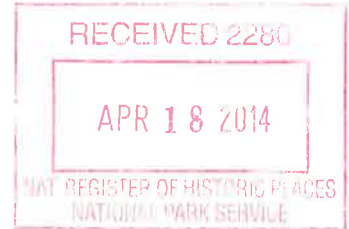


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Bear Valley School
other names/site number Bear Valley Hall

2. Location

street & number East side of SR 146, 1 mi. n. of jct. SR 25 and SR 146
Pinnacles National Park (PINN) not for publication
city or town Paicines vicinity
state California code CA county San Benito code 069 zip code 95043

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Robert A. Mottin Deputy 5/20/14/14/2014
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

National Park Service
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Carol Isabel Davis 2/18/14
Signature of commenting official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer California Office of Historic Preservation
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

For Edison H. Beall 6-2-14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
3	1	structure
		object
4	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

- Education/School
- Social/Meeting Hall
-
-
-
-

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

- Recreation and Culture/Museum
- Social/Meeting Hall
- Work in Progress
-
-
-

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

- Classical Revival
-
-
-
-

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

- foundation: Concrete
- walls: Wood (redwood drop siding)
- roof: Metal (corrugated steel over wood shingle)
- other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bear Valley School is located on a 1.5 acre parcel toward the southern end of Bear Valley in southern San Benito County, California. The Bear Valley School is a one-room, wood-frame building in the simplified, Classical Revival style that was typical of much rural architecture from this period throughout the American West. There is no evidence that the building was designed by an architect, but a professional carpenter by the name of Edward Somers was hired to construct it. The building has a moderately pitched, front gable roof, wide bands of unadorned trim, and simple drop siding. An enclosed porch with hipped roof is attached to the front (west) end and extends a few feet wider than the main building to either side in order to accommodate two waterclosets. Five double-hung, four-over-four light windows fill most of the south wall, while the north wall has one window of this design and two smaller awning windows. The rear (east) end of the building has a single door offset to the north side which opens onto a poured concrete porch. The roof of the building consists of corrugated metal panels laid over the original wood shingles. Until recently, a small, gable-roofed belfry stood at the west end of this roof, but it was removed and placed in storage pending rehabilitation of the schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse is the principal contributing building within the Bear Valley School property. In addition to this building, however, the property includes several associated structures, two of which are also contributors. Approximately 100' north of the schoolhouse is a small valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) surrounded by a wood and wire protective enclosure. The tree was planted in 1923 to commemorate former school teacher Horace Bacon. Both tree and enclosure comprise a single contributing structure. Approximately 85' north of the schoolhouse, and about 16' east of the Horace Bacon tree, is a well which was bored in 1902 when construction of the schoolhouse was just getting underway. This well is also a contributor. The well was originally serviced by a windmill, but this was replaced after the period of significance with a non-contributing electric pump enclosed in a wooden lean-to shed. Finally, the property is enclosed within a perimeter fence which was constructed in 1895. Although the fence was originally constructed for the first Bear Valley School, it remained significant as the perimeter fence after the construction of the second Bear Valley School in 1902, and is therefore a contributing structure to this property.

Narrative Description

Building Exterior

The schoolhouse sits near the center of its 1.5 acre parcel within a grove of four mature valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*). The building is oriented on an east-west axis with its front side facing Highway 25 (the old county road) to the west and its rear side backing up to Bear Creek on the east. The building's exterior dimensions measure 24' 2" in width and 43' 8" in depth. The front porch is 7' 5" deep, giving the building an overall depth of 51' 3". As originally completed in 1903, the porch was the same width as the main building, but subsequent modifications made toward the latter end of the period of significance added two closets, known as anterooms, which widened the porch relative to the main building by just over two feet on either side. The overall width of the present porch is now 28' 5". The schoolhouse is one-story, with an attic in the pitch of the roof, and measures 13' 0" from eaves to concrete footing. Corners, windows and doors are trimmed with

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simple, unshaped boards, many of which have been damaged by woodpeckers. The worst damage appears to be around the windows on the north side of the building.

Foundation—Past and Present

The foundation of the building consists of concrete and/or stone footers which support the corner posts and floor joists. This system permits good air circulation and drainage beneath the building, preventing accumulation of moisture and associated rot. The original foundation was augmented during the 1980s with poured concrete footing walls along portions of the north and south sides toward the rear of the building. This was done presumably to compensate for settling of the building toward Bear Creek.

West (Front) Elevation—Present Condition

The west elevation of the schoolhouse is dominated by the front porch, which measures 28' 5" wide by 7' 5" deep and is enclosed by wire screening which was added after the period of significance. The porch is 4' 3" wider than the rest of the building, extending just over two feet to either side of the walls behind it. This additional width accommodates two waterclosets—a mens and a ladies—within fully-enclosed compartments at the north and south ends of the porch. Each watercloset is accessed by a wood five-panel door which opens outward into the porch. A half-wall clad in exterior wood siding encloses the front of the porch, which is accessed from outside by a single door located in the center of the front facade. This door is wood with five panels like the watercloset doors. Wire screen set within heavy wood framing fills the remainder of the west facade from the top of the half-wall to the ceiling plate. The overhead space inside the porch is enclosed by a ceiling consisting of narrow wood slats running the width, or long axis, of the building. The deck is constructed in similar fashion, with slats oriented the same direction, and is elevated only slightly above grade. It still retains a well-worn coat of dull green paint, which may be the same green paint used on the original trim of the schoolhouse. The porch roof is clad in corrugated metal panels laid over wood shingles, like the roof on the main building. Unlike the latter, the porch roof is hipped. This was done to accommodate the extra width for the waterclosets, since the outermost rafters had to be oriented at an angle in order to be anchored to the front wall of the building.

West Elevation—Past Modifications

The porch has undergone substantial changes since the completion of the schoolhouse in 1903. Originally, the porch was the same width as the rest of the building and possessed a simple shed roof which sloped at a shallow pitch. Four boxed columns, adorned with decorative quarter-round molding, supported this roof. The porch was entirely open, with no solid walls or enclosures of any kind. The only barrier was an open wood balustrade with shaped handrails extending around the front and sides. A gap was left between the two innermost columns in the center of the porch to allow passage. The deck was elevated approximately two feet above grade, leaving an open space beneath the building and necessitating three wood steps up to the porch. The first significant modifications were made to the building in or about 1928, when the porch was extended a few feet to either side and the shed roof was replaced with the present hipped roof. The purpose of this extension was to provide closets—known as anterooms—for the children to hang their coats. At the same time, the open balustrade was replaced with the solid half-wall, and the boxed columns were replaced with simple, four-by-four posts. The exterior siding used for the anterooms and half-wall on the modified porch is tongue-and-groove with a vee-notch (unlike the simple drop siding used on the original building). The front grounds were regraded, probably at the same time as the porch modifications, in order to bring the grade elevation up to nearly flush with the porch deck. Modifications post-dating the period of significance were made in 1956, when flush toilets were installed in the porch anterooms and metal louvers were attached over the two porch windows.

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In 1966, the entire porch was enclosed with wire screen, and an outside door was installed to improve security. Additional framing had to be added to narrow the gap in the front half-wall in order to accommodate this door.

South Elevation—Present Condition

The south elevation contains five double-hung, four-over-four light, wood sash windows evenly spaced along the entire length of the wall. Each window measures between 33" and 33 3/4" wide by 75 3/4" in height. Trim around the windows consists of plain boards with sloped, full-width sill. All of these windows are identical in design. The exterior wall is clad in simple drop siding with a 3/4" reveal. This siding is used on all exterior walls of the main building, though not the porch, and is original to the 1902-03 construction. The eaves are closed, with the rafter ends concealed beneath a narrow soffit. There is no rain gutter.

North Elevation—Present Condition

The north elevation contains only three windows. One of these is a double hung wood sash window identical in design and dimensions to those on the south elevation. It is located toward the east end of the wall. The other two are two-light wood awning windows, each measuring 34" wide by 24" tall. The exterior finish and other characteristics of the north elevation are the same as those on the south elevation already described.

North and South Elevations—Past Modifications

The present pattern of fenestration on the north and south side walls of the schoolhouse date from modifications made sometime after 1915 but during the period of significance, most likely in 1921. Prior to this work, both walls contained three evenly-spaced windows—the double-hung, wood sash windows which were original to the 1902-03 construction. The 1921 modifications involved removing two of these windows on the north wall and moving them to the south wall, where they were installed in the spaces between three already existing windows. The two-light awning windows were installed in the uppermost portion of the original window openings, while the bottom portion of the openings was covered with siding that was probably salvaged from the openings made on the south wall. Evidence of this work is still clearly apparent. These modifications were made in order to provide more interior wall space to accommodate an additional blackboard when separate instruction was provided for high school students.

East (Rear) Elevation—Present Conditions

The east elevation is unadorned except for a single four-panel wood door, which is offset toward the north side. This door opens outward onto a small, poured-concrete porch consisting of two crescent-shaped steps on top of a larger rectangular slab. A square, louvered vent is located in the middle of the gable to provide ventilation for the attic space.

East Elevation—Past Modifications

Dissimilar siding above the door suggests that the wall has been patched following the removal of some materials original to the 1902-03 construction, probably a small porch roof designed to shelter the door. The siding used to make this patch matches the tongue-and-groove, vee-notch style used on the 1928 front porch, suggesting that these modifications may have been made more-or-less simultaneously. District financial records show that a large quantity of cement was purchased on 10 January 1922, indicating when the rear porch slab may have been poured.¹ The removal of the existing porch roof may have occurred at that time as well.

Roof

¹ San Benito County Dept. of Education, "Register of School Warrants," Vol. 5, San Benito County Historical Society, Hollister, CA.

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The roof of the schoolhouse is clad in corrugated metal panels. These have been laid over wood shingles which were the original material used in the 1902-03 construction. District financial records indicate that these shingles were periodically replaced, a necessary maintenance activity. The 1928 front porch was also roofed originally with wood shingles that were subsequently overlaid with corrugated metal panels. The date when these metal panels were installed is unknown but was probably prior to 1950 (the end of the property's period of significance) since they appear in a watercolor painting made that year. A single metal stovepipe rises from near the top of the south pitch of the roof toward its eastern end. This pipe vents an oil-burning stove which was installed sometime after 1950 in order to provide heat inside the building. (This stove is still present.) A metal patch lies just east of the pipe, marking where a brick chimney once stood. This chimney vented the original wood-burning stove, which is no longer extant. A small wood-frame belfry with a gable roof was located, until recently, near the west (front) end of the roof. This structure was removed by NPS maintenance staff and placed in storage as an emergency stabilization measure. The belfry is original to the 1902-03 construction and once held a bronze bell supported on circular trunnions. The bell could be rung by the teacher of the school by means of a cord which passed through the ceiling to the teacher's desk directly below. The bell is no longer on-site and is presumed lost.

Paint Scheme

The building is presently painted white. Historic photographs indicate that a darker color was used at one time for the trim. Informal testimony from local residents suggests that this trim color was green. This is corroborated by a 1950 watercolor painting (referenced above), which clearly shows green used on the frieze board below the roof eaves and on the window trim. The front porch deck, which appears to be original to the 1902-03 construction despite later modifications to other parts of the porch, is also green. The latter provides a still-extant sample of what may be the original paint used to accent the trim of the schoolhouse.

Building Interior

The interior of the porch has already been described above. The present porch was completed by 1966, when the building was fully enclosed with the addition of wire screens and an exterior door. Although well-worn, the floor of the porch still retains its green paint, which is probably original. Toilets, located at the north and south ends of the porch, were introduced in 1956 within anterooms which were constructed during the late 1920s, probably in 1928, when the entire porch was reconfigured to its present dimensions. The doors accessing these toilets are five-panel in style, like the door at the front of the porch, and are not consistent with the design of doors associated with the original construction of the schoolhouse. They were probably salvaged from another building.

As completed in 1903, the schoolhouse comprised a single, clear-span interior space which served as the school classroom. This room was never subdivided, although modifications made during the 1960s, subsequent to the period of significance, introduced partial walls that define a distinct kitchen area toward the rear of the building. These modifications were additive and can easily be removed. The original classroom was oriented toward the west end of the building, where two entrance doors are located on the front elevation behind (inside) the porch. Both of these doors are wood four-panel in style, like the rear door, and are probably original to the 1902-03 construction. (In contrast, the three five-panel doors on the front porch were probably salvaged from another building and are not original to the Bear Valley School.) The southern of these two doors is presently inoperable but would originally have provided access for female students. The northern door, which is presently the only operable means of entry from the front of the building, would have provided access for male students. The teacher's desk would have been located near the front (west) wall between these two doors. Two wall-mounted kerosene lamps with mirror reflectors were located above each door, providing artificial light for the teacher in this otherwise-shadowed corner of the room. One of these original lamps has been located by a

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former student, who has provided a photograph. (The lamp itself is unavailable, as the present owner is unwilling to part with it.) This photograph indicates that each lamp was attached to the wall by two screws, oriented one above the other. The holes from these screws can be discerned quite clearly on the wall of the building, as can some ghosting of the fixture itself.

The ceiling of the classroom was finished with thin strips of milled wood, oriented longitudinally in an east-west direction. A small, decorative brass plate with a hole in the center is located directly above where the teacher's desk once stood. This admitted the cord from the bell in the belfry above, allowing the teacher to ring it from where she or he sat.

The present floor material was laid during the 1960s over the top of the original hardwood flooring, which is still extant. The wood flooring can still be seen in a few places where the later material does not extend all the way to the wall.

