and the school itself was situated on the grounds of the Mammoth Grove Hotel in the North Grove of the Big Trees.[71] The owner

of the hotel, Mr. J. L. Sperry, lived at the hotel during the sightseeing season with his family, and appears to have taken a special interest in establishing and maintaining education in the BTR area. He may have built the school. He did provide supplies, teachers from his own family, the school site, and the skill of his wife, who acted as the clerk of the school board for sixteen years.[72]

The first teacher was Mrs. H. A. Morgan of San Joaquin County.[73] By 1885, at least thirty-nine children between the ages of five and seventeen lived in the district; however, only twelve students were enrolled and the reported average daily attendance (a.d.a.) was only half of that.[74]

Low attendance was a county-wide problem that threatened the existence of many schools. Attendance determined the amount of money which was apportioned to the districts from the state and county taxes. The teacher's salary was paid by the state money, but supplies, books for the library, school apparatus and other educational amenities were purchased from the apportioned money. Not only was the ability of the district to meet the educational demands curtailed by low attendance, but the ability to remain open was affected as well. The state required that a district maintain an a.d.a. of at least six in the school year to stay open.[75] Low attendance, like a spectre, continually threatened to terminate both the Big Trees and the Avery School Districts throughout the period of 1881 to 1940.

The County Board of Supervisors established the Avery

School District on April 4, 1886, on the recommendation of the County School Superintendent, C. R. Beal, after an election was held in the district favoring the establishment of a school.[76] Up to that time, students living in that vicinity had to go to the Murphy's School, eight miles away, or the Big Trees School.[77] The attendance boundaries were established between the Big Trees School District and the Murphy's District. The school house was built by George Avery on land he provided across from his hotel on a knoll next to a meadow.[78] The first teacher was Miss Mary Carty, and the first clerk of the school trustees was Mr. Avery, a position he held for ten years.[79] There were twenty-two children enrolled for the school year 1886-7, but the a.d.a. was only eight.[80]

The State of California, in 1849, only required that a school district remain open at least three months per year. By 1879, this requirement was raised to six months.[81] Most schools in Calaveras County during this period stayed open about nine months. The Big Trees School was one district that held school the least amount in the county, averaging only about six months per year.[82] The school was open during the spring and summer months when the road was clear, and the population of the mountains swelled, particularly the hotel population. The Avery School managed to stay open about one and a half months longer each year, although the weather, too, eventually forced the school to close in the late fall.[83] Elevation is the key factor in explaining the

differences of the school years. More precipitation in the form of snow falls at the almost 5000-foot level of the Big Trees than at the 3500-foot level of Avery.

School districts received quarterly apportionments from both state and county taxes. The state superintendent disbursed funds from the state school fund based on the total student a.d.a. of the county and the number of teachers working there. The county superintendent added money raised by the county property tax. From that combined amount he divided the funds among the various districts, as Superintendent Frank Wells explained to the readers of the Calaveras Prospect in 1908: "To find the amount given each district, multiply the average daily attendance by $3.00 and add $10.00 for each teacher."[84] That quarter, Avery received sixteen dollars from the county and twenty-four dollars from the state, because there was one teacher and an a.d.a. of ten.[85] The methods of apportionment changed very little during this early period, and they were always based on the a.d.a. figures. The school library fund was at times figured at ten percent of the apportionment.

Education came to the mountains, but since the support remained small, the money to create a quality educational program was limited. In spite of the hardships of a largely disinterested summer population, and limited funds, the educational program managed to survive. The schools remained open at least the required six months. A teacher was provided for each district every year.[86] The libraries

continued to grow.[87] Attendance remained high enough to stay open, for the supporting community sent their children. Some students graduated and some even became teachers in the county.[88]

The Teachers

The teachers who served these districts during the period of 1881 to 1900 were usually young, unmarried women in the early years of their careers. There were exceptions to this generalization that demonstrate the variety of teachers who worked in the BTR area. W. F. Sperry, son of the owner of the Mammoth Grove Hotel, and a one time student of the Big Trees School, became its teacher in 1885. He later moved from the area, left the teaching profession and ran a branch of the Sperry flour business in Marysville.[89] Frank Wells, of Fourth Crossing, taught at Avery in 1899 and 1900. He later married an Avery daughter, became county school superintendent and eventually a principal in Stockton.[90] M. G. Salicido, a spinster in her late twenties, left her teaching assignment at Big Trees before the end of the term to edit the Calaveras Prospect in the election year of 1884.[91]

It is commonly assumed by many that married women were not allowed to teach school, although there were no legal provisions that support this contention. Miss Louise Reinking taught at the Avery School for five years before marrying Morton Avery. For a short period the new Mrs. Avery

continued to teach. Because there is no other record of a married woman teaching at either school until the late 1940's, this incident may be the exception that proves the rule. More than a legal requirement, it appears to have been an accepted custom that female teachers were to be single.

Most of the teachers were long-time county residents, who were educated in the county system. Many came from areas adjacent to the Big Trees.[93] They would have been familiar with the area from summer visits or perhaps other members of the family or friends had worked there. An opportunity to teach in the mountains, near the hotels, during the height of the sightseeing season, would be very attractive to a young teacher. But apparently, the attraction rarely lasted for more than a few years, for county-wide teacher turnover was high--especially in the rural schools.[94] The city schools of San Andreas and Angels Camp appear to have offered more attractions for teachers, because the same teachers were hired year after year.[95] Some of the male teachers in these cities married and raised families.[96]

An example of the unsettled habits of some of these early teachers can be seen in the career of Miss Carrie Houston, probably of Murphy's. In 1885, she was teaching in Washington Ranch. In 1887, she was down at Salt Spring Valley School. In 1888, she was at Mosquito Gulch. She settled down for three years at the Eureka School before

SCHOOL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES ~ 1935

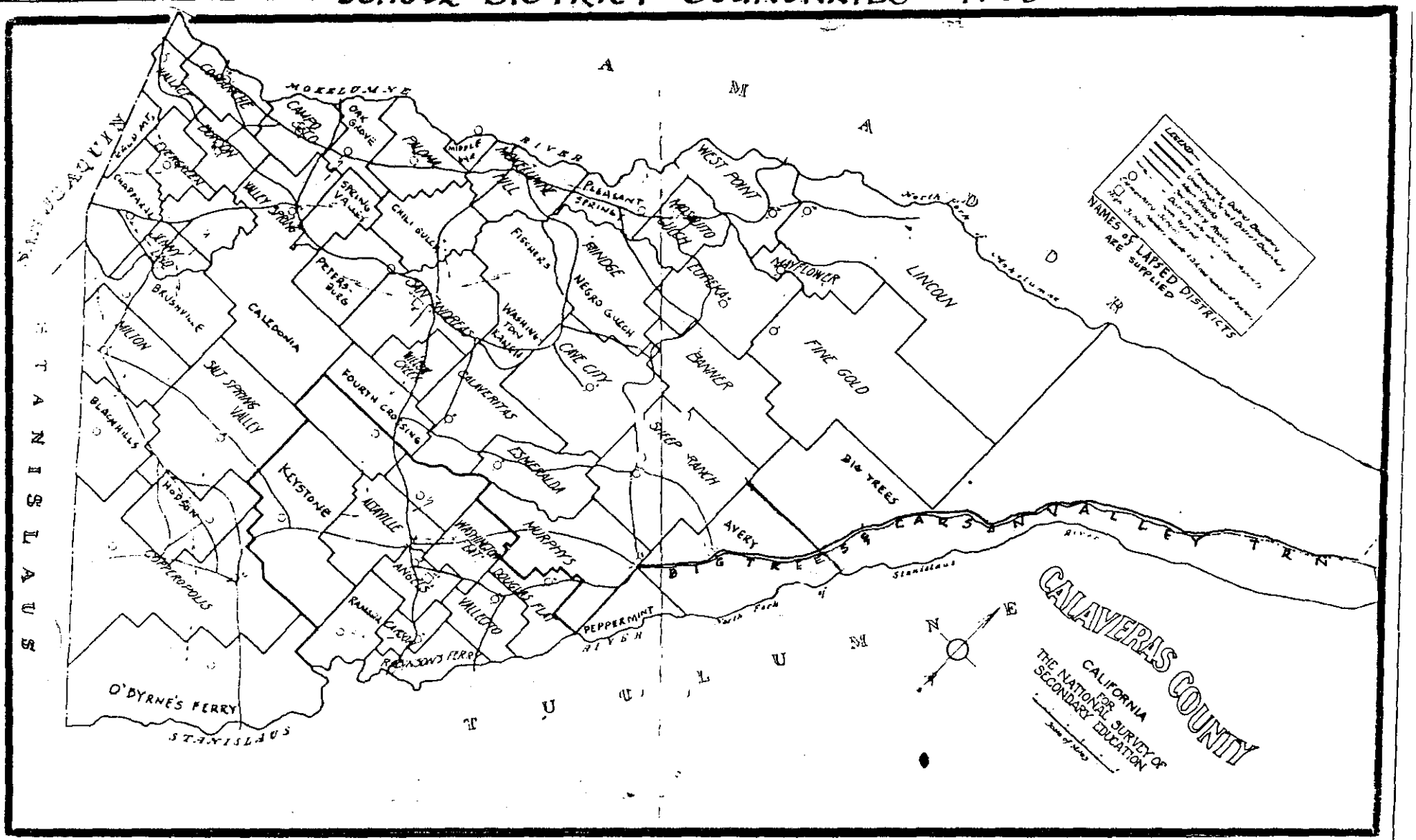

FIG. 2

moving to teach at Avery in 1892.[97]

With the great turnover of teaching personnel at the two schools of Big Trees and Avery, oddly enough, no teacher who taught at Big Trees ever taught at Avery or vice-a-versa. There was no apparent rivalry or anomosity between the districts that might account for this fact.

The teacher's salary remained about sixty dollars per month during this period, one of the lowest in the county, but in line with some of the other rural districts. County-wide, men, generally, received about ten dollars per month more than women, but no such sex discrimination was apparent on the BTR. City schools paid the highest wages in the county.[98] Teaching salaries in California were abysmally low and State Superintendent John Swett often chided the State Legislature about this fact.[99]

Some of the teachers appear to have roomed and boarded at the local hotels.[100] The hotels were the convenient centers of the local community and the seasonal home for the teamsters, some mill boys and bookkeepers--a lively milieu for a young teacher. In addition, the clerks of the school boards for both schools were usually the owners of one of the local hotels. The room and board could have been offered to the teacher as part of the contractual agreement.[101] Henry Russell, a teacher at Avery in 1906, lived at his family home near the Darby's and walked to school from there.[102]

All teachers employed in the county were required to

have a county-issued teaching certificate. The state empowered the county board of education with the task "to examine applicants and to prescribe a standard of proficiency."[103] These exams were to be both written and oral. The written questions were developed by the county board in their capacity as the county board of examiners. This job required a great deal of their time because the exams were given four times per year, with a different set of exam questions each time! Members were assigned to create questions in specific areas.

A study of these exams reveal questions that are esoteric, pedantic, and difficult, even for contemporary college graduates. They also demonstrate the influence of the New England ideas of educational content, and there is little evidence that the educational expectations for teachers were altered, having been written in the new setting of California. The subject areas were: spelling, grammar, arithmetic, geography, history, word analysis, theory and practice, mental arithmetic, composition, reading, penmanship, algebra, physiology, natural philosoghy, Constitution, school law, and bookkeeping.[104] It is no wonder that the exams took three days to complete. The applicants were then tested orally in the same subject areas, and the board members were the sole judges of the applicant's competence.

The board of examiners was composed of professional educators who, no doubt, drew upon their own educational backgrounds when conducting the exams and creating the

questions. The classical curriculum of the New England model tended to perpetuate itself from board to teacher to classroom. The questions were silent on the more germaine topics of teaching skills and how to meet the special problems of a small, one room rural school. This area clearly illustrates the dominance of certain cultural forces even as they encountered the new environments of the west.

Despite the difficulties these exams appear to present to contemporary readers, mere eighth grade grammar school graduates, eighteen years old, regularly passed these exams. Rather than accept the indictment that today's teacher is no comparison to the teacher of the past, it is necessary to analyze the apparent discrepancy in academic ability.

