



THE ONE-ROOM Sycamore School operated until 1927 and burned down in 1945. Photo: San Ramon Valley Historical Society 7-21-1990

Sycamore School site to be dedicated

By Marianne Foglia

DANVILLE — Traveling to school on horseback was common in the late 1800s. That is the way most students got to Danville's Sycamore School when it opened in 1866.

When school started that fall, students sat on wooden benches built by Ebenezer Dole, who also built the wooden desks.

The one-room country schoolhouse that stood on Camino Tassajara between Old Blackhawk and Wood Ranch roads served as a gathering place for important events during the 1800s.

For 61 years, Sycamore School bustled as a popular site for picnics, school exhibits, church services and parties. People would hold events under the large sycamore trees that shaded the old schoolhouse.

"A small existing building served as the first school from April to June 1866," said Irma Deason of the San Ramon Valley Historical Society.

Dole, during the summer of that year, busied himself making not only the new desks and benches but a new schoolhouse. The land for the school was donated by Wade Hayes.

The Historical Society will hold a dedi-

DEDICATION

What: Sycamore School historical landmark dedication ceremony.

When: 1:30 p.m. July 28

Where: Sycamore School site on Camino Tassajara, across from the Wood Ranch between Old Blackhawk and Wood Ranch roads.

ation ceremony at 1:30 p.m. July 28 to recognize the site as a historic landmark. Although the school burned to the ground in 1945, the site has been preserved throughout the decades.

Rose Bettencourt Ferreira, 82, a lifelong Danville resident, attended Sycamore School.

"It was a one-room school with first-through eighth-graders," said Ferreira, who started at the school in 1922 at age 12. "That wasn't anything new to me, because I had gone to school out in the Tassajara Valley before my dad moved."

Class was held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with morning and afternoon recesses that lasted 10 minutes.

Twenty-four teachers taught at the school, including Charlotte Wood, who had attended the school beginning in 1869

at age 5. In 1890, Wood started teaching there and remained at the school 31 years. Her salary ranged from \$65 to \$80 a month.

The old school building had thin walls. Wood wrote in the Valley Pioneer in 1958. Every once in a while, a woodpecker would peck through the walls, "requiring many a piece of tin to stop the unsightly holes."

Wood, who was referred to as "Miss Lottie" by her students, retired in 1921 and died in 1961. The San Ramon Valley School District named its middle school in downtown Danville after Charlotte E. Wood.

Other well-remembered teachers include Albert J. Young, who taught from 1869 to 1872; Kate Howard, who taught from 1888 to 1889; and Grace Donahue, who taught in 1923.

In 1927, because of declining enrollment, the school closed and students joined the Danville Union School District.

On June 25, 1945, when a man named Jose Mitchell and his family were using the school as a private residence, a fire destroyed building.

Now, all that remains of the school is the Historical Society's brass plaque marking its location.

Sycamore Grammar School Site

Dedicated 1990



Pictured here is Charlotte E. Wood, Sycamore Grammar School student from 1869 to 1877 and Sycamore Grammar School teacher from 1890 to 1921.

This rare indoor school picture shows desks, a blackboard, and a potbelly stove. According to Charlotte E. Wood, some of the text books of the 1870s and 1880s were Robinson's Practical Arithmetic, Swinton's Word Book, Reed and Kellogg's Grammar, and Willson's and McGuffey's Readers.