The interior walls are clad, like the ceiling, in thin strips of milled wood. These are oriented horizontally and painted white. Evidence such as the screw holes from the kerosene wall sconces on the west wall suggests that the interior walls have not been repainted since at least the mid-twentieth century.² A blackboard is mounted on the front (west) wall between the two entrance doors. This may be original to the 1902-03 construction, since the original layout of the classroom would have required a blackboard in this location. Two blackboards joined end-to-end are mounted on the north wall toward its western end. These most likely date from about 1921, when the building's fenestration was modified to accommodate separate high school and grade school areas within the classroom. Six electric light fixtures hang from the ceiling in glazed glass globes suspended on pendant rods. There is no evidence of pre-existing kerosene lamps, but such evidence may have been obliterated by installation of the present fixtures. These likely utilized any existing holes or other mounting apparatus in the ceiling. The present ceiling fixtures must have been installed sometime after 1948, the year electricity became publically available in the Bear Valley area.

A kitchen with associated counter space was constructed in the northeast corner of the building during the 1960s in order to support meetings and other events which regularly took place after the building ceased to be used as a school. Additional cabinets were constructed at the same time along the rear (east) wall toward the south side of the building. These were designed as storage and were used by organizations that regularly met at the Bear Valley School, such as 4-H. Ghosting on the wall together with the edge of the linoleum flooring suggest that an earlier cabinet existed here and was not removed until after the later floor material was laid but before the kitchen cabinetry was constructed. This earlier fixture, which may have been original to the 1902-03 construction, was built directly into the wall and included decorative cornice molding along its upper edge. (This is revealed in ghosting on the south wall.)

Setting (Landscape)

The Bear Valley School is located on a parcel legally comprising 1.5 acres, consistent with the property originally deeded to the Bear Valley School District by private landowner Dr. Americus Powers on 9 June 1885. This property comprised a portion of the land Powers had homesteaded two decades earlier. The property was acquired by the National Park Service in 2011 and is now part of Pinnacles National Park.

The land on which the Bear Valley School was constructed consists of an area of relatively level bottomland between Bear Valley Creek and the toe of the Gabilan Mountains, which rise to the west. Highway 25, which follows the alignment of the old county road established in 1890 by local residents, defines the western boundary of the property. The schoolhouse was situated within a small grove of four mature valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*), all of which are still present. These provided shade and contributed to the peaceful,

² Electricity was not introduced to the Bear Valley region until 1948. Presumably, the kerosene wall sconces would have been removed after electric lighting had made them redundant, but not before. This could have been no earlier than 1948 and was most likely several years later.

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sylvan character of the setting. The remainder of the landscape was relatively open and would have comprised grassland and brush. Maintenance during the historic period of significance probably focused on preventing the growth and further incursion of native brush in order to keep the schoolyard open to allow play and to reduce the risk of fire, always a threat in this arid environment. During the historic period of significance, vegetation within the wide, braided channel of Bear Creek to the east of the schoolhouse was substantially thinner than at present. This allowed for unobstructed sight-lines toward the hills bordering Bear Valley on the east and to the Diablo Range beyond. Whether or not this condition was due to anthropogenic management is unknown. Large trees such as coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*) as well as many shrubby species such as elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) have grown prolifically within the Bear Creek channel over the last fifty years, obscuring the eastern vista.

Although the legal boundaries of the original Bear Valley School comprised 1.5 acres, the area actually utilized by the school during its period of significance included closer to 3.0 acres, extending north to encompass most of the natural plain lying between Highway 25 and Bear Creek up to the next private landholding. This area was enclosed in 1895 by a perimeter fence consisting of wire and redwood staves. The fence is still largely extant, although some of its eastern edge has deteriorated as a result of erosion caused by Bear Creek. Despite this damage, the fence retains enough of its historic character and maintains a high degree of integrity. Approximately 100' north of the schoolhouse is a small enclosure constructed of wooden posts and rails with wire fencing that protects a young valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). This tree was planted in 1923 in commemoration of Horace Bacon, who taught at Bear Valley School from 1896 to 1916. Both tree and enclosure comprise a single contributing structure. A wood flagpole is attached to the tree enclosure, but its significance remains to be determined. Another associated structure is a well located approximately 85' north of the schoolhouse. This was bored in 1902. A windmill once stood over the well, but it has subsequently been replaced by an electric pump enclosed within a small wooden shed. The well is a contributing structure, but the pump and shed post-date the period of significance and are not contributors. Further research will be needed to determine whether there are other components associated with the well—for example, an underground cistern—that may also be contributors.

Aspects of Integrity

The Bear Valley School and its immediate setting retain all or most aspects of integrity needed to convey the historic significance of the property. With respect to location, the schoolhouse has never been moved since its completion in 1903. Its physical setting remains the same as that established by the school district in 1874 (and as assumed by the community in 1873). Its design reflects a vernacular tradition of rural schoolhouse construction common throughout the American West during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite minor modifications made after the period of significance (e.g., the enclosure of the front porch), the present building still conveys the significance of this tradition. The setting of the schoolhouse remains essentially unaltered and still retains its original sylvan character despite increased traffic along Highway 25 and vegetative growth along Bear Creek to the rear of the building. Both the materials and workmanship of the original 1902-03 construction by carpenter Edward Somers are still evident in the main building with little modification to affect their integrity. Only the front porch departs from this integrity, but its principal features were constructed within the period of significance and reflect patterns of maintenance and adaptation significantly associated with the history of the property. Most importantly, the aspects of feeling and association remain undiminished. As one visits this property and walks through its setting, it is easy to imagine the history of the property. The schoolhouse is still located within an essentially rural environment, surrounded by open fields and large cattle ranches, many descended from the original homesteads that were claimed during the late nineteenth century. The schoolyard itself retains a quiet, sylvan character, dominated by the same large oaks that were standing when the schoolhouse was first constructed.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education

Period of Significance

1902 -1950

Significant Dates

1902-1903 Schoolhouse constructed
1950 School closed

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Somers, Edward (carpenter)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Bear Valley School extends from 1902 to 1950, beginning with the year construction began on the present schoolhouse—the second to exist on this site—and ending with the last year classes were held. Although the Bear Valley School District was established in 1874 and the first schoolhouse constructed a few months earlier at the end of 1873, only the schoolyard and a few associated

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features (such as a perimeter fence) remain from that time. Since these remaining features are not sufficient to convey the significance of this earlier period, the period of significance does not include it. However, the history of the earlier period is discussed at length in the following narrative in order to provide sufficient context to understand the significance of the present schoolhouse. The end-date of 1950 reflects the closure of the school and the conclusion of its primary significance in the area of education. Although the building continued to be used by local residents after this date as a community hall, this activity did not represent a new use or contribute further to the history of the property. Moreover, the property's local significance in this area was already well-established from its prior use as a community hall during all or most of the period when it remained an active school.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Bear Valley School is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Education. For more than half a century, this was the only public, or common, school serving Bear Valley, a small agricultural community located in the remote mountains of southern San Benito County. Most of the original homesteading families sent their children here. As a common school, attendance was not limited by income or social status, since the school was supported by state and county tax contributions and was open to everyone. The educational curriculum emphasized fundamental skills in such essential subjects as reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and geography. The children were taught by a single teacher in one room, where everybody was required to cooperate regardless of grade level, age, or intellectual ability. The equalizing effect of this unique pedagogical environment, as well as the school's open admission and lack of fees, were all characteristics of the common school movement which had originated in the American Northeast during the period of the Early Republic, with older precedents in colonial New England. The one-room schoolhouse itself, situated within a small and geographically-limited school district, was a further adaptation of the common school tradition to the rural, sparsely-populated conditions of the American West. Although Bear Valley School was only one of many one-room schools that were established throughout the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth, it is an excellent example of this historically-significant tradition within the local context, where it had a profound and lasting effect on the formation of the Bear Valley community by providing a common school education for three generations of residents.

Although not formally significant under National Register criteria, the Bear Valley School has also played an important role in the lives of local residents as a community hall. It was used for a variety of non-scholastic purposes in the evenings after class was over and on weekends. All of these uses and events contributed to the value of the school for local residents. Combined with its significance in education, this additional role as a community center would reinforce the overall value of the Bear Valley School as a symbol of the community itself. Even after classes ceased to be held here in 1950, the building was still frequently used for meetings and entertainment events, so that it continued to have an important place in the life of the Bear Valley community almost to the present day. The strong interest in preserving the building among local residents (and the children of past residents) of Bear Valley is an expression of this enduring value.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Rural Education in America

The common school was an early form of public elementary education that developed during the antebellum period in the United States. Although national in their extent and significance, these schools were locally-controlled and organized. This local orientation contrasted with contemporary European models of public education—for example, in France and Prussia—where schools were organized and administered by national governments. Many scholars have seen this localism as a distinctively-American expression of democratic values. Supported by taxes, the common schools were open to all children regardless of income or social status, at least in principle. They would play an important role in providing improved opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities and were an equalizing force in American society. They were the antecedent of today's public education system.³

Although the movement to establish common schools flourished primarily from about 1830 to 1860, its roots extend much further back in American history. These roots also had a decidedly regional character, and were closely associated with the Reform Protestant culture of New England. The first public schools in American history were established in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where they were intended to promote the moral education of a deeply-religious community. The rudiments of this early system of public education originated in 1642, when the Massachusetts General Court passed an ordinance requiring parents to teach their children to read and write. Five years later, in 1647, the same court required towns with a population of 50 or more to appoint teachers to carry out this responsibility.⁴ These New England precedents would exert a strong influence on American public education in later years, especially during the early stages of the country's growth and expansion westward. This was evident, for example, in the nineteenth century's persistent belief in education's fundamentally moral purpose. But it was also expressed in more tangible forms, such as the design of many rural schoolhouses, which often adopted a simple neoclassical form typical of the New England church or meetinghall.

With the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, many leaders of the new republic believed that its success depended on a well-educated citizenry and supported schools in one form or another as essential national institutions. This sentiment was understandably more common among New Englanders—for example, Benjamin Rush, Noah Webster, and Ben Franklin—but it was not confined to them. Thomas Jefferson, who came from the Mid-Atlantic colony of Virginia, shared his northern compatriots' optimism about public education. Jefferson included important provisions supporting schools in the Land Ordinance of 1785, of which he was principal author. This law provided for the survey and distribution of lands west of the Appalachians, but it also set aside one section of every new township for the support of local schools. In practice, this would prove financially insufficient, but the intent was a measure of the importance which early political leaders such as Jefferson attributed to education. That importance was expressed in the subsequent Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which included the admonition that, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."⁵

³ Wayne E. Fuller, *The Old Country School: The Story of Rural Education in the Middle West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 45-46; and Lawrence A. Cremin, *The American Common School: An Historic Conception* (New York: Columbia University, 1951), esp. pp. 219-221.

⁴ Gerald L. Gutek, *Education in the United States: An Historical Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), pp. 4-11; Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*, 3rd ed. (Niwot, CO: The University Press of Colorado, 1996), pp. 36-38; and Cremin, *American Common School*, 84ff.

⁵ Art. 3 of "An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States northwest of the River Ohio," 13 July 1787. However, the remainder of Article 3, which promised that the lands and property of the Indians "shall never be taken from them

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These provisions in the Northwest Ordinances were also indicative of the special significance that public education would have on the western frontier. This was explained in no small part by fear of the debilitating effects that many believed life would have in this remote and thinly-populated section without education (and other civilizing influences such as religion).⁶

These were essential precedents, but the real push for public education, especially in the rural west, would come a few decades later with the advent of the common school movement in the 1830s. The one-room schoolhouse, which became the center of countless small communities throughout the American West, had its most discernible roots during this period. The common school movement began in the cities of the eastern seaboard during the decades after the War of 1812. Many of these cities were beginning to experience serious social problems associated with rapid growth and crowding during the first period of America's industrial revolution. New factories were creating wealth for the nation, but it was not evenly distributed, and the system of industrial labor which provided this wealth was also producing a large class of working poor. Many were recent immigrants comprising an increasingly polyglot mix from places such as Ireland, Germany, and later eastern and southern Europe. Their foreignness made it difficult for them to get established in the predominantly Anglo culture of the United States. At the same time, they presented an apparent threat to the older population, who feared their own culture would be overwhelmed in this rising human tide. Free public education was one of several ideas proposed by reformers to address these problems. Education would help new immigrants, or at least their children, assimilate to American culture, improving their chances to get ahead while at the same time removing the more threatening aspects of their foreignness. The system would work, however, only if it were freely available to everyone. It therefore had to be supported by taxes. The New England precedent of town schools reaching back to colonial times would incline states in the northeast more easily to accept the idea of a tax-based system of public education. Elsewhere, education would remain mostly a private affair until after the Civil War, limited to those who could afford it.⁷

The common schools that originated amid these social conditions were more than just a reaction to the challenges of the time. As proposed by their most ardent supporters, educators such as Horace Mann of Massachusetts, common schools represented the highest ideals of a democratic society. Mann and other leaders of the common school movement believed that education could prepare students to be responsible citizens by providing them with the intellectual tools of self-government and a respect for the moral values which supported it.⁸ They proposed a curriculum that would focus on basic skills, with lessons in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, history and geography. At the same time, students would be taught habits of discipline and ethical behavior in order to prepare them for productive, successful lives in modern society. One of the most important principles of the common school was its integrationist philosophy. Unlike contemporary public schools in Europe that reinforced class distinctions by separating students according to a dual-track system—one track to educate lower-class children for manual labor or service, the other to educate upper class children for eventual leadership—the American common school would make no distinctions for social status but would instead provide the same basic education for all children. The American schools would also be non-denominational, though they remained characteristically-Protestant in many of their underlying moral principles, reflecting the religious background of the men who founded them. (Horace Mann, for example, was raised as an orthodox Calvinist, though he parted ways with his formal religious affiliations as an adult.)⁹

without their consent," is a good indication of the unrealistic expectations embodied in this law.