One explanation may lie in the exam questions themselves. Most of the applicants had passed through the county school system. The curriculum, textbooks, and the final graduation exam were all established by the same county board members that created the teacher's exam. The applicants were imbued with the traditional knowledge necessary to pass the exams. In addition, the applicants were practiced in the skill of taking exams of the type created by the board. Most educators agree that familiarity with the subjects on a test as well as the test format usually insures higher results.

Another explanation may be found in the grading of the tests. The questions were answered as essays and

therefore subject to the personal interpretation of the board.[105] The subjective interests of the board in both the written and oral exams could create an atmosphere conducive to passing. In 1924, the county school superintendent recommended that the eighth grade exam be written in a more objective way so that it would be more difficult to coach the student.[106] This situation could have also been true in the case of the teacher's exam.

Whatever the case, the exams tested the knowledge that the educational profession felt was necessary to teach in the county schools. It was a difficult hurdle in this respect, and it certainly weeded out the uninformed so that only the teachers certified were those versed in the traditional curriculum approved and perpetuated by the county board and the educational community.

To receive a primary certificate, which allowed the teacher to teach the first four grades, the board required the applicant to pass only selected subjects on the exam with a score of seventy-five percent. A primary certificate was valid for two years. The board granted a grammar grade teaching certificate when the applicant passed the full exam with a score of eighty-five percent, and it was valid for six years. Both certificates could be renewed for the same length of time. A teacher received a life diploma after ten years of teaching.[107]

Teachers who had a certificate from another county needed to qualify for a Calaveras County certificate.

The back of the certificate listed the subjects, scores in each area, and the applicant's overall standing on the exam so that other counties could determine if the teacher needed to make-up a deficiency to meet the requirements to teach in the county. Kate Beavais, a teacher at Avery in 1897, came to Calaveras County with an Alameda County teaching certificate. The county board minutes recorded that she was "granted a grammar grade certificate on an Alameda County certificate, after passing an examination in four studies not on her certificate."[108] Still other teachers were granted certificates if they were graduates from a state normal school and received an education diploma. Lillian Purdy, who taught at Big Trees in 1889, received a certificate in this way.[109]

Yearly county teacher institutes, set up by the county superintendent, were usually held in the fall in San Andreas. Outside experts in education, as well as local speakers, presented topics that were designed to promote the latest teaching methods, as well as enhance the morale of the isolated rural teacher. These institutes lasted up to three days, and at the end of the sessions the educators drew up and voted on a list of certain proposals and declarations. Local newspapers published the proceedings for the perusal of the community. The administration took these institutes seriously, and an accounting of attendance was sent to the state superintendent in the annual report.[110] For an eighteen year old, recent grammar school graduate

with little or no professional training in education, the information gained from these institutes would have been an invaluable aid.

The county board of education set the course of study to be followed by all county teachers for the primary and the grammar grades. They explained on one instance that their intention

> ...in presenting this course of study to the schools of the county, it is not so much our object to fix the amount of work that shall be done in a term as it is to furnish a definite object for the schools--to have in view a certain amount of work in each branch--so that the mind of the pupil may come out of the school symmetrically developed.[111]

The course of study they developed for the primary grades was divided into four divisions, equivalent to todays first through fifth grades. A six-year old student would commence school at the fourth division. Yearly work and attendance would bring the student up to the first division where he had to be promoted to the grammar grades. They were in turn divided into three divisions equivalent to the modern sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. A fourth division of advanced study was added later as an equivalent ninth grade before there were high schools in the county.[112]

To meet these objectives, the board also provided some guidance. Sometimes they were very explicit, basing an objective on a specific textbook. For example, under the objective for the primary grade, first division arithmetic, the teacher, "...is to use Mione's Practical to page 207, including the mental work."[113] Other recommendations were

less precise:

> Language--criticize incorrect expressions, giving the correct form. Teach children to give complete answers; not, however, to be carried to extreme.[114]

The board also approved a list of textbooks to be used to meet the objectives.[115] The books were to be purchased by the student unless he was financially unable to do so, and then the district was required to supply the books.

The board published and distributed to each district a "Manual" containing their rules and regulations, and it was to be referred to as a guide. The "Manual" was apparently an important creation of the board, and they expected it to be the last word in most problems encountered by the teacher. Unfortunately, there is no example of one extant in the county to provide more information.[116]

As today, teachers prepared the lessons according to the levels of the students. In the one room, rural school, the age spread could be considerable. For example, one year the Avery School had one first grader, two third graders, two fourth graders, one fifth grader, one sixth grader and two eighth graders. Developing lessons for such a variety, no doubt, taxed the ingenuity of the teacher. It is apparent that the lessons were short, judging from daily schedules that are found in the Vallecito School registers. Also, the student population in both the schools was always small, making it easier to meet the individual needs of the children. It is reported also, that at times, the older children were used to assist the teacher with the younger students.[117]

A particular problem for both the teachers and the students of the BTR area was the shortened year due to the weather, especially at Big Trees. This fact would make it difficult for a student to attain the required amount of work to pass the exams for promotion and graduation. The list of graduates from both schools is incomplete in this early period, making it difficult to reach positive conclusions about the detrimental affects of a shortened year on academic progress.[118] Those students who left the mountain in the fall may have continued their education elsewhere. The Avery's left the hotel for the winter in the 1920's, and the children continued their education at Valley Springs School.[119] If the Murphy's School registers were availible, they would probably show that the Sperry children did the same thing there. The Sperry's originally lived in Murphy's. They kept the family home there and lived there during the winter months.[120]

The teachers on the BTR were the vanguard of a traditional culture that found its roots in the school systems of New England. They were not only raised on the curriculum as students, they had to demonstrate profound competence in its principles. There is little evidence left that might show any official deviation from the traditional curriculum or in teaching methods which would have been more suited to the local situation. If the school board minutes or the school registers were available, they might show innovations, community involvement, and community imput all arising from

local concerns that the traditional educational program was not addressing. The teachers on the BTR had to adjust the program to the physical and social environment. The seasons dictated the length of the school year and when school was taught. The overall lack of interest of most of the people on the BTR resulted in small classes, little money, and minimal support. Teaching in the area was a lonely, isolated experience. The teachers were surrounded by a society with little interest in the local educational program, save a few persistent men and women.

The School Building

The most obvious physical statement of a school district is the school building itself. A community will provide an environment commensurate with its ability to pay. Interest in education, financial ability to provide instruction, the legal requirements of the state, and the practical needs of a rural setting with extremes of climate, all were factors which set the parameters for the building.

Physically, both schools were similar, following the familiar frontier school appearance of a small rectangular clapboard construction.[121] Two windows on either side, a door in front with a porch and a stoop, an attic and a back door complete the picture. Because the teacher called the students to class with a handbell, there were no bellfreys.[122] The expense of a large bell was too much for the community and would be ineffectual in the mountains where the sound

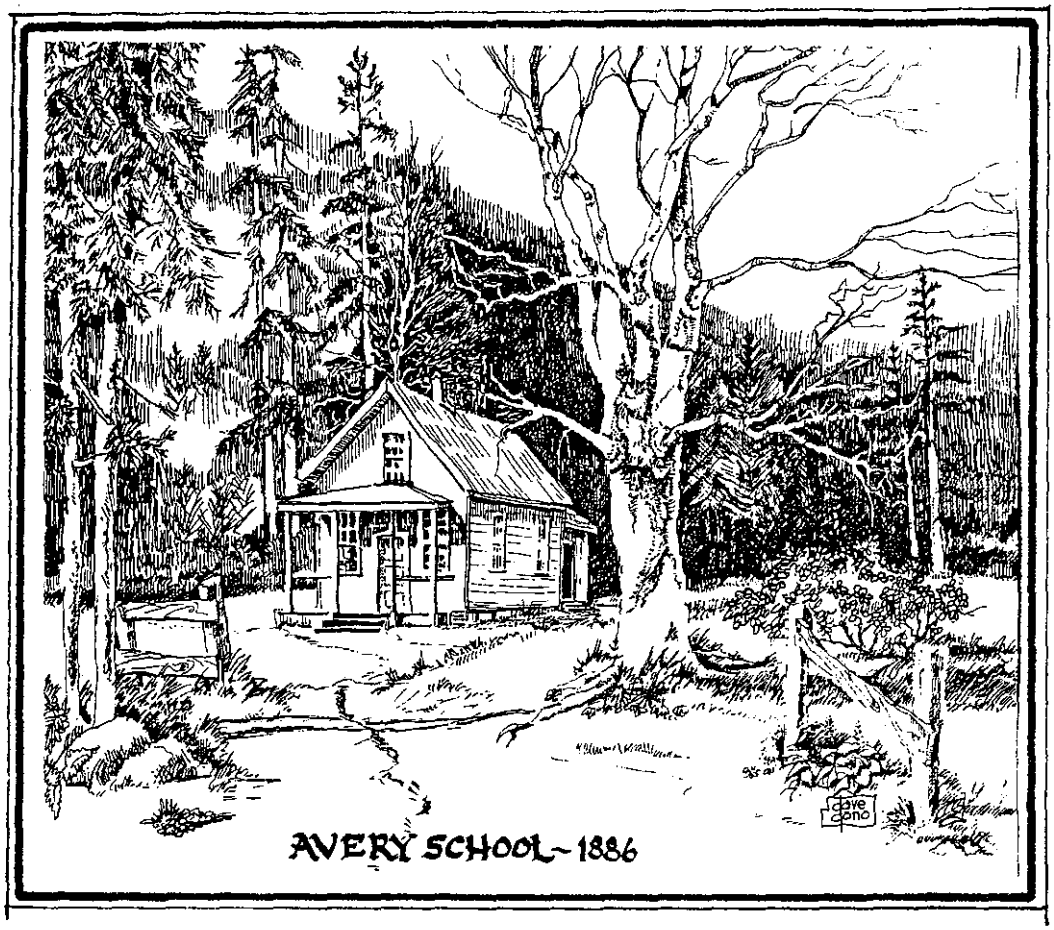

FIG. 3

would be muffled by the hills and trees, and the children lived at such great distances. The school districts made a practical adjustment to a local situation.

Both school buildings appear to have been painted a rust color, but by the early 1920's, the Avery District painted their school a light gray.[123] The practical appearance of these wilderness schools clashes aesthetically with the increasing trend of this period to beautify the "temples of learning." Although the Murphy's and Douglas Flat schools were built in an earlier period, the modest attempts to enhance the appearance of the buildings by adding neo-classical adornments, reveals communities which went beyond the mere utilitarian into the realm of aesthetics. The Big Trees and the Avery schools were the result of no such fancied flights, but rather a practical answer to a need. The buildings met the basic requirements. They were an undecorated truth with a basic task to be carried out with limited funds and a relative lack of interest from the community at large.

