

# What Became of the Little Red Schoolhouse?



FACTS AND FIGURES—TALES AND PHOTOS  
OF EARLY MENDOCINO COUNTY SCHOOLS

VOLUME-4

ROUND VALLEY-POTTER VALLEY

This publication by the  
MENDOCINO COAST GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
in cooperation with the Mendocino County Museum  
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Mendocino County Museum

The purpose of this publication is to provide a record of  
information on early Mendocino County Schools and make it  
available for public use.

**WHAT BECAME OF THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE?**

Facts and Figures--Tales and Photos  
of Early Mendocino County Schools

**DEDICATED TO  
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AND  
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RESIDENT AND HISTORIAN OF POTTER VALLEY**

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Cover Photo: Tent School-Poonkinney Independence School

**ELSIE ALLEN REMEMBERS**

I had received no education until I was eleven and it was in that year that I was taken away from my family and sent to Covelo in northeast Mendocino County, where there was an Indian Reservation with an Indian school. A government agent came to see us and talked my mother into letting me go to that place, which was about 80 miles away from where we lived. In those days there were no highways or buses and I had to travel through the wilderness of pines and firs most of the way. Six other Indian children from the Hopland-Ukiah area traveled with me. First I went on a wagon to Ukiah and then we were all put on a flat-bed railroad car of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad and carried by train to the wooded Sherwood Valley where we changed to a stagecoach that carried us north to Laytonville, where we stayed overnight. The next day a gravel wagon picked us up to take us to Covelo. I remember being frightened by the big river, the Eel, and the giant trees we rode under, which I thought every minute would fall down on me. I was very tempted to jump out of the wagon and run away. At the Covelo Indian school they placed me in a dormitory with other Indian girls. At the time I could not speak English and soon found myself unable to follow simple dressing and eating chores of the daily existence because we children were not supposed to speak Indian, a rule of most government Indian schools at that time. I had learned the middle Pomo dialect to proficiency. At first there was only one girl there I really knew and she was put in a different age group so I did not see her very often. They tried to keep me busy by giving me cards that had holes in them which I was supposed to twist some yarn through. It seemed so useless. Worst of all the dormitory was burned down one night, the fire believed to have been started by some older girls who hated the school, and I lost nearly all my clothes that my mother had so carefully packed and sent with me.

We moved to a boy's dormitory and there I was forced to wear boys clothes. We were given various duties to do, but it was hard for me to understand and sometimes I was punished when I did them wrong because of lack of understanding of the language. Finally I was given one dress, but I could not read the label on it and it looked so much like the other dresses that when I picked out what I thought was my dress and put it on, another girl would often come up very mad and take it away from me. We usually did our work in the morning, then cleaned up at noon and put on school clothes to go to classes where I seemed to learn nothing at all. My stay in Covelo was very frightful because of the language barrier, and I often cried at night with homesickness. I left there after two years and went to an Indian school opened on the Hopland Rancheria where we lived. The teacher was kind and patient, so I finally learned to read, write and speak English. I went there for three years and then to work.