⁶ Fuller, *Old Country School*, 33; and Gutek, *Education in the United States*, 100.

⁷ Fuller, *Old Country School*, 31ff; and Gutek, *Education in the United States*, 99-102.

⁸ Gutek, *Education in the United States*, 96-98; and Cremin, *American Common School*, 62-63.

⁹ Gutek, *Education in the United States*, 96-98

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Although the common school movement was born in eastern cities, it followed the American migration westward, taking hold with especial vigor on the old northwestern frontier of the Ohio and upper Mississippi River valleys (an area now known as the Midwest). By the late 1840s and 1850s, the overland migration had carried the common school idea, and other aspects of Midwestern culture, to Oregon and California in the Far West, and from there to successive mining frontiers in places like Idaho, Nevada and Colorado. The common school would develop a distinctive character in these rural locations, adopting the iconic form of the one-room schoolhouse out of necessity as it adapted to its rustic environment. The one-room school was specifically designed to serve a small community of farm children living on isolated homesteads, rather than the densely-populated neighborhoods of eastern cities. School was taught by a single teacher, and the number of students was limited to the population of school-age children living within practical walking distance, usually no more than a mile or two away. Each schoolhouse with its attendant student population constituted a single school district and was administered by a board of three officials elected from the local community. The board was responsible for most decisions affecting the school, including construction and upkeep of the facilities, hiring (and firing) of teachers, and the allocation of funds, though the funds themselves were provided out of state and county taxes.¹⁰

The district idea was an essential part of common school education in rural America. Like the common school itself, it had precedents in New England. The Massachusetts Bay laws which had first established public schools in the towns required all citizens of the township to support them through taxes. But as farmers moved further into the surrounding countryside, it became increasingly difficult for their children to attend schools that were often many miles away in distant town centers. In response, these farmers requested the right to apply their tax contribution toward local schools instead of the township schools that no longer benefitted them. Between 1789 and 1800, the state of Massachusetts passed a series of laws allowing its rural residents to create independent school districts supported by public taxation. As the principle later developed in the American West, each district came to comprise about two square miles (or three districts for each township of 36 sections). This would ensure that the schools were accessible to all of the area's children. As settlements grew, more districts would be established and new schools built, so that the average size of each school and the distances between them remained constant.¹¹

The relative independence of the rural district from outside authority, and the great interest which local residents usually took in their management, made the rural common school a center of participatory democracy. The local community chose members of the school board from among its own ranks and voted them into office. It participated in school meetings and debated matters of importance relating to the education of their children. In doing so, ordinary members of the community became familiar with the intricacies of parliamentary procedure and developed a conversancy with the political process that allowed them to play an active part in their own governance (and in that of the nation). These examples have led some scholars and historians of education to characterize the rural common schools as "laboratories of democracy."¹² Democratic principles were taught not only to the young students by means of the common school curriculum but were also learned by their adult parents through the shared responsibility of administering the school itself. (This interpretation has also been criticized as romantic by some scholars, who point out that authority is not necessarily more democratic just because it is local.)¹³ Following the Civil War, the common schools would become an important, if ambiguous, force in efforts to assimilate freed African-Americans under Reconstruction policies.

¹⁰ Gutek, *Education in the United States*, 103-104.

¹¹ Fuller, *Old Country School*, 43.

¹² Fuller, *Old Country School*, 45.

¹³ Paul Theobald, "Country School Curriculum and Governance: The One-Room School Experience in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest," *American Journal of Education* 101.2 (1993): 116-139.

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The extension of public education to racial minorities was consistent with the common school movement's ideal of providing equal opportunity for all Americans, but these efforts would fall well short of the expectations of their supporters.¹⁴

Rural Education in California

Eastern and Midwestern precedents would have a great deal of significance for the history of education in California, since many of the Americans who immigrated to California after 1849 came from those regions (or at least came with an appreciation of their culture). California held its first constitutional convention at Monterey in September 1849. Delegates represented a wide range of ethnic and national backgrounds, but 36 were Americans (from the United States), and of these the majority (twelve) came from New York, which at that time had a well-established system of common school education. This had evolved directly from New England principles being vigorously promoted at that time by educators and statesmen such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. Other states with a strong foundation of common schooling, such as Massachusetts and Ohio, were also well-represented among the convention delegates. This northeastern bias would greatly influence the future direction of California's educational system. Most of the delegates at the convention proved willing to adopt a statewide system of common schools operated by local townships under the supervision of an elected state superintendent of public instruction. This was established by Article IX of the new constitution, adopted that fall. Schools were to be funded by the sale or rental of public lands (following the principle introduced with the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787) and were to be in session for a minimum of three months every year.¹⁵

The constitution left additional details to the legislature, which passed a series of statutes between 1851 and 1855 for the purpose of implementing the state's educational system. The first of these, entitled "An Act to Establish a System of Common Schools," provided for three-member boards of commissioners, or trustees, to be elected by each community desiring a school.¹⁶ This law, which became the basis for establishing local school districts throughout California, closely followed the New England model, where three of a town's selectmen served as the school committee or board of education. Proponents of the legislation were so conscious of the eastern traditions they emulated, that they even required a minimum petition of fifty householders for the establishment of a district, the same threshold that had been required in colonial Massachusetts.¹⁷ A system of public taxation was also introduced—again, following New England precedent—after the western experiment of relying on public lands provided insufficient funds to pay teacher salaries. This was rectified in 1852 when the legislature authorized both state and county taxes to support the common schools. The state revenues could be used only for teacher salaries, meaning that all other expenses became the responsibility of the local districts, including the construction and upkeep of the schoolhouses themselves.¹⁸

Over the first two decades of the state's existence, most elements of California's public education system were established, at least in rudimentary form. At the heart of the system was the common school, which

¹⁴ Ward F. McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction: The Public School in the Politics of the 1870s* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). Although common school advocates like Charles Sumner sought integration in the classroom, this would not be achieved in the South for another century.

¹⁵ Charles J. Falk, *The Development and Organization of Education in California* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 18-19.

¹⁶ Works Progress Administration (WPA), *Inventory of the County Archives of California: San Benito County* (San Francisco, CA: The Northern California Historical Records Survey Project, 1940), p. 460.

¹⁷ Falk, *Education in California*, 71.

¹⁸ Falk, *Education in California*, 24

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provided free education in basic subjects—reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic—for grades one through eight. By this time, the state had also organized a high school (in 1856), a two-year normal school for training and certifying teachers (in 1862), and its first state university (in 1868).¹⁹ The chief failure of the state during this early period of development was its relative neglect of rural education. The problem was exacerbated by over-centralization of the common school organizational structure. Although the preponderance of authority was, in principle, centered in local communities with the county superintendent and district trustees, in fact, the local authorities initially had little control over the licensing of teachers, financial affairs, and choice of textbooks. These challenges would be addressed in the state's second constitution, which was adopted in 1879. It transferred these responsibilities to the county and districts. In addition, the second constitution also increased the minimum period of time that a school was required to remain open from three months to six months each year, though which months remained up to the discretion of the trustees, an important consideration for rural districts where seasonally variable events such as weather and the agricultural harvest could significantly affect school attendance.²⁰

The Settlement of Bear Valley

As California's educational system was assuming full form by the conclusion of the 1855 legislature, San Benito County was not even established. The territory it would later comprise was still part of Monterey County. Except for the rich San Juan Valley at the northern end, most of this country consisted of dry, rugged mountains and was difficult to access. The majority of the sparse population was concentrated in the town of San Juan Bautista, a Spanish community which had grown up around the Franciscan mission of the same name in the midst of the San Juan Valley. Americans had begun arriving only a few years earlier. (The first was a youthful survivor of the Donner Party who opened the town's first inn.) Sheep ranching was just then emerging as the principal economic activity, following the introduction of high-quality Merino sheep by Thomas Flint and Llewellyn Bixby in 1853. The southern end of the territory, where Bear Valley is located, had been almost entirely depopulated of its native Chalon and Mutsun inhabitants by about 1810 as a result of Spanish missionization, introduced diseases, and overt violence and was now largely uninhabited. (Most of the native peoples who survived had scattered to other locations.) By the mid-1850s, Anglo-European adventurers and homesteaders began drifting back into this emptied land. The recent discovery of rich mercury ore in the Panoche Hills to the southeast would soon bring a steady flow of laborers up the San Benito River to work in the New Idria mines and reduction facilities. Teamsters were also employed to bring the refined quicksilver north to San Juan Bautista. This traffic contributed to the early settlement of the southern region—later known as South County—and the establishment of the small town of San Benito, which grew up along the miners' road on the San Benito River only a few miles away from Bear Valley.²¹

The first school district in this old section of Monterey County was established in 1852 and was known as the San Juan District. It comprised all of the territory of the future San Benito County, an area about the size

¹⁹ Falk, *Education in California*, 226. San Francisco High School was established in 1856 from Union Grammar School. It graduated its first class in 1858. The legislature passed an act to establish and maintain normal schools on 2 May 1862. This act resulted in the state assuming control of San Francisco Normal School (previously a private institution) that year. Further legislation enabled its transfer to San Jose, a move that was carried out in 1871. The original building for the San Jose Normal School was completed in 1872 but burned down in 1880. It was replaced the following year. The University of California was established in 1868 in Berkeley. It had been proposed as early as 1849 in Section 5 (Art. IX) of the first state constitution.

²⁰ Falk, *Education in California*, 29-30, and 35-41.

²¹ George H. Tinkham, "The Story of San Benito County," in *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties...*, ed. J.M. Guinn (Chicago: The Chapman Publishing Co., 1910); and Henry D. Barrows and Luther A. Ingersoll, *A Memorial and Biographical History of the Coast Counties of Central California* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1893).

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of the state of Rhode Island. As families began following the miners up the San Benito River during the next two decades, this vast district had to be broken up into smaller units. In 1868, the San Benito School District was established in the southern part of the county. Ten additional districts were organized at the same time, including the Jefferson District, which included Bear Valley. When the county of San Benito was finally established in 1874, a total of twelve school districts existed. Most had no schoolhouses, though the earliest structures were built at that time. Prior to this, classes had to be held wherever there was a convenient space, usually in somebody's farmhouse.²²

Bear Valley was settled comparatively late for South County, despite having good farmland and perennial water, because it lay some distance from the main travel corridor along the San Benito River. The first group of Americans arrived in 1865, led by an eastern doctor named Americus Powers. Powers had already inspected the area in anticipation of the loss of his present homestead in San Leandro, just south of San Francisco, in a land title dispute in which he had little chance of prevailing. With him came several neighbors and friends from the Bay Area, including his brother-in-law Aaron Rockwood and Rockwood's young nephew Henry Melendy. The following year, this initial group of settlers was joined by members of the Bacon family, who had known Dr. Powers in San Leandro. Powers had been personal physician to the matriarch of the family, Elizabeth Quigley Shell Bacon, and had probably delivered two of her children, including her son Horace Greeley Bacon, who would later play a significant role in the educational history of the Bear Valley community. Elizabeth Bacon's last child, Benjamin Franklin Bacon, would be born only months after the family came to Bear Valley. Ben Bacon arrived during the wet winter of 1866 and is believed to be the first American child born in Bear Valley. He would live his entire life here and would eventually become one of the largest and most successful of Bear Valley's ranchers before his death in 1939. His legacy is preserved in the Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, a cultural landscape which is currently managed by Pinnacles National Park.²³

These original settlers, all relations of the Bacon and Powers families, would form the nucleus of the community that would eventually develop in Bear Valley. Their lives were already closely interwoven from prior experience, both in San Leandro and on the immigrant trail across the western United States. They would become even closer through common experience and family unions in Bear Valley. Within three years, the two clans were joined in marriage after Henry Melendy wed young Deborah Shell, the daughter of Elizabeth Bacon by her first husband. By the following decade, members of the large Prewett and Butterfield families would also arrive, establishing prosperous homesteads at both ends of the valley on the remaining good land between the homesteads already claimed by the first settlers. Numerous individuals and smaller families soon took up the remaining parcels of unclaimed land, causing the population of Bear Valley to continue to swell for another ten years or more.²⁴ Although this generation may have had little opportunity to obtain an education, their children would need one, and they thought highly enough of the advantages provided by common schooling to hasten its establishment. Common schooling would increase the opportunities available to the children of these homesteaders, potentially smoothing out differences which may have existed between their families as a result of economic disparities. (Race was not a significant source of difference in the Bear Valley community as it was in other parts of the county. Most of the surviving Native Americans were concentrated around the mines

²² WPA, *Inventory*, 479; Grace Butterfield Bacon Robinson, "Family Album," in "South County Pioneers: Memoirs of Southern San Benito County, California," ed. by Stanley Schmidt, et al., unpub. history, December 2008.

²³ United States Dept. of the Interior (USDOI), *Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, Pinnacles National Monument* (Oakland, CA: National Park Service, Pacific West Regional Office, 2009).

²⁴ The homesteading population probably reached its peak by the early 1890s but began to decline shortly thereafter. Although suggested by the decennial Agricultural Census, the best indication of this trend on a local (district) scale is the census of schoolchildren recorded in the Annual Reports of the state's common schools. [California Dept. of Education, "Common School Reports, 1861-1959," California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.]