The State of California required, through the educational code, that the district trustees, acting on the teacher's requisitions, supply each school with

> ...clocks, brooms, dusting brushes, wash basins, water buckets, tin cups, dust pans, matches, ink, ink bottles, pens, penholders, pencils, crayons, chalk, writing and drawing paper, handbells,...wood boxes, shovels, pokers, soap, towels, thermometers, door mats and scrapers.[124]

From the school warrants, it seems that the trustees of both schools attempted to meet most of these requirements. Small

items were no doubt donated by the families, while the Big Trees trustees purchased supplies at the Sperry's hotel or in Murphy's for the Big Trees School. The Avery trustees purchased their supplies from the Avery Hotel, or from Murphy's and Angels Camp.[125]

The Avery school site had a well which certainly supplied the school with the necessary water supply.[126] Unfortunately, by 1917 the well water was polluted and water had to be carried by bucket each day from the Avery Hotel.[127] The close proximity of the Big Trees School to the Mammoth Grove Hotel made it possible for them to share the water supply. The children used outside privys at the Avery School up to the late 1920's, as there was reportedly no inside plumbing.[128] The warrants, however, refer to a payment for plumbing repairs in this period.[129] The truth of this matter is unclear and needs further investigation. Wood stoves heated both schools and could also serve as lunch warmers. According to the warrants, wood was rarely purchased, which may suggest that most of the wood was supplied by the community. Miss Hazel Fischer, a teacher at the Avery School beginning in 1917, related that she provided porcelain cups for each of her students rather than continue the usual custom of using a communal tin cup.[130]

The Avery School purchased an organ that took two yearly payments to pay off.[131] By the early 1900's, the county superintendent noted that it was in poor condition,[132] and by the 1920's it was no longer around.[133] The Big Trees

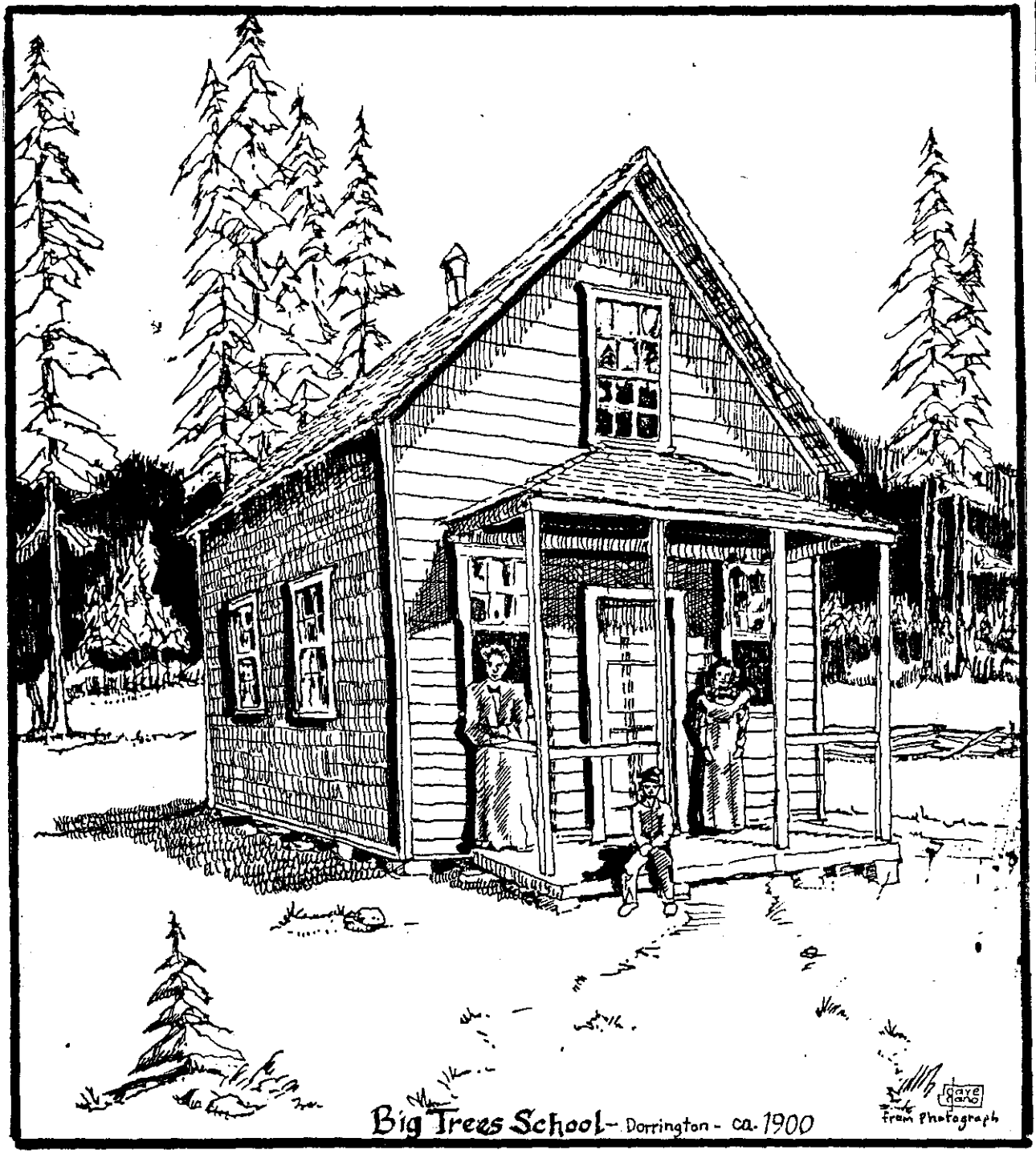

FIG. 4

School bought wallpaper and curtains to enhance the inside, something the Avery School did not do.[134] The floors of the Avery school were oiled.[135] The Avery School had single desks of the type with the seat in front for the next desk.[136] Both schools reportedly had an adequate number of desks during this period.[137]

The State of California also required that the district trustees, "employ a suitable person to sweep and take care of the school house."[138] The Big Trees School complied with this requirement in the 1880's by hiring Ira Flanders, a board member and local homesteader. Later, Flander's wife and son were also involved in the maintenance of the building. Through the years, community members were employed.[139] The Avery School, on the other hand, rarely paid for a janitor. There was certainly a need for one. Perhaps, teachers employed at Avery School were expected to be its janitor as well. Miss Hazel Fischer performed this task for nothing.[140]

The county superintendent continually reported that the grounds surrounding the schools were "undeveloped."[141] To spend money on the school grounds would not fit the utilitarian approach that was apparent in both districts. Fortunately, the Avery School had an area that was adequate for the children on the edge of a fenced meadow with a wooded area behind it. The Big Trees School was in the shadows of the world famous Sequoia trees--no other school in the county had such a unique "undeveloped" school ground.

The construction of play-equipment, such as slides and swings for the playgrounds was, no doubt, considered a frill not needed in a basic education.

The Avery District constructed an addition to the rear of the Avery School to house the library. It was not as well built as the main building, and during the winter of 1982-3, it collapsed. The addition remained unpainted. The Avery School house still stands altered with additions and the loss of the front stoop. A further testimony to the sturdily-built schools can be derived from the fact that the Big Trees school suffered the fate of being moved up the BTR about three miles to the Cold Springs Ranch at Dorrington, where it continued to serve as a school house for ten more years. The Big Trees building no longer stands.

The Supporting Community

The consistently low a.d.a. figures that hounded the two districts in the early years, reveal that only a small portion of the families living on the BTR committed themselves to the schools. Those who did partake in the struggle with the forces of the frontier were usually families not only striving to make a living in the BTR area, but also they were intent upon settling the land and making it their home. The vast majority who came to the hills in the spring and summer to use the resources of the area, returned to their permanent homes elsewhere. It was in other areas they supported the schools that educated their children. But there were those

families who saw the BTR as more than a mere summer retreat, for they attempted to bring into the environment formal education--a harbinger of civilization.

Those committed families who basically supported the schools by sending their children, acting on the school board, and working as census marshals were mainly from the hotel establishments and certain homestead and ranch families. Some half-breed Indian families, occasionally sent their children. Some students did come from the shake-maker community and there is evidence of one student coming from one of the lumber mills.[142] It has been demonstrated already the interest the Sperry and Avery families took in their prospective schools.

There may be several reasons that explain that interest. The 1880 United States Census recorded that J. L. Sperry, his wife and four school aged (or soon to be) children were living in the BTR area, probably at the hotel.[143] By this time Sperry had become the sole owner of the Mammoth Grove Hotel.[144] He had divested himself of his other hotel in Murphy's, and he was focusing his attention on the BTR area. He lived at the hotel during the tourist season--the six mild months of the year. If his family were to live with him, it would be necessary to provide for their education. His wife demonstrated a great zeal for education by serving on the school board for sixteen years. His oldest son and daughter both became teachers. Consequently, it would appear that Mr. Sperry had ample support in starting

a school from his own family.

In addition, Sperry appears to have had a sincere interest in improving the BTR area. Although he had been a successful businessman in Murphy's, he increasingly turned his business attention up the hill. He purchased many acres of land surrounding the Big Trees, so that he became one of the area's larger landowners. He was on the board of supervisors which directed the development of the Big Trees-Carson Valley Turnpike which facilitated travel and freighting into the area. He was ever trying to bring a railroad up the grade to at least the Big Trees to connect the area with the "distant markets" of the Central Valley. It may be true he was mainly interested in developing his lumber holdings, including the Big Trees themselves, but with the construction and support of a school on his hotel grounds, he was also demonstrating his belief in education and its effect on an area's development. He was not appealing to the lumberjacks, cattlemen or summer vacationers with such a move, but rather to those who saw the area as a potential home.[145]

Other families in the area probably influenced the decision to establish a school district. The John Moran family, who ranched a sizeable spread about two miles from the Big Trees, provided students and a board member.[146] The Ira Flanders, who homesteaded about three miles from Big Trees, and more than eight miles away from the nearest school in Murphy's also appear to have been interested in

establishing a school in the BTR area.

The Avery family situation somewhat parallels that of the Sperry's. George Avery's family was young and growing in the 1880's. He also demonstrated a genuine interest in developing his area. He increased his land-holdings. He added on a second story to his hotel and included a bar. He built a store, dance hall, and a post office across the road from the hotel. During this period of expansion and improvement, Avery also built the Avery School on his own land. The same business sense that Sperry manifested may have motivated Avery to improve his area by adding a school--a symbol of settled civilization. Besides donating the land and the school, the Avery's served on the school board for two generations, acted as census marshals numerous times, and sent many children to be educated.[147] Before the construction of the Avery School, Morton Avery, George Avery's oldest son, attended school in Murphy's, and several times was listed on the honor roll.[148] The Averys had more than just a passing interest in education.

That other element supporting schools were the homesteaders and ranchers like the Morans and the Flanders. They were part of a national movement emigrating westward to take advantage of the federal government's generous land laws. With little cash and a great deal of work, families willing to sacrifice and struggle could start a better life on their own land, free from the social, economic and political structures that tended to conserve the cultural

norms of the east and keep the ambitious poor down. Education was part of this movement west, as a contemporary describes the emigrants:

> ...but our own society, scarcely less nomadic than the tented Arab, scarcely less impetuous than the Goth and Hun, pour abroad along the western wilderness in swarming millions, countless with implements of farming, with wealth of flocks and herds, and with a breadth and depth of civilization such as never emigrated before. They drive schools along with them, as shepherds drive flocks....Educational institutions go lowing along the western plain.[149]

Education was necessary and part of the self-improvement of the emigrant.

Besides those families already mentioned, there was the Mentz family on Love Creek. He was a German immigrant who came to California and married and raised a large family on a homestead he cleared and settled. Several of their children graduated from the Avery School, and one daughter became a teacher.[150] The Jay Anson Darbys, another homestead family, sent their children to the Avery School. The Russells, who lived in the same area with the Darbys, had a son named Henry who taught at the Avery School.[151] Several other families were involved in the districts, but their stories have not been recorded or they have been lost. Unlike the hotel families, these homesteaders did not have the luxury of moving down the hill in the fall. They contended with the hardships of the area in a year round struggle for survival. Their committment to education demonstrated a greater faith in the future of the area as a home.

The Student

Few students have had to endure the temptations to skip school that certainly beckoned children attending the Big Trees and Avery schools in this early period. Those students who persevered and overcame the temptations and even went on to graduate, represent a triumph of the will (theirs or their parents?) over desire. The schools were open during the same period the mountains were alive with activity--summer and spring. There were the bustling lumber and cattle camps, the sightseers and the teamsters, the stagecoaches and the freight wagons, the hunters and the fishers, and running in among them all were children, liberated from their own schools, enjoying their summer vacations in the mountains. They came to help with the sheep and cattle.[152] Still others were visiting the Big Trees or they were hunting and fishing. The child census for the BTR area counted many more children in the vicinity than those actually attending school.[153] Obviously, there were many children there with no intention of attending school. For the normal child to trudge to school, under such circumstances it is no wonder the a.d.a. figures remained consistently low for both schools.