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in the Panoche district or further north near San Juan Bautista, while the only African-Americans known to have lived in the immediate area was an adult couple, presumably freed slaves, who had accompanied white settler John T. Prewett from Missouri in the early 1870s.)²⁵

The First Bear Valley School (1873)

The early settlers of Bear Valley initially belonged to the Jefferson School District, which was established in August of 1869 by residents of the nearby township of San Benito.²⁶ The few school-age children who lived in Bear Valley at this time, however, were probably schooled at home, if at all, since the district did not yet possess a schoolhouse. Residents of Bear Valley petitioned for their own district in 1873 and began constructing a school that fall. It was completed before the end of the year and began holding regular classes the following spring. The first teacher was Charles Price Troy, a native of New York who had recently immigrated to California. Not long after the Bear Valley School was completed, the county of San Benito was organized. It included Bear Valley. On 6 May 1874, the newly-established board of supervisors created the Bear Valley School District from a portion of the existing Jefferson School District. The first trustees of the new district were John T. Prewett, George M. Butterfield, and William K. Bacon (an uncle of Ben and Horace Bacon).²⁷

The first Bear Valley School was a simple structure. According to local tradition, it was built in a hurry owing to the need to have a serviceable structure available as quickly as possible.²⁸ Few photographs survive from this era, but one may represent this building. It shows a simple, wood-frame, end-gable structure, with two entrances on the west side (one for boys, and one for girls), but no porch. The building has been painted, which indicates at least some interest in protecting the structure and providing for adornment.²⁹ The Bear Valley School was located on the property of Dr. Americus Powers on a narrow strip of level ground toward the southwest end of the valley. It stood approximately in the same location as the present building, though one local resident believed the first building stood toward the north end of the lot and faced south rather than west.³⁰ In the photograph mentioned, it is not possible to determine the building's precise location or its orientation, except that it stands behind one of the large valley oaks which are still present.

On 9 June 1885, Dr. Americus Powers sold the land on which the schoolhouse stood to the Bear Valley School District for the nominal price of one dollar. The parcel comprised one and a half acres and was located toward the northern end of Powers' ranch. It was described in the deed of sale as,

...bounded and located near the south west corner and on the west side of the south west lot (or 4) of section 18 township 16 range 8 east Mount Diablo M being the lot or parcel of land now occupied by the Bear Valley public school district house lying between the Bear Valley creek on

²⁵ Statistics kept as part of the annual common school reports provide a record of racial and gender diversity in county school districts. Although "Indians" were reported in some districts, such as Panoche and San Juan, no minorities were reported in the Bear Valley School District during the period of significance. ["Common School Reports."] The African-American couple—the man is remembered only as Sam—is buried with other early settlers in an unmaintained cemetery on a hill overlooking the Bear Valley School. [Martha Bacon Miller, "Cemetery on Knoll East of Bear Valley School," in "South County Pioneers: Memoirs of Southern San Benito County, California," ed. by Stanley Schmidt, et al., unpub. history, December 2008.]

²⁶ Entries for 19-20 August, 1869 in Matthews, "Joseph Warren Matthews Diary," Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA. Matthews was appointed census marshal for the new school district. That year he enumerated 83 children between the ages of 5 and 15 (41 boys and 42 girls). Thirty-nine of these children were from Bear Valley alone, a surprising number given how recently the valley had been settled.

²⁷ Robinson, "Family Album"; Deborah Melendy Norman, "Notes on Bear Valley School," email corresp. with author, 27 July 2013.

²⁸ Robinson, "Family Album."

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

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the east and the hill on the west and as it is now fenced or partly fenced being about one and a half (1 1/2) acres of land.³¹

The county road ran along the western side of the lot in front of the schoolhouse. This road was improved from an existing track in 1890 by local farmers. It is the same alignment presently followed by Highway 25. Bear Creek meandered through a wide, braided channel just behind the building to the east. Then, as now, the site was shaded by a small grove of valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) and had a quiet, sylvan character. Records from this period indicate that the schoolhouse was valued at a relatively modest \$477.55 in 1890. At the same time, however, the school district showed evidence of its enthusiasm by investing generously in books and teaching aids such as maps, musical instruments, and even a tellurian, a mechanical model of the earth and sun that was purchased in 1882. The school library included 241 volumes that year and would grow to nearly 300 by the end of the decade. Its value, combined with these various apparatus, was greater than the schoolhouse itself and came entirely from county or local funds.³²

Early in the 1890s, the community began making plans to improve and enlarge the Bear Valley School. By this time, the local population had grown considerably, with the number of children attending the Bear Valley School regularly exceeding 30 after 1885. School attendance reached its highest point in 1890, when there were 38 students.³³ One local resident, whose family had immigrated to Bear Valley in 1886, recalled that,

Bear Valley had quite a few families in the '80s and '90s for, in addition to the larger ranches, there were many homesteads on the hills and in the canyons, mostly on submarginal land. Arthur Hain quite often would say, in describing those more populous days, that when the school bell would ring the hills seemed to come alive as children on foot and horseback came hurrying to school.³⁴

The growth in the number of school-age children was apparent throughout the county by the proliferation of new districts, which increased from only 12 in the year Bear Valley School was established to 51 by 1890.³⁵ The ranches of many of the original homesteaders had also become relatively prosperous by now, making it possible for these families to invest more of their private resources in community efforts such as improving the local school and providing a better education for their children.³⁶

The first substantial improvements made to the first Bear Valley School were new toilets constructed in the winter of 1894. These were still outdoor vault toilets, but school records describe them as "county privy," suggesting that they were installed at the instigation of the county superintendent and were likely an improvement over existing conditions.³⁷ The following spring, work was undertaken on the school lot with the construction of a perimeter fence. This represented a substantial improvement, valued at \$188.15. The fence was constructed of redwood, likely obtained from the Santa Cruz mountains to the north. This fence can be seen in the background of many historic photographs taken over the years and is still present today, though in somewhat deteriorated condition. It consists of thin wooden pales that are oriented vertically and held by

³¹ Recorded 9 October 1886, in Vol. 8 of *Deeds*, p. 509, San Benito County Records, Hollister, CA.

³² San Benito County Dept. of Education, "Register of School Warrants," Vol. 3, San Benito County Historical Society (SBCHS), Hollister, CA; Bear Valley School District, "School Trustees' Records and Accounts," Mus. coll., PINN-00485, Pinnacles National Park (PINN), Paicines, CA.

³³ "Common School Reports."

³⁴ Lois Bourke, "Early History," unpub. typescript, January 1961, Mus. coll., PINN-3658, Pinnacles National Park, Paicines, CA.

³⁵ Jack Schreder, *San Benito County School Facilities Master Plan* (Sacramento, CA: Jack Schreder and Associates, 1988), p. 12.

³⁶ USDO, *Bacon Ranch Historic District*.

³⁷ Bear Valley School Dist., "Records."

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strands of unbarbed wire. Two sets of these wire strands are twisted together around the top and bottom of the pales, creating tight pockets for each one. In addition to the fence, a well, a pump, and a wash house were also constructed that year, worth an additional \$100 in total value. The pump would have been hand-operated, while the wash house was probably a simple shelter surrounding or adjacent to the hand pump where the children could wash themselves before entering school.³⁸

Horace Bacon—Bear Valley's Exemplary Teacher

Shortly after these improvements were completed, Horace Bacon, one of the community's most noteworthy educators, began teaching at Bear Valley School. Bacon's career was unusual in many respects. He was male, for one thing, at a time when most rural school teachers were women.³⁹ He also spent the majority of his professional career—twenty years—teaching at the same school, while most teachers at that time rarely taught more than one or two years before moving on (if they continued teaching at all).⁴⁰ Horace Bacon was the exemplar of the common school teacher for this small community and became more closely associated with the Bear Valley School during its heyday than anyone else. In part, this was due to the extraordinary length of his time spent there, but it was also because of the respect and admiration the community held for him. Grace Butterfield Bacon Robinson, who was a student in Horace Bacon's classroom during the last six years of his career (1910-1916), remembered that "he was strict, patient, helpful, loving and kind; one of the finest men I ever knew." (Horace would later become Grace's father-in-law, after she married his son Clarence in 1921. This would unite the Butterfield and Bacon families, who had long been neighbors at the lower end of Bear Valley.) While many other individuals taught at Bear Valley School over the years, and nearly all of them made important contributions to the lives of local residents, Horace Bacon remains the district's most memorable teacher. The history of the school would be incomplete without discussing his place within it.

Horace was one of four children born to Elizabeth Shell and Myron Bacon, who had been among the original homesteaders to settle in Bear Valley in 1866. Horace was born in 1864, just two years before the family arrived in Bear Valley, but he grew up on the family's Bear Valley ranch at the foot of the Pinnacles with his brothers Ben and Oliver, his sister Mary, and Susan Shell, a half-sister by his mother's first marriage. (He had two other half-siblings as well, but they were not living on the Bacon Ranch during Horace's youth, except briefly.) Horace Bacon attended Bear Valley School as a young boy, probably with his siblings, and graduated from the eighth grade around 1881 when he was seventeen years old. (His daughter later recalled that Horace attended Bear Valley School until he knew as much as the teacher did.)⁴¹ This puts Horace Bacon among the first class at the original Bear Valley School, which opened in 1874 when Horace was ten years old. He may have had some prior schooling at home, which was likely given his age, or he was able to advance a grade after formal schooling had begun in order to graduate a year early. He then went to Hollister to be examined by

³⁸ Robinson, "Family Album."

³⁹ Women, especially young women, were often preferred by the district trustees because they could be paid less, allowing the school to remain open longer each year on the same budget. [Fuller, *Old Country School*, 157-163] Eventually, primary school teaching would be identified largely as a female profession, but this did not happen all at once. When Horace Bacon began teaching at Bear Valley in 1896, one-quarter of all the school districts in San Benito County had male teachers. By the end of his career nearly twenty years later, Horace Bacon was one of only three male teachers in the county. ["Common School Reports."]

⁴⁰ School districts were required to elect their teachers every year, and they rarely chose the same teacher more than one or two times consecutively. More often than not, this was a matter of necessity rather than choice, since few rural teachers were actually interested in making a career of this profession, as Horace Bacon would. The county superintendent viewed this rapid turn-over among teachers as detrimental to the quality of education. ["Common School Reports."]

⁴¹ Martha Bacon Miller, et al., "The Bacon Family, 1740-2008," in "South County Pioneers: Memoirs of Southern San Benito County, California," ed. by Stanley Schmidt, et al., unpub. history, December 2008.

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the county superintendent for a teaching certificate. This allowed him to return the following year to teach for one term at the Bear Valley School and a subsequent term at the nearby Willow Creek School.⁴²

This early experience must have convinced Horace that he wanted to continue teaching professionally, since he enrolled the following year at the California State Normal School in San Jose. This was a two year program of teacher education that was designed to provide a higher standard of professional training than the county-administered certificate system (although the latter continued to be the mainstay of rural educators for many years). Horace was awarded a more advanced certificate on 17 December 1885 and began teaching the following year in the rural farming community of Alamo, east of San Francisco, where he remained for the next three years. While there, he met his future wife Martha Jeanette "Nettie" Smith, niece of the prominent rancher who owned the land on which the Alamo School was located. In 1889, while still teaching in Alamo, Horace purchased a 160 acre portion of Dr. Americus Powers' ranch in Bear Valley with the assistance of his younger brother Ben. (By this time, Americus Powers was no longer living, having been murdered the previous year by his neighbor John T. Prewett.) This parcel adjoined the Bear Valley School lot to the southeast. Horace's interest in the property suggests he was thinking of returning to his home in southern San Benito County and may have already intended to make his career there. This is further indicated by his application for a teaching certificate for San Benito County, which he received in 1890, though he was teaching in the San Joaquin Valley town of Tulare at the time. The certificate would allow Horace to teach at any common school in San Benito County for a period of three years.

Rather than return immediately to San Benito County, Horace went back to Alamo for the fall term in 1891, apparently for the purpose of marrying Nettie Smith now that his professional life was coming together and he could feel confident of supporting a wife and family. The couple were wed that December. After Horace fulfilled his teaching commitment in Alamo for the spring term, he and Nettie moved to Bear Valley in June 1892 and settled into a small cabin they constructed on the Powers ranch not far from the Bear Valley School. Horace undoubtedly wanted to teach at the school, which was now only a short walk from his front door, but his first San Benito County assignment was at the Cienega School, nearly twenty miles north of Bear Valley near the town of Paicines. He taught there only one term, during the fall of 1892, before obtaining an assignment at the Willow Creek School, which stood at the north end of Bear Valley. Although much closer to home, Horace and Nettie—now with their first child Edith—still had to board at a nearby ranch.

Horace taught at Willow Creek for four years before finally obtaining an assignment at Bear Valley School in the fall of 1896. District financial records show that his first wages, in the amount of \$65.00 for one month, were paid in October of that year.⁴³ The three district trustees who elected Horace Bacon were George M. Butterfield (who had been a trustee since the origin of the district in 1874), Henry Melendy, and Schuyler Hain. All had some relationship to the Bacon family, either as close neighbors or relatives, and were probably pleased to hire a member of their own community. Schuyler Hain and his young wife Ida Cook had recently immigrated from Michigan and were living on a portion of the old Powers Ranch adjacent to the school. They were now neighbors of Horace and Nettie Bacon, and the two couples, who were nearly the same age, would soon become close friends.⁴⁴ These personal ties would help Horace Bacon build a strong relationship between the school and local residents and contributed greatly to his success as a teacher. Horace Bacon would continue teaching for the next twenty years at the Bear Valley School, retiring at the end of spring term in 1916. At that time, he was making an annual salary of \$612.50, or a little over \$70 per month. This was scarcely more than

⁴² Miller, et al., "The Bacon Family."

⁴³ Bear Valley School District, "Records."

⁴⁴ Schuyler Hain had just begun his long campaign to protect the nearby Pinnacles formation just west of the Bacon Ranch. His eventual success in getting a national monument established here more than ten years later would earn him the title "Father of the Pinnacles."

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he earned at the beginning of his career.⁴⁵ Horace Bacon would also serve as chairman of the county board of education from 1904, a position he would retain even after he retired from teaching.⁴⁶

Years later, Horace Bacon was honored by the residents of Bear Valley for his long service with a public tree-planting in 1923. This was held in the school yard just north of the schoolhouse, where a valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) sapling was planted. A small wood rail and wire enclosure was later constructed to keep deer from destroying the young tree. (Both tree and enclosure are still present.)⁴⁷ A second public tree-planting took place in 1935, several years after Horace Bacon's death in 1929. On this occasion, three redwoods were planted in lower McCabe Canyon on land that had formerly belonged to Horace Bacon's brother, Oliver Bacon. This property had passed to Horace Bacon following Oliver's death in 1926. It remained with Horace Bacon's heirs until sold to the National Park Service in 2006 for inclusion in Pinnacles National Monument, now Pinnacles National Park. Two of these trees are still extant and have been documented by the park.⁴⁸ Other members of Horace Bacon's family would later teach at the Bear Valley School as well (though none for as long as Horace). His daughter, Edith Bacon Schmidt, was employed here during the 1930s, and his granddaughter, Nadine Schmidt, would teach from 1946 to 1948, shortly before the school closed.⁴⁹

The Educational Curriculum of the Rural Common School

The curriculum during the years which Horace Bacon taught was relatively consistent throughout most rural common schools and had changed little since their origin in the first half of the nineteenth century. A typical day began with the students being called to class with the ringing of the school bell. In many communities during the nineteenth century, the boys and girls would form separate lines outside the schoolhouse, then file in to the classroom through each of two front doors following the teacher's command. Coats would be deposited in anterooms along the way. Whether or not this routine was followed at Bear Valley School is not known, but the school was constructed with separate, gender-specific entries in accordance with Midwestern and New England precedents. Anterooms for coats, however, were not constructed until the late 1920s (probably in 1928—see discussion below). Prior to this improvement, coats may have been hung on pegs or were simply carried into the classroom. Since Bear Valley is relatively dry, and temperatures rarely fall below 15 degrees Fahrenheit even on the coldest winter day, cumbersome outdoor apparel was not usually needed. Instruction would begin at 9:00 AM sharp and continued, with intermittent breaks, until 4:00 PM.

Every teacher prepared a lesson plan to fit the unique requirements of her or his class. Although records of these plans have not been found for Bear Valley School, those from nearby Jefferson School, a similar one-room schoolhouse located about twenty miles south of Bear Valley, have. A typical day in February 1902 is reproduced below. The teacher who prepared this plan is not identified, but Horace Bacon was teaching that same year in Bear Valley and would have been following a similar plan that he himself had prepared. (This would have been Horace Bacon's last year in the original Bear Valley School prior to construction of its successor, the present Bear Valley School.)

9-10	Arithmetic - All Grades
	Reading in 1st and 2nd grades
10-10:40	4th, 7th, 9th grades spelling

⁴⁵ "Common School Reports."

⁴⁶ "An Educator of Ability and Esteem," *The Hollister Advance*, 26 April 1929.

⁴⁷ Stanley Schmidt to Deborah Norman, email corr., 9 August 2007, in Deborah Norman, "Notes on Bear Valley School," email corr. with author, 27 July 2013.

⁴⁸ USDO, *Bacon Ranch Historic District*.

⁴⁹ Norman, "Notes," 27 July 2013.

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	6th grade grammar
10:40-11	Recess
11-12	6th grade spelling
	4th, 7th, 9th grades grammar
	9th English
	1st & 2nd Arithmetic
Noon, 12-1 PM	
1-2:40	Reading in 1st, 2nd, 4th, & 6th grades
	Civ. Gov. and word analysis in 9th
	History and Physiology in 7th
	Geography in 4th
2:40-3	Recess
3-4	Geography in 6th, 7th, and 9th grades
	History in 9th. Physiology in 6th
	Book Keeping in 9th
Friday	General review and all extra work not given time for during the other days of week. ⁵⁰

This lesson plan reveals a number of characteristics that were typical of the common school curriculum. Among the more obvious is that instruction had to meet the needs of a variety of different competencies, all within one classroom. (What is not revealed are the ages of the students, which might include youth as well as adults. Grade only signified the level of educational material that a student had mastered.) Common school education emphasized basic skills such as reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, history and geography. Orthography, or penmanship, was another fundamental skill that was usually integrated into the curriculum, while a few specialized topics such as human physiology were also taught. While all students had to learn the same basic subjects, there was usually a considerable range between what each individual student knew or was capable of learning. Because of this diversity, the common school teacher could not simply lecture to the class as a whole, as in the modern graded classroom, but instead had to provide individual instruction for each student (or a small group of students). With as many as twenty or even thirty students in a single classroom, this could be a daunting task for only one person.⁵¹ Over the years, teachers in these rural schools evolved creative strategies for dealing with this challenge, resulting in some of the more distinctive features of the common school tradition. Individual study accompanied by regular recitation was the heart of this system. Students were expected to work at their own pace from assigned materials, usually a series of incrementally-graded books such as the famous McGuffey readers. They would demonstrate their mastery of a lesson by reciting what they had learned before the teacher, or possibly working through a problem on the blackboard in the case of arithmetic. Recitations were usually held at the front of the classroom where the teacher's desk and the blackboard were located. They provided an opportunity for the teacher to make personal contact with each student, allowing the

⁵⁰ Jefferson School District, "Teacher's Register for Public Elementary School," Mus. coll., PINN-00485, Pinnacles National Park, Paicines, CA.

⁵¹ During its most active period in the 1890s, the Bear Valley School had as many as thirty-eight students in one year. This would decline to an average of about twelve students during the next few decades, while eight to ten students was more typical during the final decades of the school's existence. ["Common School Reports."]

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teacher to assess the student's individual needs and provide specific guidance and further instruction. Each recitation might last only a few minutes, however, since the teacher had to divide her or his time among many students.⁵²

While some students were engaged in recitations at the front of the class, the rest of the students were expected to continue working at their desks on their own lessons. They could, however, listen to the recitations of their classmates and might get a preview of more advanced lessons if they were so inclined. In this way, it was possible for an ambitious student in a lower grade to become familiar with the subject matter of a higher grade even before he or she was formally advanced. At the very least, the constant repetition of lessons reinforced the students' mastery of the curriculum. The flexibility of this environment allowed students to learn from one another while at the same time encouraging individual initiative and making it possible for students to advance at their own pace. Teachers also relied on the older or more advanced students to mentor the younger ones, thereby distributing some of their own workload. Cooperation of this sort was facilitated in many rural schools by the fact that the students were often siblings or close relatives. One might find, for example, an older sister who was reading at the eighth grade level instructing her younger brother who read at the second grade level, while the teacher only occasionally looked on. This peer education was unique to the one-room schoolhouse and could never be replicated in the graded, multi-room environment of later consolidated schools.⁵³

In the 1902 lesson plan from Jefferson School, at least one student was sufficiently advanced to be working at the high school level, so the teacher had to provide 9th grade curricula as well. Among other subjects, this included "Book Keeping," which was probably designed to prepare the student (or students) for a specific trade. Although a formal high school was established in San Benito County in 1893, it was located in Hollister, which was too far for most students in the rural districts to attend.⁵⁴ As a result, the rural school teachers sometimes offered this level of education as an extension of their elementary school curriculum. As local demand for high school-level education increased, common schools such as Bear Valley were divided into separate elementary and high school sections, with separate teachers employed to instruct each group, but this would not occur until later in the twentieth century. After 1935, the introduction of motorized buses made it possible to bring high school-level students from remote rural locations such as Bear Valley to the county high school in Hollister, eliminating the need for segregated classrooms in the local elementary schools.⁵⁵

One important subject that is not reflected in the Jefferson School lesson plan is music. This was an integral part of common school education, even if it was not necessarily a formal part of the curriculum. Most teachers provided at least rudimentary music instruction with singing of popular songs. If the district could afford an instrument, and the teacher was able to use it, the singing might be accompanied. The Bear Valley School possessed an organ during Horace Bacon's tenure as teacher, and Bacon was fond of singing, a talent which he demonstrated at public events such as the annual Teacher's Institutes where he regularly performed.⁵⁶ He was also adept with the cornet, a type of horn or trumpet which was invented at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Given this evidence, it is likely that music played a prominent role in Horace Bacon's classroom during his years at the Bear Valley School.⁵⁷

⁵² Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*, 47-48; Fuller, *Old Country School*, 11-14; and Thomas M. Gwaltney, "The Era of the Rural School: Teaching Strategies," *Childhood Education* 78.2 (2002): 104-106.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ The original San Benito County High School was organized on 28 August 1893. ["Common School Reports."]

⁵⁵ Deborah Norman to Martha Bacon Miller, email corr., 30 March 2010, in Deborah Norman to author, email corr. 28 July 2013.

⁵⁶ "Common School Reports."

⁵⁷ Schmidt, "Horace G. Bacon Family," p. 12.

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Students in the common schools advanced according to their mastery of the subject matter as evaluated by their teacher. Eventually, a formal system of grades—first through eighth—was established. This was introduced in San Benito County schools by 1897. Prior to this, grade levels were simply designated primary and grammar. On completion of the eighth grade, or grammar level studies, students were examined by the county superintendent and awarded a certificate of graduation. This qualified them to enter high school if they desired, though prior to World War II, most students in rural districts continued no further than this. Completion of the eighth grade also qualified a student to apply for a teacher's certificate, which was administered through examination by the county superintendent as well. Many rural school teachers had no more education than this when they first began teaching and might be only a year or two older than the oldest students in their first classroom. (This was the case with Horace Bacon when he began teaching at Bear Valley School in 1882 at the age of eighteen.) More ambitious teachers, especially those intending to make teaching a career, could obtain additional training at a two-year normal school, such as the California State Normal School in San Jose, but the most important opportunities for continuing professional education were the annual Teachers Institutes sponsored by each county. These were normally held in the county seat over a period of several days and included inspirational lectures, entertainment (usually musical), and workshops. Teachers Institutes were very popular with rural school teachers, allowing them to find out what their colleagues were doing in other districts and to become familiar with the latest ideas in educational theory.⁵⁸

The Second Bear Valley School (1902-03)

Under Horace Bacon's able stewardship, the Bear Valley School would grow in significance, becoming a symbol of pride for the local community. Seven years after he had begun teaching here, work would begin on the construction of a new building to replace the original schoolhouse. This structure was larger and more elaborate than the 1873 schoolhouse, though a precise comparison is impossible to make, since so few details exist concerning the former building. The new schoolhouse was built entirely with local funds. According to Grace Robinson (Horace Bacon's daughter-in-law), this money came from subscriptions raised by members of the Bear Valley School District, a testament to the local community's commitment and enthusiasm. It also suggests that preparations had been underway for awhile, since a considerable sum was required. The cost of materials and labor that were actually invoiced came to nearly \$780.00. (This does not include time and materials that were volunteered, which may also have been considerable.) These financial records suggest that a high standard of work was desired. Lumber for the project was purchased in November 1901, more than a year before construction began, in order to allow the green wood to season properly. A professional carpenter by the name of Edward Somers was hired to do the actual work, which began in December 1902 and continued through the following February. Somers was given room and board with Schuyler and Ida Hain, who lived next to the school. Prefabricated doors and windows as well as decorative molding were also ordered to complete the otherwise simple structure with a degree of refinement.⁵⁹

Other improvements were made to the school property at this time as well, the most significant being a new well. This was bored in November 1902, just prior to work on the schoolhouse getting underway. A substantial number of bricks (500) were delivered the following summer, at least some of which must have been used to construct a chimney on the east wall of the building, but it seems unlikely that all 500 were utilized for this purpose. The excess may have been used for another structure—for example, an underground cistern associated with the new well, since bricks were often used to line such structures. If that is the case, then a windmill which appears in later documentation of the school was probably erected at this time as well.

⁵⁸ "Common School Reports"; and Fuller, *Old Country School*, 169-177.

⁵⁹ Bear Valley School District, "Records."

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(Windmills were commonly used in the area to raise water into a storage tank or cistern.) All construction on the new schoolhouse and surrounding grounds was complete by the end of summer.