The usual ages for the primary and grammar school student were between six and seventeen years. Six years was the low limit set by the state, and it was strictly enforced.[154] Those over seventeen who cared to attend school, could do so.[155] Even so, few students continued on beyond

the age of sixteen, as they were expected to go to work by that age.[156]

The state set the following days as holidays for a spring-summer school:

> Every Sunday,...the thirtieth (30th) day of May, the fourth day of July, the ninth day of September,... every day on which an election is held throughout the state, and every day appointed by the President of the United States, or by the Governor of the State, for a public fast, thanksgiving, or holiday.[157]

In addition, students were off during the three days of the teacher's institute and whenever the teacher was ill, as there was no substitute system during this period.[158] An exception may be revealed in the Big Trees warrants. The regular teacher was not paid for one month in 1892. Instead, Miss E. Sperry was paid. Living at the hotel, and having only recently received her teaching certificate, Miss Sperry was available to step in as a substitute.[159]

The state also set the daily hours of the school day:

> The daily school session shall commence at nine o'clock A.M. and close at four o'clock P.M., with an intermission at noon of one hour, from twelve o'clock to one o'clock P.M. There shall be allowed a recess of twenty minutes in the forenoon session--from ten-forty to eleven o'clock--and a recess of twenty minutes in the afternoon session from two-forty to three o'clock.[160]

Students eight years old or younger were to be excused at two o'clock or, as it is printed in the code, "of such length that the actual confinement in the schoolroom shall not exceed three hours and a half."[161]

There was a place in the official school register where the teacher could keep track of desciplinary actions.

In the Vallecito registers these pages were not used for this purpose.[162] At Big Trees and Avery, where the student population remained small, discipline was probably not a problem. Marcelle Avery does not recall any discipline problems at Avery School in the early 1920's.[163]

A daily program developed by the Vallecito teacher of 1891, affords an example of the daily schedules used up the hill.[164] It is a model of precision and careful attention to the demands of time and subject. There were short lessons of ten to fifteen minutes for the younger students and from fifteen to twenty for the older ones. Short lessons would be a necessity in a multiple graded classroon where students could not be left without supervision for great lengths of time. After two o'clock those subjects especially designed for the older students--history, geography, drawing--were presented.[165] Teacher supervision was expected even during the recess period. The state asked that:

> Teachers are particularly enjoined to devote their time faithfully to a vigilant and watchful care over the conduct and habits of the pupils during the time of relaxation and play, before and after school and during the recesses, both in the school buildings and on the playground.[166]

Students either walked or rode to school by mule, sometimes up to two miles. The roads were dusty in the summer, from the heavy lumber, cattle, and freight traffic. Students have always been adept at finding the most convenient and quickest paths to school which, no doubt, circumvented the dust and the traffic. Photographs show up to four

students upon the back of a mule, burdened down with lunch pails and books, ready for school. This form of transportation was the most common, although there is an incident where one teacher carried a student to school on his shoulders.[167]

Students were called to class by the teacher with a handbell.[168] Until the 1912 California State Constitution amendment requiring that the state supply students with all textbooks, it was the responsibility of the parents to purchase the proper textbooks from the approved list.[169] The districts were required to supply books to those students whose families were unable to buy them.[170] Fortunately, a course of study presented by a textbook often covered more than one year's study, so that parents were not overly burdened with purchasing new books each year.[171] The libraries at both schools were continually added to as the quarterly apportionments always included a percentage for the library fund. By 1922, Avery School had 458 books in the library.[172]

A student would be promoted from the primary grades to the grammar grades by passing a county board test, a teacher-made test, or with the teacher's best judgment.[173] A primary certificate of promotion was used in the county.[174] To graduate from grammar school, a student was required to pass a county-wide test prepared by the county board of examiners, in much the same way they prepared the teacher's exam. Each member prepared questions on certain topics.

The student was tested in the following areas: reading, arithmetic, grammar, composition, geography, spelling, penmanship, physiology, philosophy, bookkeeping, algebra, and mental arithmetic. The test was given at the end of the school year in the larger towns, and it was proctored by members of the board.

Thirteen diplomas were granted to the first students to graduate in Calaveras County in 1885.[175] The test was not an automatic pass. In 1894, there were forty-three applicants but only twenty-four successfully graduated.[176] The only extant record of Big Trees and Avery School graduates is found in the San Andreas newspapers or the Angels Camp newspapers. They are far from complete or consistent, but these conclusions can be made: until after 1940 there was never more than one graduate per year from the Avery School, and in some years there were none. The Big Trees School has no record of a graduate, although it is almost certain that W. F. Sperry and his sister, H. Evelyn Sperry both graduated because they were later able to take the teacher's exam--one requirement being that the applicant is a grammar school graduate.[177]

Following graduation, several students, besides the Sperry children, went on to take the teacher's examination and become teachers in the county.[178] Other students, Morton Avery, for example, went to San Francisco to finishing school.[179] Before 1904, there was no public high school education in the county, and students wishing to continue

their education had to move to the Central Valley. There is little evidence of graduates from the BTR area actually making this move. When the county built a high school at San Andreas in 1904, and Angels Camp built Bret Harte the next year, there is no evidence that the trend to attend high school was reversed.[180] The commute would have been too far so that, once again, the student would have to room and board in one of the towns. The families would not only be financially burdened by sending a child to high school, they would also suffer the loss of the labor of a mature adolescent. Apparently, grammar school was all the education that most of the families could afford and thought was necessary. There were exceptions. The daughters of Morton Avery moved to Stockton to attend high school while living with an aunt.[181]

The students on the BTR were offered a traditional education with little evidence that it was adapted to the special needs of the area. The curriculum provided a general foundation so that the student would be "symmetrically formed," and in the judgment of the general population an educated person. Judging from the few who did graduate from grammar school, it was possible to acquire that knowledge. One final incident reported by the Calaveras Prospect, in 1893, demonstrates the conscious attempt to inculcate certain educational rituals into the wilderness--the school program. Avery School put on a program for the proud parents consisting of recitations, singing, and dialogues. The teacher was the

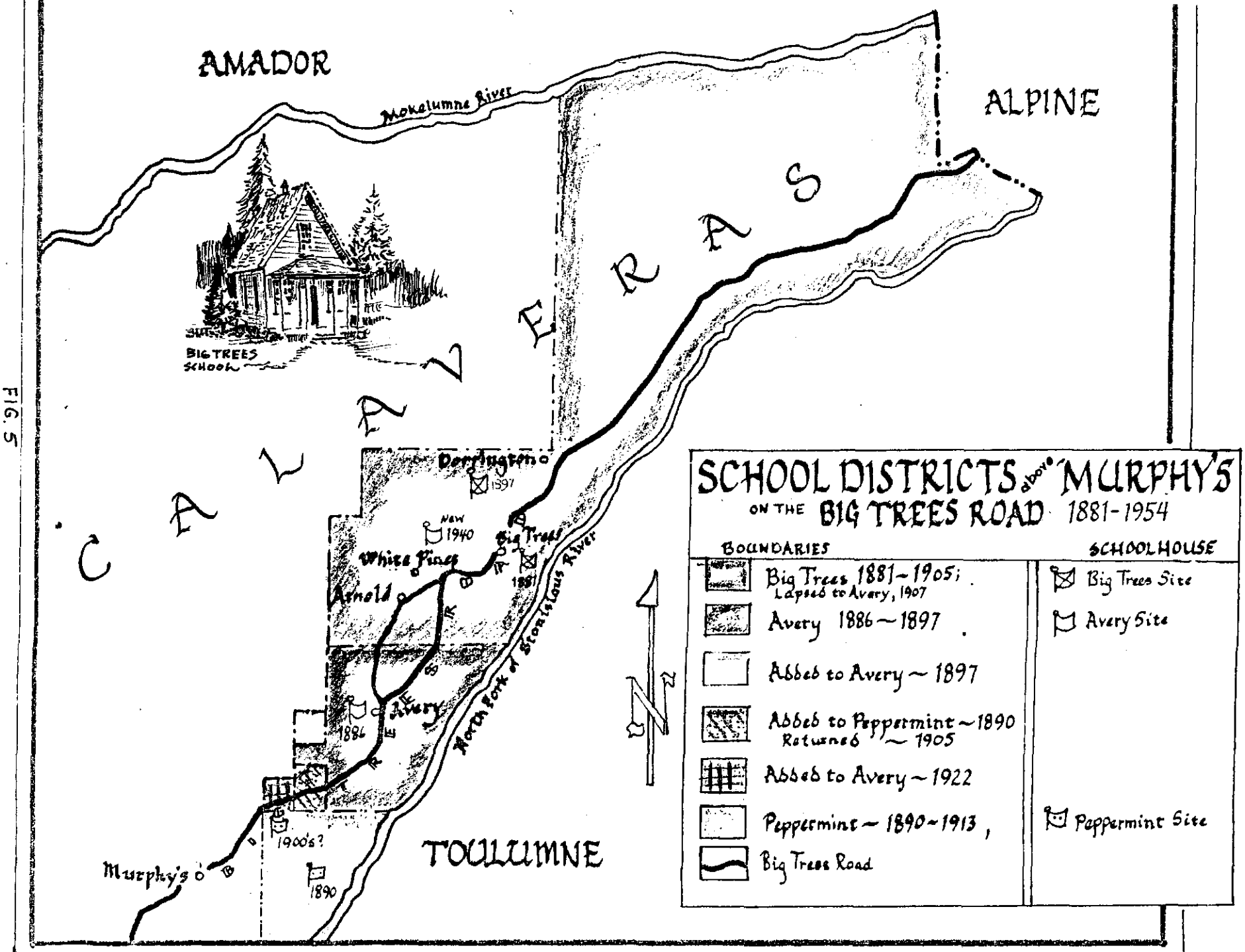
AMADOR
Mokelumne River
ALPINE
CALAVERAS
BIG TREES SCHOOL
Darrington
1897
New 1940
White Pines
Big Trees
1881
Arnold
Avery
1886
North Fork of Stanislaus River
1900's?
1890
Murphy's
TOULUMNE
SCHOOL DISTRICTS about MURPHY'S
ON THE BIG TREES ROAD 1881-1954
BOUNDARIES
Big Trees 1881~1905; Lapsed to Avery, 1907
Avery 1886~1897
Added to Avery ~ 1897
Added to Peppermint ~ 1890 Returned ~ 1905
Added to Avery ~ 1922
Peppermint ~ 1890~1913
Big Trees Road
SCHOOLHOUSE
Big Trees Site
Avery Site
Peppermint Site

FIG. 5

master of ceremonies, and at the end of the evening she was applauded for her efforts. This program represented an almost national educational ritual which showcased the local educational program. That it occurred in Avery in 1893 reveals that those who were struggling for education thought of themselves as part of the national educational scene.[182]

The Period from 1897 to 1940

The economic activities that had predominated on the BTR continued during this period with varying degrees of intensity and success. By the 1920's, a real economic depression seems to have descended upon the area. The population declined, and many of the longtime residents were selling out. The isolation of the BTR began to magnify. The school districts also suffered from the decline. The Big Trees District ceased to exist, and the Avery School District almost followed. This period was the lowest ebb for education on the BTR. By the late 1930's, the economic picture brightened and the population began to increase. By 1940, because of the growth of the lumber industry and the construction of a permanent lumber town, it was necessary to construct a new, larger school house to house the increased enrollment. Nineteen hundred and forty marked the end of the initial struggle to establish education on the BTR. From this point on the area changed from a seasonal, limited populated area to one of steady employment, growing population and year round living.

Big Trees School
ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE
1881 to 1907

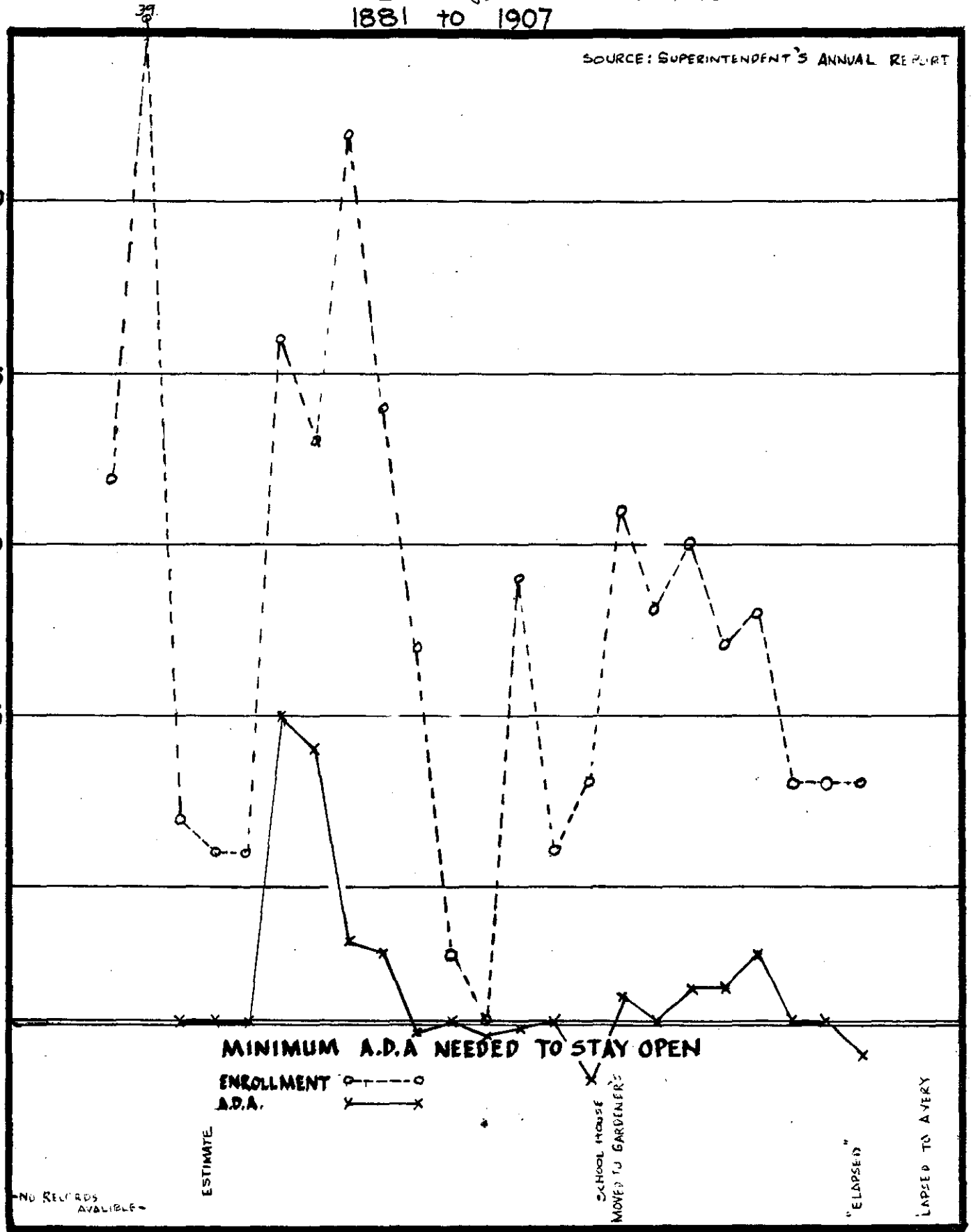

FIG. 6

In 1895, County Superintendent, E. R. Floyd, lectured the readers of the local newspaper regarding the need to send all eligible students to school. The a.d.a. was so low in the county that he demonstrated how the financial loss was hurting education.[183] Low attendance resulted in the closing of the many small rural county schools. Usually, the superintendent would recommend that a district be "lapsed." This meant that the district no longer functioned as a separate district, but was absorbed by an adjacent district. In 1897, the Big Trees School reported only thirteen students enrolled with an a.d.a. of only 4.3.[184] The perennial problem of low attendance appeared to have finally brought about the closure of the school. E. R. Floyd, recommended that the district be discontinued, as the student population was not sufficient enough to maintain a school.[185]

The Sperry era was over, for the children had grown and moved away. The Morans and the Flanders no longer needed the school for their children either.[186] The struggle was apparently over for Big Trees District when a novel solution was attempted. John Gardener, owner of the Dorrington Hotel and the Cold Springs Ranch, moved the Big Trees schoolhouse up the Carson Valley Turnpike to his ranch. He placed it facing his hotel.[187] There were more children living in this part of the district including the Gardeners and a thriving shakemaker community. The first trustee clerk in the new location was J. N. Schrum, a shakemaker

Avery School
ENROLLMENT and ATTENDANCE
1886 to 1912

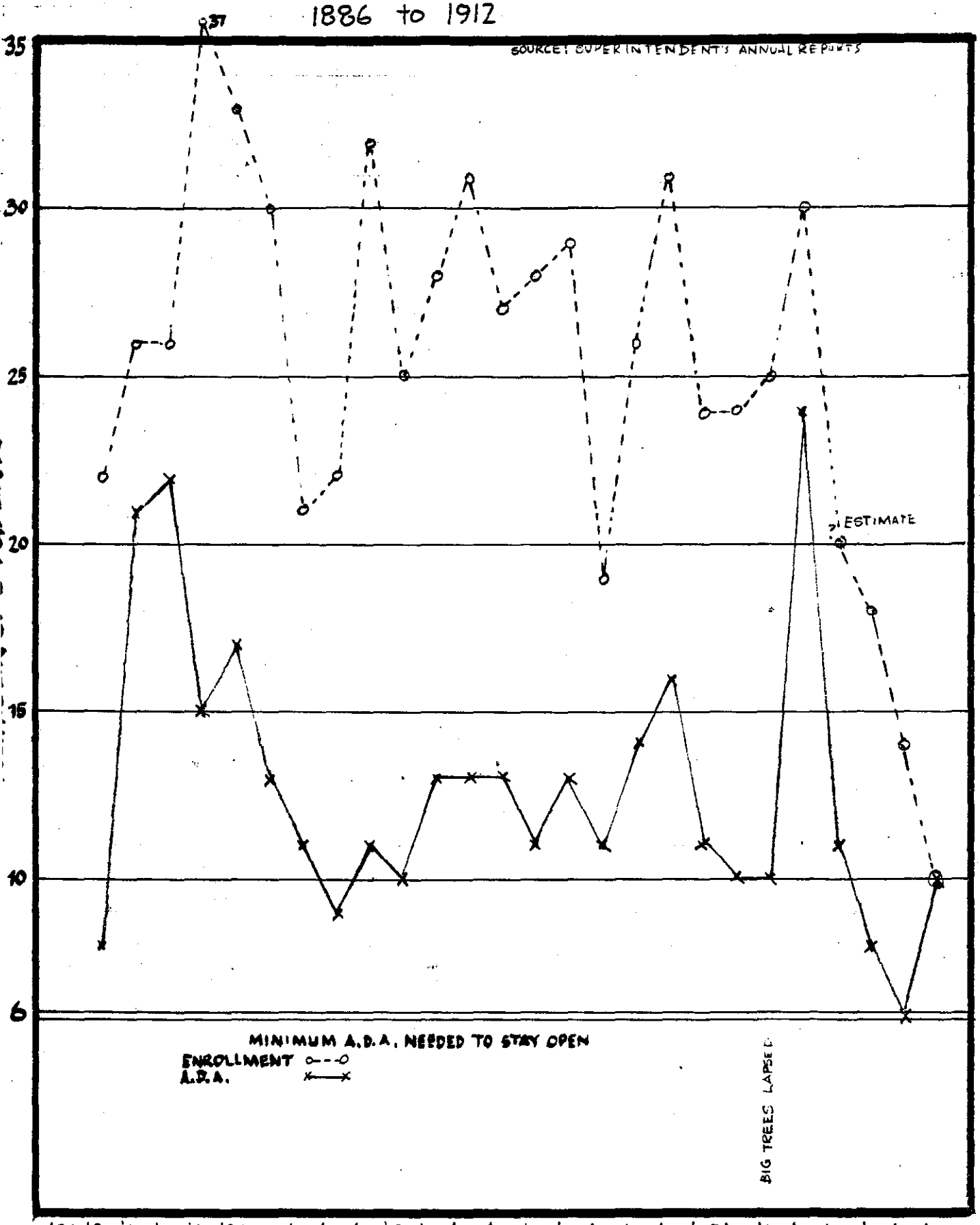

FIG. 7

with a large family.[188] Mrs. Gardener followed Schrum at this position until the school closed. The teacher at this time was Rose Williams of Angels Camp. She lived at the hotel.[189] The a.d.a. increased after the move to a minimum of six. The practical solution of moving the schoolhouse to a larger student population area was not an unique solution in the county, but the innovation does demonstrate the extremes the interested population was willing to go to to maintain education in the area.

Rose Williams taught until 1900. She was followed by Loretta Kaler, Sydney Smith, and Lizzie Kaler, all of Murphy's.[190] Although the move to Dorrington kept the school open for at least eight more years, they were not abundant years. By 1905, the newspaper declared it had "elapsed," but it was not until 1907 that the superintendent declared it to be a lapsed district.[191] The last money spent on the district was for a map and for Rose Williams, who returned to be the school's last teacher.[192] The struggle on the BTR claimed its first casualty.

In 1907, the Avery School District added the attendance area of the Big Trees District and consequently, became one of the largest districts in the county. Unfortunately, the area had few students. The a.d.a. increased that year to the highest level of twenty-four, but the following years returned it to the regular pattern of around six, not to rise again until the late 1930's.[193]

In 1899 and 1900, Frank Wells, with a Tuolumne County

teaching certificate, was able to secure a teaching job at Avery, after passing the four areas that his certificate lacked.[194] His sojourn in the mountains certainly changed his life. He met and later married an Avery.[195] Living at the hotel, with daily encounters with the Avery family, proved to be conducive to matrimony. Louise Reinking taught at the Avery School for five years. Finally, in 1905, she married Morton Avery.[196]

At this same time, George Avery moved with his wife and four younger children to Stockton. The family property in Avery was divided between the five eldest children. Morton bought out the interests of the other four and became the sole proprietor of the Avery holdings in the area. He and his new wife continued to run the store and the hotel. Mrs. Avery kept her hand in the educational field by serving on the Avery School Board until 1944.[197]

In 1917, Louise Avery informed Hazel Fischer, a cousin, that the Avery School needed a teacher. Miss Fischer had only recently received her teaching certificate, and the Avery assignment became her first teaching job. Against the usual tradition of rural teachers moving regularly from school to school, Miss Fischer continued to teach at the Avery School year after year until she retired in 1964. During her tenure, she was thought of as "the school." In an article listing the new teachers hired to teach at Avery, the phrase, "...and of course, Miss Hazel Fischer will be teaching the seventh and eighth grades," reveals the