In September, a painter by the name of E. Ruple was hired to begin painting the schoolhouse. This work was interrupted, however, by some unspecified difficulty, which may have been caused by shortage of funds to pay Mr. Ruple. (In their October meeting, the school trustees debated "ways and means" to get the painting finished.) Painting of the interior of the schoolhouse was finally completed in February of the following year. An additional, relatively small purchase of lumber was made about the same time and may have been used to construct interior fixtures such as a cabinet or built-in shelves to store the school's extensive library. The outline of a built-in cabinet with decorative cornice molding can still be seen staining the wall at the rear of the schoolhouse. It appears to have been part of the original work but was obviously installed after the interior was painted. One final touch was given to the new schoolhouse when a bell was purchased the following year in June 1905 and installed in the belfry at the west end of the roof. A cord from this bell passed through the ceiling over the teacher's desk, allowing the teacher to summon the children from where she or he sat inside. A small, decorative metal plate is still extant reinforcing the hole in the ceiling through which this cord passed.⁶⁰

With the new schoolhouse completed, and apparently in use by fall of 1903, the old schoolhouse had become surplus to the school district. The trustees accordingly sold the structure at auction that November for \$70.00. The buyers were local ranchers Axel Bourgman and Arthur Hain (Schuyler Hain's brother).⁶¹ What happened to the building at this point is not entirely certain. Grace Robinson believed that it continued to be used for several years longer as a meeting place for Sunday School, presumably on-site, before it was torn down. She remembers that the lumber from the old schoolhouse was salvaged and used to build a small storage shed behind the new schoolhouse. This shed was divided into two bays, with cut firewood stored in one side and school supplies in the other.⁶² The shed is clearly visible in many later photographs, though it was demolished sometime after 1970. If this scenario is correct, Axel Bourgman and Arthur Hain must have sold the salvaged lumber from the original building back to the school district.

Somewhat ironically, the local community had ceased growing even before the new schoolhouse was completed. Many small farmers were leaving the area by the latter half of the 1890s as worsening economic conditions made it difficult for them to survive on limited resources. Drought exacerbated the problem. The county superintendent of schools noted in his annual report for 1899, "We have had two dry years over a large portion of San Benito County, which have reduced our census over 300; several of our small districts have lapsed, and the attendance in others has been correspondingly reduced." This decline continued into the next decade, and class size was at its lowest ever the year the new Bear Valley School opened in 1903, with only eleven students attending.⁶³

The 1903 Schoolhouse As-Built

As it was originally constructed, the 1903 schoolhouse was substantially the same as its present form. The architecture was simplified Greek-revival, with a moderately-pitched front gable roof, wide bands of unadorned trim, and simple drop siding. The one-room, single-story structure measured just over 24 by 43 feet with a full-width front porch extending an additional seven feet from the west end (giving the building an overall depth of just over 51 feet). The porch was an open structure, enclosed only by balustrades capped with

⁶⁰ Bear Valley School District, "Records"; and Robinson, "Family Album." Grace Robinson recalled that the original Bear Valley School bell was stolen sometime around 1914 and was replaced with the La Gloria School bell after that school merged with the Bear Valley district, but this bell has also gone missing and is presumed stolen.

⁶¹ Trustees Minutes, in Bear Valley School District, "Records."

⁶² Robinson, "Family Album," p. 57.

⁶³ J.H. Garner, County Superintendent, in "Common School Reports."

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shaped handrails. Simple, squared columns supported a shallowly-pitched shed roof with no hiping. The deck of the porch was elevated above grade and reached by three steps centered along its front (long) end. Within the porch, two doors placed symmetrically in the front wall of the building provided separate entrances for boys and girls. This was a common feature of many western schoolhouses and was borrowed from vernacular church architecture.⁶⁴ The long walls on the north and south sides of the building each had three double-hung, wood sash windows, evenly-spaced in a symmetrical pattern. These windows reached more than half the height of the walls from floor to ceiling and were designed to let as much natural light into the classroom as possible. The rear wall on the west end of the building had one door offset toward the north side, providing egress out the back. The wood-burning stove that provided heat for the classroom on cold mornings vented through a flue in this wall to a brick chimney on the roof, which was offset a few feet south of the roof peak. The roof itself was wood shingle. An open belfry with gable roof was centered on the roof of the schoolhouse just a few feet short of the front (west) end. The building was painted white with dark green trim.

The Original Interior of the 1903 Schoolhouse

Many details of the interior of the building remain matters of conjecture, since little documentation exists from this period. Like most rural schoolhouses, the interior would have comprised a single, open classroom with no partitions or walls. Although many one-room schoolhouses had closets or anterooms for storing coats, the Bear Valley School originally had neither. The open floorplan allowed the teacher to keep track of all the students without hindrance from physical obstructions. The size of the room was limited by the number of students who might be expected to attend a rural school, which in turn was determined by the distance they had to walk. It was also limited by the range of a teacher's voice and the number of students a single person could reasonably teach, though elder students often assisted the teacher by mentoring the lower grades. These various conditions meant that the typical rural school rarely accommodated more than about 30 students, and usually fewer.

The front of the classroom would have been oriented toward the west, with the children facing the teacher's desk, and behind it the blackboard (probably the same blackboard which is still mounted in the center of this wall). On either side of the blackboard and desk were the two doors through which the students entered. If the routine at Bear Valley School was typical, the children would gather in two lines outside the front of the schoolhouse when the teacher rang the bell calling them to class. In the Bear Valley School, the teacher was able to grasp the bell cord while sitting at the desk, as the cord came directly through the ceiling above.⁶⁵ After being told to enter, the children would file in through separate doors—the girls through one, and the boys through the other—taking their seats inside. Mounted on the wall over the top of these doors were two kerosene lamps.⁶⁶ The holes from the screws attaching these lamps are still clearly visible in the wall paneling above each door. Other kerosene lamps may have hung from the ceiling of the classroom, but this is not known for certain. (Electric lights were installed sometime after 1948 and obscure any trace of possible earlier fixtures.) Even with ceiling lamps, the relatively dim light of the oil flames would have done little to dispel the gloom on

⁶⁴ On this design feature, see Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*, pp. 164 and 172.

⁶⁵ Grace Robinson remembers that a rope ran from the belfry down through the ceiling to the teacher's desk, where the teacher "could reach right up and pull it," thereby ringing the school bell, which was located on the peak of the roof at the west end. [Robinson, "Family Album," p. 58.]

⁶⁶ Grace Butterfield Bacon Robinson, who graduated from the 8th grade in 1918, remembers these kerosene lamps, and described them to her daughter, Martha Bacon Miller. [Martha Bacon Miller, "Bear Valley School's Kerosene Lamp," attachment in Deborah Norman to author, email corr., 28 July 2013.]

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dark winter mornings, a fact which was recalled by Grace Robinson and later commented upon by at least one county inspector.⁶⁷

At the west end of the classroom stood a large, wood-burning stove, which provided heat. As one student remembers, this stove had to be lit early each morning before class began, but it would still take all morning long for the building to become warm, and the children had to remain bundled up. By the afternoon, however, the classroom would be sweltering hot.⁶⁸ School records indicate that another heater, possibly an oil-burning one, was purchased in 1906, so the wood stove may not have been the only source of heat, but regular deliveries of cordwood—approximately one cord per term—indicate that the wood stove remained in constant use over the years.⁶⁹ The wood stove stood in the middle of the floor several feet from the back of the room. Its flue was directed into a boxed casing about six feet up the wall—the casing itself extends from floor to ceiling—and continued from there through the ceiling and attic space to a brick chimney on the roof. A cabinet appears to have been built in the space between this boxed casing and the south wall. The outline of it, including a decorative cornice at the top, can still be seen on the painted surface of the wall, while a gap between the back wall and the original wood flooring, which can still be seen under the modern floor material, marks where the base of this cabinet was anchored into the subflooring. Since Grace Robinson remembers the school's library being at the rear of the classroom, this cabinet may well have been where the books were stored.

The Original Setting of the 1903 Schoolhouse

The school yard was a well-defined space, though it was never a designed landscape in any formal sense. Its most prominent features were already present when the new schoolhouse was built in 1903 or were introduced at that time. Among these was the perimeter fence, which had been constructed in 1895 and is described above. This enclosed the entire yard and defined its boundaries. Oddly, however, the fence does not correspond with the legal boundaries of the parcel actually owned by the school district (and now owned by the National Park Service) but encloses an area nearly twice as large, or approximately three acres. The bulk of this additional land consists of an open field to the north of the schoolhouse. Here the fence runs approximately 225 feet north of the legal boundary and at a slightly oblique angle to it. Bear Creek defines the eastern boundary of the schoolyard, with the fence following the western bank of the drainage. Along the south side of the yard, the fence more-or-less follows the parcel boundary, and on the west side both legal boundary and fenceline follow the county road (Highway 25). The alignment of this road appears to have remained unchanged since it was first improved in 1890, as indicated by the 1895 fenceline that parallels it. Circulation through the yard was along a crescent-shaped track that entered at the southwest corner, where the present gate is located, and exited at the northwest, with the apex of the crescent in front of the schoolhouse itself. (This simple pattern was clearly-established by 1939, when it can be seen in the earliest aerial photographs available, and probably dates back to 1895 or earlier.) At least one other circulation pattern is suggested by the presence of a stile built into the northeast side of the perimeter fence along Bear Creek. It shows where pedestrian traffic regularly entered the schoolyard from the east. Although the stile is constructed of relatively modern lumber, it may reflect a much older point-of-crossing, since the road which once led from Bear Valley to the town of San Benito lay in this direction.

Other features which would have contributed to the setting of the Bear Valley School in 1903 included outhouses, a storage shed to the rear of the schoolhouse, and the well with associated structures. The outhouses were simple wooden structures with gabled roofs which enclosed a vault (open pit) toilet. There would have

⁶⁷ Martha Bacon Miller, in *ibid.*; and Vincent Claypool, quoted in Schreder, *Master Plan*, p. 73.

⁶⁸ Norman, "Notes," 27 July 2013.

⁶⁹ Bear Valley School District, "Records."

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been two of these structures located in the field north of the schoolhouse. (One of them can be seen in the background of a photograph from about 1910.) The storage shed stood several feet behind the schoolhouse off its southeast corner. It comprised two bays, with separate doors on its west side, and was used for storing cordwood and school supplies. The well was newly-improved in 1903 and now probably included a windmill. A hand pump allowed water to be drawn from a pipe for washing, and a tin cup was kept nearby for drinking. Grace Robinson remembered this arrangement from about a decade later, describing in her family album "...the old hand pump with a pipe going out to where the cold water flowed out, where you put your head down and drank as some one pumped for you or you used the tin cup hanging there and washed your hands and face if need be." Some sort of structure may also have existed to shelter the wash area, though this is mentioned only once in a record from 1895 and never repeated, so it may have been ephemeral. Of all these structures, only the well remains, though an electric pump has replaced the windmill and hand lever from 1903.⁷⁰

Natural features were probably the most important character-defining elements of this setting in 1903 (and remain so today). These included the open fields to the north and south of the schoolhouse, the large valley oaks which shade the building, and Bear Creek which runs behind it. Most of these elements have remained largely unchanged over the years, although the vegetation along Bear Creek has grown denser and taller. Photographs from the early twentieth century show that it was possible to see the hills bordering Bear Valley to the east from the schoolyard, a sightline which has been obscured by coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) that have grown up subsequently along the creek channel.

Later Developments and Modifications of the 1903 Schoolhouse

During Horace Bacon's tenure, the schoolhouse appears to have experienced few if any significant changes. Not long after Horace Bacon retired, however, the interior plan of the classroom was modified to accommodate high school students in addition to the usual grade-schoolers. Grace Robinson, who attended two years of high school at Bear Valley following her graduation from the eighth grade in 1918, remembered that the classroom was partitioned down the middle, with the grade-schoolers occupying one side and the high-schoolers the other. Another teacher with the appropriate certification was brought in to instruct the high school students. Grace Robinson never described this partition, but it was unlikely to have been a permanent structure, and may have consisted only of a physical separation between the two groups.⁷¹

Other more substantial changes were necessitated by this division of classroom functions. A separate blackboard had to be installed for the high school students. This was placed on the north wall toward the front of the building (the west end). In order to accommodate this large structure—which actually consisted of two blackboards mounted end-to-end—two of the three large double-hung windows on the north wall were removed and transferred to the south wall, where they were installed in the space between the existing three windows. The south wall now had its present configuration of five double-hung windows, while the north wall had only one (at the east end), though two small awning windows were installed at the top of the original window openings, while the remainder of the space was filled in with exterior wall siding. Grace Robinson recalled that the grade school section of the classroom was well-lit, being near the wall with the windows. This would have placed the grade-schoolers on the south side of the room. The high school section, on the other hand, was dark since it was located on the north side of the room where few windows now remained.

These modifications were made sometime after 1915, as a photograph from about that year shows the original window configuration still present.⁷² The new configuration would likely have been in place by the

⁷⁰ Robinson, "Family Album."

⁷¹ Martha Bacon Miller, "Bear Valley School's Kerosene Lamp," attachment in Deborah Norman to author, email corr., 28 July 2013.

⁷² Photograph from private collection of Jane Lausten.

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time Grace Robinson attended high school at Bear Valley, which was sometime after her graduation from grammar school in 1918 though before her marriage to Clarence Bacon (Horace Bacon's son) in December 1921. However, county financial records indicate that a professional carpenter (W.S. Wier) was hired to do work on the Bear Valley School in the fall of 1921. (Wier was paid on 17 October.) Local resident Viggo Petersen was also hired at that time to do labor.⁷³ This suggests that the work may actually have been done during Grace Robinson's final term in high school just before she left. The only other construction that is indicated in these records during this time period occurred in the winter of 1916, when a substantial quantity of lumber and nails was purchased for installation of a "waterless closet." This mysterious entry most likely refers to the construction of new toilets (i.e., water closets). If these were truly waterless, then they may simply have been new vault-style outhouses to replace the existing ones, but it is also possible that flush toilets were installed at this time. They were present fifteen years later.

Another important change was made to the schoolhouse toward the end of the 1920s when the front porch was substantially rebuilt. This work was done in order to construct two coat rooms—known to the students as anterooms—one for boys and one for girls. These were used to store the children's outdoor apparel while they were in class. Each anteroom was accessed through a door leading in from the porch and had a single, small window on the exterior wall opposite the entrance to provide light and ventilation. The rest of the porch was open, but the original balustrades were replaced with a solid half-wall that was sheathed in wood siding similar to the exterior siding used on the rest of the building. Simple four-by-four posts, rather than the original boxed pillars, supported the porch roof, which was now hipped at the north and south ends. (The original roof had had a simple shed configuration.) The new design was introduced because the anterooms extended beyond the existing footprint of the porch and required widening it by an additional two feet on either end. Since the porch was now larger than the main building, the outermost rafters of the porch roof had to be anchored to the front wall of the schoolhouse at an oblique angle. The two ends of the new roof were hipped at these rafters. The result was a more complex and visually elegant structure, but the underlying reasons for this change were utilitarian.

The extent of this reconstruction suggests that nearly all of the porch was replaced, though some of the original material may have been retained or was salvaged and reused. The only part of the original porch which appears to have remained unaffected was the deck. Although extensions were added to either end in order to support the new anterooms, no further modifications were made to the deck. Once the new porch was completed, however, the deck would appear only slightly elevated above grade (approximately one foot—the height of a single riser—instead of approximately three feet as before). This eliminated the need for all but one step at the front entrance and resulted in closure of the crawl space which had previously been accessible beneath the porch. Since there is no evidence that the deck has been lowered relative to the rest of the building, this apparent change in elevation must have been produced by raising the surrounding grade with dirt infill. Landscaping features such as decorative boulders and foundation plantings which appear in photographs as early as 1942 support this interpretation.⁷⁴

The most likely date for the construction of the porch anterooms is September 1928, when district financial records indicate a payment made to James Giacomazzi for carpentry work. Lumber for the project had been purchased a few months earlier in June. (Shades were installed at the same time on the large schoolhouse windows.)⁷⁵ This date is supported by other contextual evidence. A photo dating from 1923 shows that the anterooms had not yet been constructed, while local resident Stan Schmidt remembers seeing them when he

⁷³ San Benito County Dept. of Education, "Register of School Warrants," Vol. 5, San Benito County Historical Society, Hollister, CA.

⁷⁴ Photographs from private collection of Bernice D'Arcy.

⁷⁵ San Benito County, "Register of School Warrants," Vol. 5.

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began attending school in 1931. Stan Schmidt also remembers toilets with running water which were located in separate buildings to the rear of the schoolhouse, just north of the shed.⁷⁶ Each of these structures was approximately seven feet wide by five feet deep and contained a single flushable toilet. The girls toilet stood to the south, while the boys was to the north. A wooden, lattice-type fence was erected in front of these buildings and acted as a screen to shelter their entrances. An inspector who visited the Bear Valley School in 1949 also observed these toilets, which he described as, "two old redwood outhouses standing side by side at the back of the school ... separated and screened by lattice work."⁷⁷ Exactly when these flush toilets were installed is not known for certain, but it was after 1910, when one of the older vault toilet outhouses can still be seen in the background of a photograph taken that year.

World War II and Subsequent Changes

World War II would dramatically change life for the agricultural community of Bear Valley. The most immediate effects were posed by the war itself, but far greater were the social and economic changes left in its aftermath, which would eventually result in the closure of Bear Valley School. Following America's entry into the war on 7 December 1941, Governor Culbert Olson authorized the formation of a volunteer state militia for civil defense. Among those he encouraged to join were California's rural inhabitants who possessed rifles and shotguns of their own and were skilled in using them. Volunteers between the ages of 16 and 65 were recruited through the Agricultural Extension Service of the University of California. They would serve within their home counties, which they would defend in the event of an attack. Volunteers from southern San Benito County were organized as Company B under the command of Horace Bacon's son Clarence, and trained—appropriately enough—in the Bear Valley schoolyard, as well as on nearby ranches.⁷⁸ During regular hours of attendance, the children at Bear Valley School transformed part of the schoolyard into a victory garden to grow vegetables for the war effort.⁷⁹ These activities were typical of rural schools throughout the state during the early years of the war. After the war, the school-age population in many rural districts such as Bear Valley would continue to fall. Although the war itself was a major factor in this trend, it only accelerated a fundamentally economic process that had been going on for nearly five decades. The war had brought new jobs to most urban areas, encouraging movement of the population throughout the United States from country to city. This demographic shift was driven simultaneously by declining opportunities for the independent small farmer in rural districts as agriculture became more heavily capitalized and increasingly competitive. This was especially true in California where the emphasis had already shifted to intensively-grown, irrigated crops.⁸⁰ Remote, mountainous areas like Bear Valley, which had once supported numerous homesteads, witnessed the diverse economy of the small farmer gradually transformed to the simplified economy of the cattle rancher. Since the latter required extensive acreage to maintain a profitable herd, especially in this semi-arid environment, the land supported far fewer people than before. Within five years of the war's end, there were not enough children left in Bear Valley to justify an independent school district, and the Bear Valley School was closed in 1950 after seventy-six years of operation (and almost fifty years in the present building). Loretta Bowman was the teacher that term. She dismissed her class, the last class to attend school here, in June of that year. Although the Bear Valley School District remained in existence for another year, this was simply a formality until the district trustees had

⁷⁶ Rick Schmidt to Deborah Norman, email corr., 8 August 2007, in Norman to author, email corr., 27 July 2013.; Stan Schmidt to author, email corr., 3 September 2013. Stan Schmidt also remembers that there was a path that ran between the storage shed and the two bathrooms, crossing the wire perimeter fence by means of a stile. The children used this path to get down to the creek.

⁷⁷ Vincent Claypool, quoted in Schreder, *Master Plan*, p. 73.

⁷⁸ Deborah Norman to author, email corr., 28 July 2013; and photograph from private collection of Stanley Schmidt.

⁷⁹ Photographs from private collection of Bernice D'Arcy.

⁸⁰ USDO, *Bacon Ranch Historic District*.

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completed their terms of office.⁸¹ The Bear Valley School District was then absorbed into the Jefferson School District further south, and children from Bear Valley travelled to Jefferson School in the old township of San Benito. (The town itself no longer existed.) Eventually, a multi-room consolidated school would be built there and the old one-room Jefferson School was closed as well.

The same year that Bear Valley School closed, the California Department of Education commissioned watercolor artist Rachel Bentley to paint a series representing all of California's schools. By the end of the following year, she had completed one hundred and ten works depicting mostly rural schoolhouses from San Luis Obispo north to the Oregon border. One of these was the Bear Valley School.⁸² The Bentley watercolor is an important visual record of the Bear Valley School at the end of its period of significance. Except for the new porch and reconfiguration of its windows, the building had changed relatively little since its original construction in 1903. The shingle roof has been covered with corrugated metal panels, but the brick chimney is still present. So, too, is the bell, located within the small belfry at the front end of the roof. (This is the bell that was recovered from the La Gloria School after the original Bear Valley bell was stolen in 1914. It has subsequently been lost as well.)

The Bentley watercolor also provides valuable information about associated structures and the surrounding landscape. The storage shed is clearly visible to the rear of the schoolhouse. It has two doors in its west side, facing the rear of the school. These are consistent with Grace Robinson's observation that the structure consisted of two bays, each of which was accessed separately. The windmill is visible over the roof of the schoolhouse from its location above the well just north of the building. Electrical power had reached Bear Valley only two years earlier in 1948, and the new pump may not yet have been installed. This also suggests that the original kerosene lamps may still have been in-use inside the schoolhouse, though the present ceiling globes were probably installed about this time or shortly afterwards. The immediate landscape is dominated by the large valley oaks that still overshadow the schoolhouse today. However, the vegetation along Bear Creek behind the school is noticeably sparser and more open, making it possible to see the hills on the east side of Bear Valley and the distant Diablo Range beyond. This is consistent with the view shown in photographs from thirty years earlier but contrasts with the more restricted view of today. This image provides a valuable baseline for potential future preservation, facilitating the identification of changes that occurred after the period of significance.

The Movement for Consolidation

Although Bear Valley School District lapsed in 1950 as a direct result of declining attendance, it was also, indirectly, the result of a broader, nation-wide movement to consolidate rural schools, and in some instances to eliminate local districts altogether. Interest in consolidation dates to the turn of the century, but in California it did not become a pressing issue until immediately after World War II, when demographic changes exacerbated already-existing inequities in the apportionment of financial resources between urban and rural districts.⁸³ The first formal efforts toward consolidation began in 1944, when Governor Earl Warren called a special session of the legislature to consider aid to schools. Among the outcomes of this session was hiring consultant George D. Strayer to study the problem in greater depth. The Strayer Survey recommended a program to equalize state funds for all elementary education (leading to the Fair Equalization Law of 1945) but also reorganization of schools into consolidated or unified districts to improve fiscal efficiency.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Stanley Schmidt to Deborah Norman, email corr., 18 August 2007, in Norman, "Notes," 27 July 2013.

⁸² Original painting owned by San Benito County.

⁸³ Fuller, *Old Country School*, pp. 228ff; and Robert L. Leight and Alice D. Rinehart, "Revisiting Americana: One-Room School in Retrospect," *Educational Forum* 56.2 (1993): 133-151.

⁸⁴ Falk, *Education in California*, pp. 117-118.

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Reorganization was resisted by many local districts and would move forward only haltingly in the subsequent decades. One contemporary advocate of consolidation observed that "many rural communities have clung to a one-room or small school with all of its disadvantages rather than consolidate and lose some local control. They do so in the name of democracy. There are state administrators and legislators, however, who would say that this is an interpretation of democracy that we can no longer afford."⁸⁵ Historian Wayne Fuller offered a more sympathetic interpretation of local resistance to consolidation several decades later, after the initial enthusiasm for the process had long-since peaked. Although Fuller was writing about the rural Midwest, his analysis applies equally well to rural California,

[The professional educators believed] that the farmers were plainly unreasonable to want to save their homely little schoolhouse when they could have a beautiful consolidated building with many rooms and an abundant supply of school apparatus. And perhaps they were. But the educators rarely seemed to understand that abandoning a one-room schoolhouse that had been standing in the countryside for half a century or more was much different from rearranging urban schools. To close a country school was to destroy an institution that held the little rural community together. It was to wipe out the one building the people of the district had in common and, in fact, to destroy the community, which, in those years, so many were trying to save and strengthen. Even more important, as far as the farmers were concerned, the destruction of their school meant that their power to set the length of the school terms, to employ their teacher, and to determine how much they would spend for education would be taken from them and given to some board far removed from their community and their control.⁸⁶

Fuller recognized that there was more at stake than simple efficiency and the fair apportionment of state funds. While a legitimate concern, the argument for fiscal responsibility, in Fuller's opinion, was often used as an excuse for the transference of local authority to the state and the undermining of regional identity in many rural communities.

Responding to encouragement from the state during the post-war years, members of the San Benito County government attempted to unify all of the local school districts within a single, county-wide system. These efforts, however, were rejected by local trustees. In response to this reversal, the county assembled a committee in 1949 in cooperation with neighboring Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties to report on the condition of the district schools. Consultant Vincent Claypool, who was hired by the tri-county committee, presented a largely negative assessment. For example, Claypool described Bear Valley School as "a dismal, dark schoolhouse in a beautiful setting," (though Claypool also noted that "the schoolhouse was kept neat and clean by the teacher").⁸⁷ County superintendent William Cagney disputed this critical assessment as undeserved, arguing that many schools were just getting back on their feet after the challenges of war-time austerity. Cagney also observed that many people in San Benito County resented the tri-county committee because it invited outside authorities to make decisions affecting local interests. Having already rejected the principle of county-wide unification, they now suspected a conspiracy to push the idea forward in spite of popular will.⁸⁸

In 1966, the voters of San Benito County finally rejected unification by a decisive two-to-one majority. Although this brought an end to the movement for county-wide unification and more-or-less preserved the district model, individual districts continued to be consolidated as an inevitable result of declining rural

⁸⁵ Falk, *Education in California*, p. 80

⁸⁶ Fuller, *Old Country School*, pp. 234-235

⁸⁷ Quoted in Schreder, *Master Plan*, p. 73

⁸⁸ Schreder, *Master Plan*, pp. 17-19.