Avery School
ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE
1913 to 1940

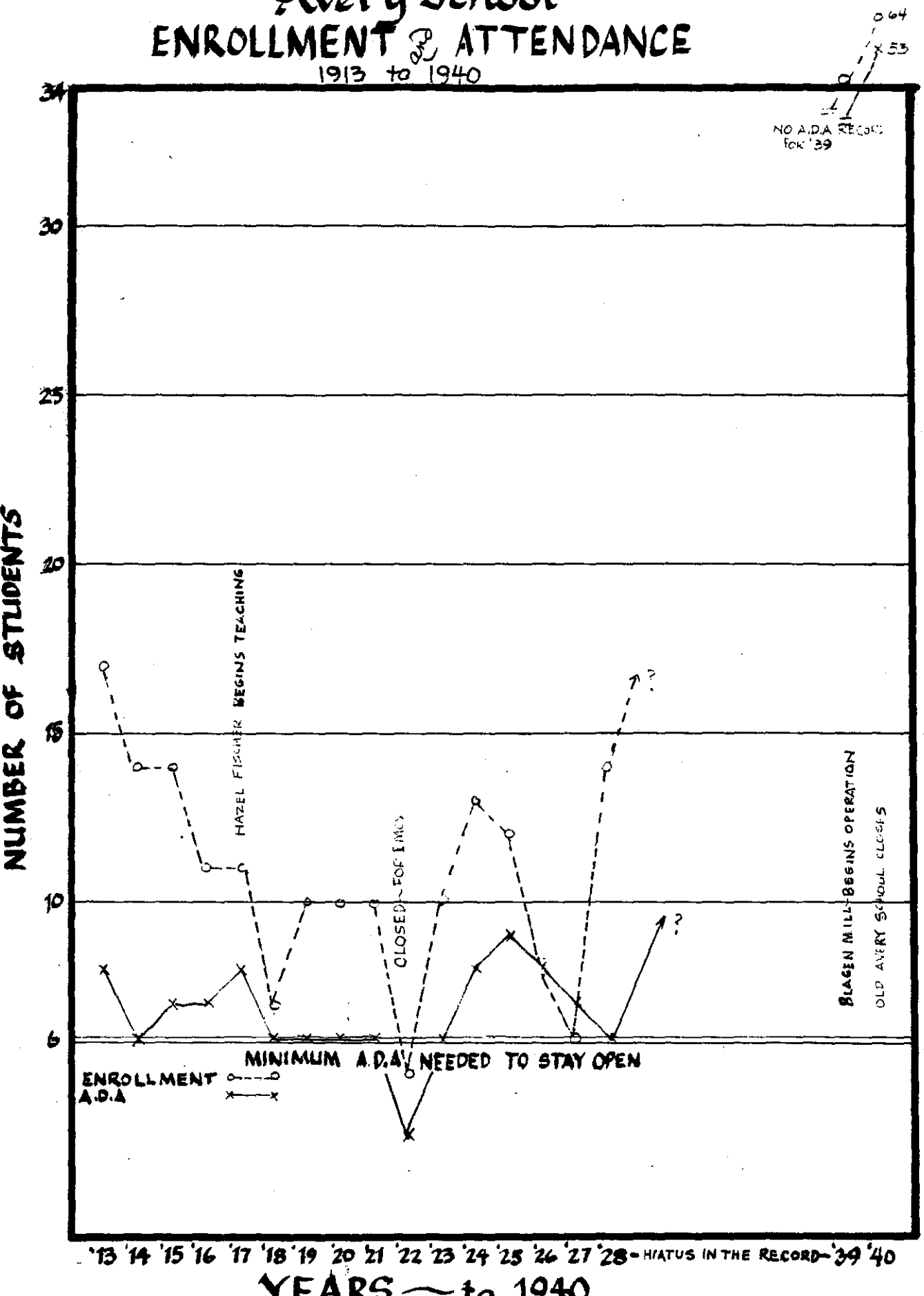

FIGURE 8

institutional status she had attained in the mid-1950's.[198] She lived at the Avery Hotel during the school year, where she reportedly accumulated a remarkable record of the school and her career in the form of newspapers and official school records. They have been destroyed.[199] When Miss Fischer died, her relatives cleaned out her room at the Avery Hotel.

The Avery School reported an a.d.a. of four for the year of 1922. The county superintendent recommended to the county board of supervisors that the school be closed, and they acted in accordance with his recommendation. On September 30, 1922, the Calaveras Weekly Citizen reported that the teacher, Hazel Fischer, was visiting her brother. The same fate that had fallen on the Big Trees School appeared to have claimed the final victim on the BTR and that the struggle to bring education there had ended.

At this point, those "few persistent men and women," described by Wright, mobilized their forces. Morton and Louise Avery went to San Andreas to present a petition signed by the school board to the supervisors asking them to re-open the school. Their request was denied. One month later on October 2, 1922, another petition was presented to the Board of Supervisors. This petition was signed by thirteen heads of families in the BTR area who claimed that they could send up to eight children to school. The Board remained unconvinced until a compromise was worked out. The Avery School District boundaries were increased by one square mile section of land in the location of the old Peppermint

School near Brice's Station. Obviously, this area included more student population, and the Board of Supervisors agreed to reestablish the Avery School District. It opened in late October, 1922, with Hazel Fischer as teacher. For the next few years, the a.d.a. remained above six but not above ten. The unique maneuver of extending the school district boundaries saved education on the BTR. The move also demonstrated the tenacity and ingenuity of those few people who chose to partake in the struggle.

Economics on the BTR

The first three decades of the twentieth century became a time of slow economic transition on the BTR. The area slid from a rather weak and seasonal economy into an apparent depression, long before the rest of the county and the nation. Lumbering and tourism, farming and ranching, all experienced a shifting and a decline. Consequently, the area suffered a loss in property values, and the population moved away. The BTR drifted further into the backwaters of the county.

Calaveras County lumbering suffered from limited finances, poor transportation, and few markets, during this period.[200] The successful lumbering concern on Love Creek run by the McKay brothers, Nathan and John, since the 1880's, moved the mill in 1906, "when the lumber ran out," to Toulumne County.[201] Another local lumberman, J. Manuel, died, but his estate was reorganized so that his lumbering

business continued to operate in the BTR area. The Raggio Sawmill also continued cutting wood into the late 1930's.[202] These efforts were small and declining. Without the lumber camps, and the teamsters, as well as the other support groups that accompany a thriving camp, the local economy suffered.

A new phase in the lumbering industry began to take advantage of the depressed economy up the hill. Several so-called "timber barons," many from out of state, began to acquire great tracts of timber lands, using local agents such as Frank Solinsky and his son, Frank Junior. The Solinskys became the county's largest timber buyers. They bought lands for delinquent taxes, and using loopholes in federal land laws, they were able to amass great holdings for these timber speculators. Mainly through their efforts, Charles Ruggles, an eccentric Michigan timberman, eventually held over 51,000 acres of Calaveras timber land by 1927. Ruggles, like Sperry before him, hoped to construct a railroad up the hill to facilitate the harvesting of his timber holdings. But, in 1927, he ran into financial problems, and he was forced to mortgage his holdings. When the crash of 1929 came, he was unable to survive it. His timber holdings in Calaveras County fell into the hands of bondsholders, who reorganized into the Calaveras Land and Timber Corporation. This corporation continued to expand its land holdings until it became, "one of the largest privately owned timber tracts in the southern Sierra, with 60,000 acres of prime forest

land in Calaveras."[203] This accumulated timberland became one of the key factors in bringing a major economic change to the BTR after 1940.

The ranchers and small homesteaders began to divest themselves of the property they owned on the BTR. The Willis Dunbar family had long ago forsaken their ranch near the Big Trees for their home in Murphy's, letting others work and live there.[204] In 1912, they put the ranch up for sale, advertizing, among its many attractions, the fact that a school was within two and a half miles.[205] Finally, the ranch was purchased in 1914 by M. L. Hunt. He raised potatoes, hay, and cattle, some of which he butchered to supply the Mammoth Grove Hotel.[206] His son, Elmer, planted 1,100 apple trees in 1920-1. The other major ranch in the area, the Moran Ranch, was put up for sale in 1922, advertising the agricultural, grazing, and timber lands.[207] It was finally sold in 1929.[208]

The Mentz family moved to Angels Camp in 1925. Their son, Alfred, bought an ice cream store there and eventually became the town's mayor. The family continued to visit the homestead, but they finally sold it in 1943.[209] The Darbys left for the Central Valley in 1914; however, Lloyd Darby returned in the early 1940's.[210]

The Morton Avery family continued to run the Avery Hotel. Relatives of Job Whiteside, who purchased the Big Trees property including the hotel from Sperry in 1900, ran the hotel until 1931, when the park was purchased by the

state to become the Big Trees State Park.[211] The Dorrington Hotel was sold by the Gardeners, but it continued to be operated by the new owners as a summer vacation area.

The Big Trees Road remained unpaved and increasingly difficult to travel. As the automobile became the major mode of travel, this fact was especially true. A newspaper article declared that in 1907 automobile ownership in California stood at 14,051, but by 1921 ownership jumped to 743,294.[212] Obviously, Californians had begun to rely heavily on the automobile. This fact may explain, in part, the economic decline that the area was experiencing. The BTR reportedly had a steep grade called the "SS grade," which prevented heavy traffic up the road. In 1921, an effort was made to modify the climb so that the automobile could make the climb into the area. A newspaper article hoped that the prime vacation land would once again be open to the tourist.[213] This effort may have helped, but it was more likely that the paving of the road in 1931 contributed most to the increased interest in the BTR in the 1930's.[214]

As the hard rock mines closed in Angel's Camp the need for timber declined. For a time, lumbering ceased to dominate the economy of the BTR. A renewed movement to promote the area as a "getaway" was initiated by Robert Hathaway, in 1933. He had purchased 320 acres of land below Avery with the intention of retiring away from the stress of the city. But when he realized the real estate

potential of the BTR area, he divided his property, built a store and a gas station, and commenced to enjoy a substantial sales boom.[215] Hathaway best represents the "Daniel Boone" phenomenon where the dual nature of the wilderness called both escape and development out of the same individual.

In the same vein, Bob and Bernice Arnold, settled in an area above the Dunbar Ranch in 1933. They purchased forty acres from the Manuel Estate for $400. They constructed a bar and a restaurant along with three cabins. Arnold also capitalized on the tourist interest in the BTR area by selling lots from his original forty acres. By 1934, a post office was established in the new town of Arnold.[216] Tradgedy struck the Arnolds in 1934 when their son, the only graduate from the Avery School that year, drowned that summer in the mill pond of the Manuel lumber mill.[217]

Membership on the school board of the Avery School District during this period reflects those elements of the society that continued to support the school. Elmer Hunt, the apple farmer, was a trustee in 1925, and his wife in 1929. Edgar H. Whiteside, who with his mother ran the hotel at the Big Trees, was a trustee from 1930 to 1932. Richard Raggio, of the Raggio lumber mill, was a trustee in 1922-3. Louise Avery continued to be clerk of the board until 1944 when the Averys finally left the mountains.[218]

With an increased interest and the easier access of a better graded and paved road, the population on the BTR began to expand and, consequently, impact the school. By 1937, there were enough students attending so that Hazel Fischer was forced to teach double sessions. There were probably no more than thirty-four students, but the small school building and the limited seating made the sessions necessary. She taught the primary (first to fourth grades) in the morning session and the other grades in the afternoon. Her day ran from eight A.M. to five P.M. Eventually, orange crates were used as desks and table tops. Prior to this period of growth, the county superintendent, on one of his yearly visits, noted on a piece of yellow legal paper the following inventory of the Avery School: "22 desks (single), 1 teacher's desk, 1 stove, not very good, 1 organ, not very good, 400 library books."[219] Oviously, the school was not ready for the sudden influx of population.

The Change of 1940

The November 24, 1938, headlines of the Calaveras Californian announced the plans of a major lumbering firm to move into Calaveras County and establish a mill on San Antonio Creek about a mile below the Big Trees. In an economically depressed county, this news was welcomed. The owner of the mill, Frank Blagen, estimated that he would be able to employ many hundreds of county workers, and that the timber stands in the area guaranteed at least sixty years of

operation at the new mill.[220]

The once lush timber lands of Sierra County were giving out, and the Bavies-Johnson Lumber Company of Calpine needed to find new lands to harvest. Blagen made a deal with the Calaveras Land and Timber Corporation to harvest their substantial holdings.[221] Using the trucks of his contract logger, "Doc" Linebaugh, the Calpine mill was dismantled and reassembled on a new site named White Pines by Blagen's wife.[222] Operations began in 1939. A town was established for the mill workers. A rectangle of land was set aside and lots were sold to the employees for $200. This price included free water and electricity supplied by the company's generators. P. G. and E. brought electricity up the hill soon after. The mill employed at least 250 men in 1940. The first substantial year round settlement had finally been established on the BTR. [223]

School enrollment soared as the new families began to settle in the community of White Pines. By 1940, there were sixty-four enrolled. Two teachers, Hazel Fischer and Wilma Avery, were hired to handle the influx. Grades first through fourth were moved to the Avery Hotel and taught by Miss Avery in the living room. Miss Fischer continued to teach the others in the old school house. In 1940, construction was begun on a new school house to be built in White Pines. The new school was still called the Avery School.[224]

Clearly, the initial struggle to establish education

on the BTR had been successful. The campaign would continue on different levels from this point on, but with a considerable year round population, steady employment, an increased interest in education, a new school building, and higher property values, Avery School never again worried about closure due to lack of a.d.a. The year 1940 marked the change on the BTR in the society, the economy, and education.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Establishing and maintaining school districts on the Big Trees Road was one small campaign in a larger struggle identified by L. B. Wright as a conflict between anarchy and civilization. As he indicated, the struggle was not dramatic, but it was well defined, even on the BTR.

On the one hand, two aspects of the "anarchistic and disintegrating forces of the frontier" were evident. The frontier as an area could be seen in the abundant natural resources that attracted men to the area and the "freeland" aspect that gave opportunities with limited competition. The other face of the frontier, that of a process, while more subtle, also worked on those who chose to live in the area. The land concentrated men eager to capitalize on the untouched resources. Their innovations and practical responses which helped them survive in the harsh environment, demonstrate that the area was eliciting some influence on the behavior of the emigrants who chose to live there. The "Daniel Boone" phenomenon manifested itself in the dual reasons for coming to the BTR area. Some came to escape and vacation in the wilderness, while others were there to develop and subdue it.

When certain families took the initiative to establish school districts, they were exercising their rights as citizens in a democracy. The structureless society that developed on the BTR--like on many other frontiers--seems to have heightened the individual's sense of equality.

Although the forces of the frontier were dynamic and influential, they did not actively oppose the other side of the struggle--education. But, at the same time, the environment was not conducive to the growth of "civilization" either. Those few families that were interested in establishing education on the BTR had to contend with a lack of interest. These people were motivated by the prevalent educational philosophy called the "common school" movement which preached a doctrine of self-betterment, equality, and a strong democracy all through the efforts of education, the great "leveler." Their children, through their efforts would attain the key to success in this republic. The educational program that was established followed closely the New England roots that fostered it.

The encounter between the two forces molded, modified, and adapted the basic ingredients that made up the districts: the land, the society, and the legal institution of education, so that a fine synthesis was formed. Scholars still are debating the question of which force in the struggle between the frontier and civilization had the most influence in forming the institutions of the West. The first and foremost spokesman for the overwhelming influence of the frontier,

F. J. Turner, felt that the

> wilderness mastered the colonist....It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and moccasins....In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man.[225]

But after a period the pioneer adjusts so that "little by little he transforms the wilderness." In the process, social institutions are reborn. On the other side, writers about the frontier feel that the

> ...abiding heritage of traditional civilization outweighed, in a relatively brief period, the novelties acquired from Indians and wilderness. Continuity proved stronger than change.[226]

The history of the Big Trees and the Avery School Districts is not a clear support for either position. Rather, the middle course, as explained by Billington, appears to best apply to the situation:

> These changes,...were of degree only; the frontiering experience did not create new characteristics in individuals or remake all institutions. Instead, it tended to strenghten certain behaviorial patterns and weaken others--and always in a slight degree.[227]

The effort to establish and maintain education on the BTR was influenced by the struggle of forces arising far beyond the isolation of the Big Trees. The struggle continued even after 1940.

The Avery School District continued as an independent entity until 1954, when it became part of the newly formed Calaveras Unified School District (CUSD) which included most of the county's school districts, save those that were part of the original Bret Harte Union High School District (BHUSD) in Angels Camp. Unification was unsatisfactory for many

local residents because they saw several incongruities and inequities. The old Avery School District continued to grow in population and in property value, so that the area became one of the CSUD's most valuable regions. However, building bonds intended to meet the growing needs of the area were voted down by other sections of the CSUD. Another irritation came from the fact that local students were required to attend Calaveras High School in San Andreas. Creating a ludicrous situation, students riding the Calaveras High School bus had to pass the closer school of Bret Harte on their daily journey to San Andreas, which added another hour to their already long bus ride.

Following the defeat of another building bond in the early seventies, many residents initiated a concerted effort to deunify the BTR area from the CSUD. Under new legislation, it was possible for a part of a district to deunify and attach itself to another adjacent district. The Vallecito School District, independent since th 1850's, was adjacent to the BTR area, and it was possible for the BTR area to attach itself to it. The new enlarged district became the Vallecito Union School District. Consequently, a bond was passed in the new district allowing two new schools to be constructed.

This study has attempted to place the history of the local school districts within the larger context so that the local events that occurred could be more fully understood.

FOOTNOTES

[1]R. Coke Wood, Calaveras, The Land of Skulls (Sonora: The Mother Lode Press, 1955), p. 29.

[2]Ibid., p. 30

[3]W. W. Elliot, Calaveras County (Oakland: W.W. Elliot and Co., 1885), p. 68.

[4]Louis B. Wright, Culture on the Moving Frontier (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 132.

[5]Henry Nash Smith, The Virgin Land (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 250.

[6]Frederick J. Turner, The Significance of the Frontier in America (AnnArbor: University Microfilm, Inc., 1966), p.201

[7]Nelson Klose, The American Frontier (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), pp. 5-6.

[8]Ray A. Billington, ed., The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History? (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winton, 1968), p. 102.

[9]Other criticisms include: Turner's agricultural bias in interpreting the American Frontier; His so-called "safety-valve theory" which posited that as long as there was land to settle disgruntled workers in the east could migrate west--instead of fomenting revolution; His reliance on a single cause to explain the complex development of the frontier.

[10]Carl N. Degler, Out of Our Past (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 132.

[11]Now in its fifth edition its now co-authored by Martin Ridge who presumably will continue Billington's work.

[12]Ray A. Billington, The Far Western Frontier (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), p. xviii.

[13]Ray A. Billington, The Western Movement in the United States (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1959), p. 87.

[14]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 4. The election of a western actor as President in 1980 is consistent with this view.

[15]Ibid.

[16]The same environment of the North American Continent produced the Native American Indian culture of living in harmony with the land and the European settlers motivation to own and subdue it. The Canadian frontier movement did not produce the same behaviors common on the American frontier. The Russian eastward movement into Siberia did not parallel the American experience. Another example can be found in the inland trek of the South African Boers.

[17]Will Durant, The Lessons of History (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 15.

[18]Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, Westward Expansion, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), p. 685.

[19]Cf. the following sources for further discussions on the importance of migtation in American history: John Parish, The Persistence of the Westward Movement and Other Essays (New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1968), pp. 5-8; Arthur Schlesinger, Nothing Stands Still (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1969), p. 151; George Pierson, "M-factor in American History," American Quarterly, 14, (Sum., 1962), pp. 275-289; Billington, ed. The Frontier Thesis, pp. 90-95.

[20]Opinion expressed by J. S. Holliday at the Calaveras County Historical Society meeting honoring him and the publication of his book: The World Rushed In (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), Murphy's,Calif., April 22, 1982.

[21]Parish, Ibid., p.5.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Smith, The Virgin Land, "Daniel Boone: Empire Builder or Philosopher of Primitivism?," pp. 51-58.

[24]Billington and Ridge, Westward Expansion, p. 686.

[25]Cf. Lawrence Cremin, The American Common School (New York: Teacher's College, 1951); Horace Mann, The Massachusetts System of Common Schools (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1849), Introduction.

[26]Frederick Binder, The Age of the Common School (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969), p. 88.

[27]Ibid. pp. 10-11. It was from this conviction that the term common school came.

[28]James MacGregor Burns, The Vineyard of Liberty (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1981), p. 501.

[29]Page Smith, The Shaping of America (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1980), p. 352.

[30]Degler, p. 157

[31]Clifton Allison, "Frontier Schools: A Reflection of the Turner Hypothesis" (Ph. D. Dissertation: University of Oklahoma, 1969), from the abstract.

[32]John W. Caughey, The American West (L.A.: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1966), p. 9.

[33]An observation by David Gano and corroborated by Dr. Milton Smith, local geologist.

[34]For a complete discussion on the history of Highway 4, cf. R. Coke Wood and Francis Bishop, The Big Trees and Carson Valley Turnpike, Ebbetts Pass and Highway 4 (Murphy's: The Old Timer's Museum, 1968).

[35]Cf. San Andreas Independent, Aug. 21, 1858: An article describes the journey up the San Antonio Creek to the Falls and tells of their beauty. Today it is difficult to reach the Falls. One has to fight thick underbrush as well as precipitous cliffs.

[36]John Muir, a great believer in the power of the glacier, presented this view. The Calaveras Big Trees also had the advantage of being the first grove to be discovered. It gained the first notoriety. When other groves were discovered and opened up, the Calaveras grove began to lose popularity. Cf. J. Engbeck, Jr. The Enduring Giants (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), p.98.

[37]Elliot, p. 57.

[38]Sperry, along with George Avery and Robert Gardener, represented the BTR in a discussion on a railroad up the hill. "J.L. Sperry...takes great interest in the railroad." Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), Aug. 5, 1893, p. 3. Also from Ronald Limbaugh and Willard P. Fuller, Jr., "Calaveras County Mining, Logging and Railroads, 1848-to the Present," (Paper written under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the Calaveras County Museum and Archives, 1977):

"This is not to say he would have felled the Big Trees in the North Grove, but his logging plans probably included the South Grove...as well as his extensive holdings nearby." p. 51.

[39]Bess Anderson, "The Darby's of Red Apple," Las Calaveras, XXV (Jan., 1977), 12.

[40]San Andreas Independent, June 18, 1859.

[41]Dorthea J. Theodoratus and Marion Parsons, "Miwok Ethnohistory," (Paper written under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the Calaveras County Museum and Archives, 1980). This paper reports that in 1905 there were 50 Miwoks in Avery but by 1928 there were only 20., p. 51.

[42]According to Marcelle Avery, daughter of Morton Avery and student at Avery School in the early 1920's. She named the Ross and Nasha families as half-breed families who sent their children.

[43] Elliot, ibid.

[44]Tax Assessments for the Murphy's Township, during the decade of the 1890's refers to property being owned for timber.

[45]Francis Bishop, "McKays' Clipper Mill," Las Calaveras, XXIV (Jan., 1976), p. 21.

[46]Anderson, ibid.

[47]"Saw Mills Above Murphy's," Las Calaveras, III (April, 1955), no page number.

[48]The photographs that show and list the mill crew and the forest crew in the Bishop, "McKays' Clipper Mill," pp.13-24, list only two workers who may come from the area: Trotter Hodge, from a half-breed family living near Avery and Jim Crespi, who owned land in the area.

[49]"History of Calaveras County Ranches," (MSS in Calaveras County Museum and Archives, San Andreas).

[50]Elliot, pp. 28-29.

[51]Tax Assessment for the Murphy's Township, 1853 lists:

G. H. Woodruff, 320 acres; The 1859 assessment: "C. B. Woodruff, 1 ranch two miles from Big Trees called Woodruff's Upper Ranch."

[52]Elliot, p. 98. This refers to the Moran Ranch.

[53]Tax Assessment for the Murphy's Township, 1891 (San Andreas: County Museum), "F. W. Mentz."

[54]The Mentz, Moran, Dunbar, and Gardener families had all moved away by that time.

[55]E.G., Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), Aug. 12, 1893, p. 2, "Avery Simmerings."

[56]E.G. The LeMue family of Angels Camp constructed a cabin on Mosquito Lake for summer vacations.

[57]Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), Feb. 8, 1902., p. 1.

[58]Francis Bishop, "Half-way House--Avery Station," (San Andreas: Typewritten), p. 6.

[59]Elliot, p. 103.

[60]Limbaugh and Fuller, Jr., "Calaveras County Mining, Logging and Railroads, 1848-to the Present." Mr. Dunbar of the Willow Creek School Antique Store has for sale a shakemaking tool found on the Gardner sight.

[61]Calaveras County Board of Trade, Calaveras County (San Andreas: Steam Job Printing, 1890?), p. 21.

[62]Spencer C. Olin, Jr., "Hiram Johnson and the Election of 1910," California Historical Quarterly, XLV (Sept., 1966), 232: "After 1860, the federal and state governments began to sell California land to private individuals, and by 1880 most of the valuable parcels had been taken. The immense holdings thus acquired thwarted the operation of the Homestead Law in California, because the best land had been taken off the open market before homesteaders came to settle."

[63]J. Ross Browne, Report of the Debates in the Convention of California, 1848 (Washington: John Tower, 1850), p. 478.

[64]"Article IX," California State Constitution, 1849.

[65]John Swett, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to the Legislature of the State of California, 1866 (Sacramento: State Printing, 1867).

[66]Ibid., pp. 208-230.

[67]Charles Falk, The Development and Organization of Education in California (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World, Inc., 1968), p. 68.

[68]Ibid., p. 69.

[69]Ibid., p. 71.

[70]Board of Supervisors Minutes, Calaveras County (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), Vol. F, (1878-85), p. 263.

[71]Ed Leonard, "Establishment and Growth of the School System in Calaveras County," (San Andreas: Typewritten), 1971, pp. 336-7: State Apportionment Journal, 1876-90, (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), pp. 86-90.

[72]Superintendent's Annual Reports, 1884-1902, (Bound), (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives); to be referred to hereafter as SAR. This is the county superintendent's report to the state superintendent gathered from the individual district reports. It contains school statistics, child census figures, and budget matters and summaries for each district.

[73]Day Book, (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), p. 96. This book is an informal accounting of the schools that appears to have been kept by several county superintendents during the years of about 1876-1890.

[74]SAR, "1885," p. 2.

[75]Leonard, p. 367.

[76]Board of Supervisors Minutes, Calaveras County (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), Vol. G, (1885-89), p. 138; Also, Francis Bishop, "Half-way House," p. 5.

[77]Calaveras Weekly Citizen (San Andreas), March 14, 1884. An article locates Morton Avery attending the Murphy's

School.

[78]Bishop, "Half-way House," ibid.

[79]School District Funds, (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), 1885-90, p. 54. A monthly accounting of payments made on the individual school district funds. Lists the date of the payment, the purpose, and to whom it was made. Hereinafter referred to as SDF and the years of the volume.

[80]SAR, "1887," p. 2.

[81]"Article IX," California State Constitution, 1849, 1879.

[82]David Kenfield, "Educational History of Calaveras County, 1850-1900," (Master's Thesis, COP, 1955), p. 30; Mr. Kenfield has compiled many useful tables on Calaveras Schools based on the state superintendent's Reports. The SAR, 1884-1902, also contain the yearly statement of months in attendance for each district.

[83]SDF, 1885-1890, "Big Trees," shows the teachers being paid in the summer, spring, and sometimes into the early fall.

[84]Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), May 23, 1908.

[85]State Apportionment Journal, 1876-90 (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), pp. 190-1. This document is an informal collection of notes and newspaper clippings dealing with the county board of education and the doings of the county superintendent.

[86]Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), From February through June, 1883, there was reportedly a vacancy, unfilled, at Big Trees School.

[87]Cf. SAR, 1884-1902, the entry: "Number of books in the Library."

[88]Record Book, County Board of Examiners, 1887-90 (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives); A record book provided by the state to record the scores and educational history of those receiving county teaching certificates. Additional information is provided on residences and ages of the applicants at the time of the examinations.

[89]Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), Feb. 8, 1902, p. 1.

[90]Statement by Marcelle Avery that Frank Wells was her uncle.

[91]Calaveras Weekly Citizen (San Andreas), Oct. 25, 1884.

[92]SDF, 1881-1904. The "Big Trees" and "Avery School Districts."

[93]Record Book, 1887-90.

[94]SDF for the years 1885-90; 1890-94; 1895-1900 under the headings: "The Big Trees District," and "The Avery School District."

[95]SAR under "San Andreas District" and "Angels Camp."

[96]E.g. J. A. Holland, of Angels Camp had a daughter who also became a teacher in the county.

[97]SAR, 1885; 1887; 1888; 1892.

[98]SAR, 1884-1902; also cf. Kenfield, p. 40.

[99]Swett, p. 33.

[100]The U.S. Census of 1900 shows teachers living at the Avery Hotel and the Dorrington Hotel.

[101]From a statement by Mrs. Thomas in an address presented to the Calaveras County Historical Society, entitled "School Days," given on Feb. 24, 1983. From her interviews with former rural teachers she stated that often the room and board were part of the contract agreement.

[102]Anderson, "The Darby's," pp. 9-16.

[103]Record Book, County Board of Examiners, 1887-90. "To the County Superintendent," This introduction gives a legal abstract of the duties of the superintendent and the county board regarding examining the applicants for teaching certificates.

[104]"Memoranda and Blotter," (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), pp. 144-45. An informal scrap book of teacher's examinations, teacher's institute minutes, and school board notes, mainly in the form of newspaper clippings.

[105]Ibid., p. 152-3; Here are some example questions: "What is the difference between analysis and parsing? Between grammar and rhetoric?" "How are the public lands of the U.S. increasing its prosperity?" "What is the one great essential of all punishments and penalties in school government?" "'Beware of sacrificing children to your personal ambition.' Swett's method of teaching. What is the significance of this warning?"

[106]Calaveras Californian (Angels Camp), Dec, 4, 1924, "It will be the task of the board of education to so construct these tests (the eighth grade test) that special coaching to pass the examination will be nullified."

[107]Leonard, p. 37.

[108]"Memoranda and Blotter,"p. 52.

[109]Record Book, County Board of Examiners, 1887-1890.

[110]SAR, 1884-1902.

[111]Record Book, Boeard of Education of Calaveras County (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), Book C (1880 or 6?). Ostensibly this book appears to have been kept as a record of the board's actions. It now is more like a scrap book of newspaper clippings dealing with the board minutes.

[112]Wood, Calaveras, p. 127.

[113]Record Book, Board of Education, Book C, p. 133.

[114]Ibid.

[115]Ibid.

[116]Record Book; several references to the "manual."

[117]Statements by Marcelle Avery and Mrs. Thomas.

[118]There are no "official" lists from either the

county or the districts that are available. Any information about graduates must be gathered from chance notices in the newspapers or the board minutes of the county.

[119]Marcelle Avery.

[120]R. Coke Wood, Murphy's Queen of the Sierra (Angels Camp: Calaveras Californian, 1972), p. 70.

[121]Cf. drawings of both schools.

[122]Marcelle Avery.

[123]Marcelle Avery and the physical evidence of wood that had been covered by the addition of the library. It has only recently been exposed.

[124]Vallecito School Register, 1891 (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives). The introductory remarks abstracts for the teacher the Education Code of California that pertains to the teacher, the trustees, and the librarian.

[125]SDF, 1889.

[126]Physical evidence on the site.

[127]I. S. Hoffman, "Hazel Fischer, The School and the Lady," (Typewritten), 1970?, p. 2.

[128]Marcelle Avery.

[129]SDF, 1910.

[130]Hoffman, p. 2.

[131]SDF, 1895-6.

[132]Informal note on lined yellow legal paper found in the Day Book.

[133]Marcelle Avery.

[134]SDF, 1885, 1889.

[135]Hoffman, ibid.

[136]Marcelle Avery

[137]SAR, 1884-1902.

[138]Vallecito School Register, 1891, "Introduction."

[139]SDF, 1884, 1895, 1896.

[140]Hoffman, ibid. On rare occasions the warrants reveal that a janitor is paid, e.g. in 1910 for two months. SDF, 1910.

[141]SAR, 1884-1902.

[142]Richard Raggio graduated from Avery School in 1917, and Marcelle Avery, in her interview, said that he lived at the lumber mill.

[143]United States Census, 1880, "Murphy's Township."

[144]Wood, ibid.

[145]Cf. California Historical Journal, 17 (Win., 73), 47-48. Sperry is mentioned in this article as being "susceptible" to a plan of bringing a railroad up the hill; also cf. footnote 38.

[146]State Apportionment Journal, 1876-1890, p. 220. Lists John Moran as an appointed board member on the Big Trees Board.

[147]Bishop, "Half-way House," p. 5.

[148]Cf. footnote 77 of this paper.

[149]Robert V. Hine and Edwin R. Bingham, eds., The Frontier Experience (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1963), p. 405.

[150]"The Mentz Ranch," Las Calaveras, XXX (Oct., 1981) p. 6.

[151]Anderson, "The Darby's," p. 15

[152]As reported by I. N. Robinson, Jr. to David Gano.

He came to the BTR area in the summer as a boy with the livestock from his parents' Central Valley ranch.

[153]E.g. Big Trees had 32 children living in the area in 1890 but only 8.4 a.d.a.

[154]Record Book, Board of Education, Book C; The superintendent reported sending home a child because he was too young.

[155]Marcelle Avery and Mrs. Thomas.

[156]Ibid.

[157]Vallecito School Register, 1891.

[158]Ibid.

[159]SDF, 1892.

[160]Vallecito School Register, 1891.

[161]Ibid.

[162]Ibid.

[163]Marcelle Avery.

[164]Vallecito School Register, 1891.

[165]Ibid.

[166]Ibid.

[167]Ibid.

[168]Marcelle Avery.

[169]William Ferrier, Ninety Years of Education in California (Berkeley: West Coast Printing Co., 1937), p. 115.

[170]Vallecito School Register, 1891.

[171]Cf. Course of study presented by the school board,

Memoranda and Blotter, p. 146.

[172]SDF, 1922

[173]Record Book, Board of Education of Calaveras County, 1880, p. 162; also teacher's judgment is shown in the Vallecito School Register, 1891, when she explains to the next teacher how the students were classified and promoted.

[174]Private Collection, Lillian Potter, Calaveras County Archives: An example of a primary promotion certificate and a graduation diploma.

[175]SAR, 1885, p. 23.

[176]SAR, 1894, p. 22.

[177]Record Book, County Board of Examiners, 1887-90.

[178]Ibid.

[179]Marcelle Avery.

[180]Marcelle Avery reported that she knew of no one from the area who attended high school.

[181]Ibid.

[182]Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), Nov. 25, 1893, p. 2.

[183]State Apportionment Journal, p. 228.

[184]SAR, 1897.

[185]Leonard, "Establishment," pp. 335-37.

[186]Calaveras Prospect (San Andreas), Feb. 8, 1902; Eulogizes Sperry upon his death. It relates that he sold the hotel in 1900, traveled extensively, and was dead in two years.

[187]Wood, The Big Trees, p. 40; SDF, 1897: J. Gardener was paid $92 to move the school house.

[188]SAR, 1898; United States Census, 1900, "Murphy's Township."

[189]United States Census of 1900, "Murphy's Township."

[190]SAR, 1900-1; Wood, The Big Trees, p. 40.

[191]Leonard, ibid.

[192]SDF, 1905.

[193]Cf. School District Map of Calaveras County in this paper.

[194]"Memoranda and Blotter," p. 54.

[195]Marcelle Avery.

[196]Ibid.; SDF, 1900-05.

[197]Registers of School Trustees, 1924-1967 (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives), "Avery School District," p. 5.

[198]Newspaper clipping in White Pines Community Club, Scrapbooks, in the possession of Mrs. M. Boman, White Pines.

[199]As reported by Marcelle Avery and Francis Bishop.

[200]Limbaugh and Fuller, p. 96.

[201]Bishop, "McKays," p. 22.

[202]Wood, Murphy's, p. 44.

[203]Limbaugh and Fuller, p. 52.

[204]Francis Bishop, Cards: "Dunbar" (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives).

[205]Calaveras Weekly Prospect (San Andreas), June 8, 1912.

[206]Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce, Calaveras

County, Information Directory (San Andreas: Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce, 1979), pp. 26-7.

[207]Calaveras Weekly Prospect (San Andreas), June 3, 1922.

[208]Francis Bishop, Cards: "Moran," (San Andreas: Calaveras County Archives).

[209]"Mentz," Las Calaveras, p. 8.

[210]Anderson, "The Darby's," p. 8.

[211]J. Engbeck, Jr., The Enduring Giants , pp. 98-100.

[212]Calaveras Weekly Prospect (San Andreas), Oct. 5, 1922.

[213]Calaveras Weekly Prospect (San Andreas), Sept. 23, 1922.

[214]The BTR was paved up to the Park.

[215]Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce, Directory, p. 37.

[216]Ibid., pp. 26-7.

[217]White Pines Community Club Scrapbooks.

[218]Register of School Trustees, "Avery School District," p. 5.

[219]Cf. footnote 132 of this paper.

[220]Calaveras Californian (Angels Camp), Nov. 24, 1938; More information in the Dec. 22, 1938 edition.

[221]Limbaugh and Fuller, p. 113.

[222]Hoffman, p. 3.

[223]Calaveras Californian (Angels Camp), Nov. 30, 1939.

[224]Hoffman, pp. 3-4.

[225]As quoted in Degler, p. 125.

[126]George R. Taylor, ed., The Turner Thesis: Problems in American Civilization (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1956), p. 71.

[227]Billington and Ridge, Westward Expansion, p. 686.

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