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attendance and the ability to bus students to a central location. The consolidation of Bear Valley and other neighboring one-room schools into the Jefferson School District was only one of many examples which were repeated over the next few decades throughout the county. Eventually only eleven districts would remain (many of them classified as union or unified districts).⁸⁹

Bear Valley Hall (1950-2002)

Although Bear Valley School closed its doors to students in 1950, the building itself remained open and continued to serve a vital purpose for local residents of Bear Valley as a community hall. The property was officially owned by the Jefferson School District, but caretaker responsibilities were assumed by the county Farm Bureau, which used the building for meetings and other events. Other organizations, such as the local 4-H chapter and Home Department, the women's branch of the Farm Bureau, also held meetings here. These activities were a continuation of existing practice, since the schoolhouse had always been used by the community for a variety of non-scholastic purposes. Mostly these had been informal events, ranging from a celebration for recently-graduated students, to an evening of festivities for the entire community. For example, the local newspaper described a typical holiday party held at the original Bear Valley School on 6 January 1899, "An entertainment and supper was given at the school house on Friday evening before Christmas. The literary programme consisted of songs, recitations, and the farce 'Hans Von Smash.' Refreshments included coffee and cake."⁹⁰ Some residents recall that the school was occasionally used for Methodist church meetings or Sunday school classes.⁹¹

After the school's closure, Home Department became one of the most prominent users of the schoolhouse (now referred to as Bear Valley Hall). Not only did members use the building for regular monthly meetings, which were almost always well-attended, they also organized community social gatherings here such as evening card parties and holiday entertainments. The card parties were often held to raise money for charities or to provide for some local need in the community. (The usual game was a local favorite known as Pedro.) The monthly Home Department meetings were important social events in their own right, providing both educational opportunities and entertainment, as well as a means for community members to stay in touch with one another. The typical meeting featured a formal presentation by a guest lecturer or by one of the members who might have an interesting story or useful information to share. This could be anything from a new cooking recipe or method for canning to a slide show from a recent trip abroad. Meetings were always held near lunchtime and included a potluck meal, either before or after the official business was conducted. As an indication of the value these events held for the community, the minutes were often summarized in the local newspaper. One example, which gives a fair idea of the typical meeting, reads as follows,

The regular meeting of the San Benito Farm Bureau women was called to order by chairman Dorothy Bacon following a pot luck luncheon and demonstration on fitting and altering ready-made clothing by Edna Langseth. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read. A motion was made by Carla Shields, seconded by Eleanor Smith to buy stainless silverware for the hall. Betty Larson was appointed to see about buying two services for eight with double teaspoons not to exceed twenty dollars. Clara Lou Melendy was appointed to assist her. Dorothy Bacon announced we would have our Polio Card Party the 24th of January at Jefferson. A raffle on a bond will be held also at that time. Each member will be assessed 75cents to a dollar to buy the bond. Edith Schmidt will attend the Bitterwater meeting with Edna Langseth to extend an

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Norman, "Notes," 27 July 2013.

⁹¹ Lou Ellen Zgragen, undated correspondence; and Robinson, "Family Album."

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invitation to meet with us at our next meeting. Dorothy Bacon, Betty Larson, & Carla Shields will be hostesses at our next meeting to be held at 1:00 PM with dessert at the start. Clara Lou Melendy and Eleanore Smith will be hostesses at the Card Party on March 7th. Carla Shields and Eleanore Smith will be project leaders for our March meeting on Protein Cookery. Edith Schmidt reported that an Annual Leadership Conference is to be held at Asilomar the 22nd to 25th of February. Anyone desiring to attend should contact her. The meeting was adjourned to Edna Langseth who showed "aids for the home server."⁹²

Although much of the formal business conducted by the Home Department seemed mundane, it was hardly trivial. For example, the task of purchasing silverware reveals an essential role the organization played in keeping the schoolhouse properly outfitted to serve its new function as a community hall. Home Department members also kept the building clean and made sure everything was in order, often volunteering extra hours to do so. In this, they helped continue the old tradition of maintaining the school with locally-invested time and labor, a practice which had always reinforced the community's commitment to the building.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Changes Postdating the Period of Significance

A number of changes occurred shortly after the Farm Bureau began managing the Bear Valley School. One of the first of these was installation of an oil-burning heater to replace the original wood-burning pot-bellied stove.⁹³ The new heater had fans, and the venting pipe would become red hot when it was in use. Evidence of this excessive heat can still be seen in the blistered condition of the paint on the boxed casing on the back wall of the room just below the aperture where the original flue pipe entered the chimney. This problem was remedied by redirecting the flue straight up through the ceiling and out the roof rather than back to the chimney by means of an elbow. The new flue consisted entirely of metal pipe, and a new hole had to be cut into the roof to accommodate it a few feet west of the original chimney. The exterior masonry was subsequently removed and the original chimney passage blocked off at either end.⁹⁴

A more significant modification occurred with the installation of flush toilets in the porch anterooms. This was done in March 1956 by local residents Jef Schmidt, Walter Melendy, and Horace Bacon (grandson of the teacher Horace Bacon).⁹⁵ Over the next few years, substantial changes were made to the interior of the classroom as well in order to keep it up-to-date and accommodate its new function as a community meeting hall. During the early 1960s, the building was rewired and cabinets were installed along the back wall and northwest corner. Any original cabinetry and furniture, such as the built-in library shelves, were removed at this time or disappeared. Only the blackboards remained. The rear of the room was subsequently used as a kitchen where

⁹² Newspaper clipping from 5 Jan. 1959, pasted in Bear Valley Home Department, "Records, 1954-1992," San Benito County Historical Society, Hollister, CA.

⁹³ Local rancher Clara Lou Melendy believes this was done by the Farm Bureau during the late 1940s, before the school closed. [Clara Lou Melendy to Deborah Norman, tel. conv. (written notes), Sept. 2007, in Norman to author, email corr., 27 July 2013.] However, Clara Lou's memory has not always proven reliable on dates, and the 1950 Bentley painting shows the original masonry chimney still in place rather than the metal flue that was later installed to vent the oil heater. On the other hand, the painting also shows two metal drums outside the south windows that may have contained oil for the new heater.

⁹⁴ Clara Lou Melendy, *ibid.* Melendy remembered this problem resulting from overheating of the flue, but was confused about what was done in response. She recalled that the original vent went directly up through the attic space and subsequently was redirected out the wall of the building. This is nearly the reverse of what actually happened, based on physical evidence from the building itself.

⁹⁵ Stan Schmidt to Deborah Norman, email corr., 8 August 2007, in Norman, "Notes," 27 July 2013; Sarah Waters Schmidt Diary, in Kathy Schmidt Spencer to Deborah Norman, email corr., 15 August 2007, in Norman, "Notes," 27 July 2013; and Norman to author, email corr., 13 August 2013.

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simple meals could be prepared when people met for meetings or evening card games. Presumably, the appliances and sink were installed at this time as well. Modern flooring material was also put down over the original hardwood floor during this decade.⁹⁶

Although the Bear Valley School continued to be used regularly for community meetings and other events, it was now vacant most of the time. Local residents maintained the building on a voluntary basis, and one neighbor acted as caretaker, keeping the building locked when it was not in use. Vandalism, however, became a persistent problem. The schoolhouse was broken into on several occasions, and articles of value were stolen, including the school bell. On at least one occasion, a passerby shot the lock off the bathroom door in order to gain access to the toilet inside.⁹⁷ In response to these intrusions, local residents Jef Schmidt, Walter Melendy, and Horace Bacon enclosed the entire front porch in wire screen mounted on reinforced wood framing. They narrowed the porch entryway by erecting two additional posts and extending the half-wall in order to accommodate a door. This allowed the porch to be secured and locked. They also installed a heavier gate on the entrance lane. These modifications were made in about 1966. Not long afterwards, the shed out back was demolished by volunteers during a community clean-up day in the late 1960s or early 1970s.⁹⁸

These were the last substantial modifications made to the building up to the present time. Over the next three decades the Bear Valley School continued to serve as a community center for local residents (who often referred to it now as Bear Valley Hall). Regular maintenance kept the building in stable condition, though some deterioration was inevitable. The most noteworthy and serious damage was caused by acorn woodpeckers excavating holes in the exterior walls, especially on the corner boards and window trim. In 2002, the Jefferson School District, which still owned the Bear Valley School, shuttered the building as an insurance liability.⁹⁹ The building ceased to be used for any other purpose except storage. The old school remained significant to many local residents, however, and efforts were made to transfer it to private ownership with the intent of preserving the property. When these efforts failed, the National Park Service, through the superintendent of Pinnacles National Monument, became party to negotiations over the future disposition of the school. In 2010, a minor boundary adjustment was made, giving the monument the authority to acquire the property.¹⁰⁰ On 17 November 2011, the National Park Trust, Inc. purchased the Bear Valley School for \$150,000.00. Four days later, ownership was conveyed to the National Park Service for the same amount. As of 21 November 2011, the Bear Valley School and lands representing the original school parcel of 1.5 acres, became part of Pinnacles National Monument (now Pinnacles National Park).¹⁰¹

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⁹⁶ Clara Lou Melendy to Deborah Norman, tel. conv., Sept. 2007. According to Melendy, the cabinetry and electrical work were done by Jef Schmidt, while the linoleum floor was laid by Tommy Williams. Horace Bacon, Ken Lausten, and Walter Melendy (Clara Lou's husband), helped out with the labor.

⁹⁷ Clara Lou Melendy to Deborah Norman, tel. conv., Sept. 2007.

⁹⁸ Photographs in private collection of Jane Lausten.

⁹⁹ Joel Turner, "A Bearish End," *The Weekend Pinnacle*, 25 December 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Dept. of the Interior, "Minor Boundary Revision of Pinnacles National Monument," *Federal Register* 75.41 (3 March 2010): 9612.

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Tinkham, George H. "The Story of San Benito County." In *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties*, edited by J.M. Guinn. Chicago: The Chapman Publishing Co., 1910.

United States Dept. of the Interior, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, Pinnacles National Monument* (Oakland, CA: National Park Service, Pacific West Regional Office, 2009).

Works Progress Administration. *Inventory of the County Archives of California: San Benito County*. San Francisco, CA: The Northern California Historical Records Survey Project, 1940.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: San Benito County Historical Society
San Benito County Recorder's Office

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.5
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

(Follow similar guidelines for entering the lat/long coordinates as describe on page 55, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* for entering UTM references. For properties less than 10 acres, enter the lat/long coordinates for a point corresponding to the center of the property. For properties of 10 or more acres, enter three or more points that correspond to the vertices of a polygon drawn on the map. The polygon should approximately encompass the area to be registered. Add additional points below, if necessary.)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 36.534068 Longitude: -121.147075

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Bear Valley School
Name of Property

San Benito, California
County and State

1	<u>10N</u> Zone	<u>4044774</u> Easting	<u>665871</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

That portion of said land situated in the unincorporated area of the County of San Benito, State of California, and described as follows:

Bounded and located near the southwest corner and on the west side of the southwest lot (or 4) of Section 18, Township 16 South, Range 8 East, Mount Diablo Meridian, being the lot or parcel of land now occupied by the Bear Valley Public School District House lying between the Bear Valley Creek on the east and the hill on the west and as it is now fenced or partly fenced being about one and a half (1 1/2) acres of land, as described in and conveyed by deed to Bear Valley Public School District from Dr. A.W. Powers, dated June 9, 1885 and recorded October 9, 1886, in Vol. 8 of Deeds, at Page 509, San Benito County Records.

Excepting therefrom that portion of said land as conveyed to David Del Daniel and Bonnie Lynn Daniel by Grant Deed recorded April 30, 1986 Series #86-02779 of San Benito County Records.

Also excepting therefrom that portion of said land if any that may or may not lie within Parcel 1 as described in that certain Lot Line Adjustment recorded October 27, 2005, Series #0019337 of San Benito County Records.

APN: 028-130-018

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary includes the original lot historically deeded to the school district in 1885 for use by the Bear Valley School. The entire lot, as here described, is now owned by the National Park Service and will be managed for its historic significance by Pinnacles National Park. This lot includes the Bear Valley Schoolhouse itself and most of the historic setting associated with it.

Although the Bear Valley School also used an area of 1.5 acres to the north of the school grounds as part of its extended schoolyard, this nomination is for the original lot as deeded to the Bear Valley School District in 1885 and as depicted on the sketch map. The additional property was never actually owned by the school district. While the setting is somewhat compromised by the boundary, enough of the historic setting is included in this nomination to provide a sense of the character of the place in which the property played its historical role.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy Babalis, Historian
organization National Park Service date September 24, 2013
street & number 612 E. Reserve St. telephone (360) 816-6206

Bear Valley School
Name of Property

San Benito, California
County and State

city or town Vancouver state WA zip code 98661

e-mail timothy_babalis@nps.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** Latitude/Longitude Reference Point Map in place of USGS map.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Latitude/Longitude Reference Point Map



Latitude: 36.534068

Longitude: -121.147075

Bear Valley School
Name of Property

San Benito, California
County and State

Sketch Map



Property boundary outlined in bold.

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Photo 1 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: View from southwest showing schoolhouse and surrounding valley oaks. Bear Creek flows to rear of building within dense vegetation.

Photo 2 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Bear Valley School

San Benito, California

Name of Property

County and State

Photo 3 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: View of south elevation with row of five double-hung windows.

Photo 4 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: View of east elevation from oblique (southeast) angle.

Photo 5 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: View of east elevation showing detail of rear door and concrete porch.

Photo 6 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: View of north elevation showing single double-hung window and two awning windows. Patched exterior siding is visible below the latter where original double-hung windows were removed. Note woodpecker damage, especially on window trim.

Photo 7 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: Detail of belfry from northwest angle before removal for emergency stabilization.

Photo 8 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: View inside enclosed porch looking north. Note worn green paint still present on porch deck. This appears to be original color used on trim.

Photo 9 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

Bear Valley School
Name of Property

San Benito, California
County and State

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: Interior of schoolhouse facing east toward the rear of the building. Cabinetry, kitchen appliances, and linoleum flooring were added during the 1960s. Original boxed-over chimney flue visible behind present oil-burning heater.

Photo 10 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Elizabeth Pidgeon

Date Photographed: January 31, 2012

Description of Photograph: Interior of schoolhouse facing west toward the front of the building. Both of the original entrance doors still present, though the southern one has been boarded over. Kerosene lamps were mounted to the wall above each door, while the teacher's desk sat in front of the centrally-mounted blackboard. A cord from the bell passed through a plate in the ceiling directly overhead. This plate is still present though not visible in this photograph.

Photo 11 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Timothy Babalis

Date Photographed: August 14, 2013

Description of Photograph: View of schoolhouse interior facing northwest showing double-length blackboard installed ca. 1921 to accommodate high school students. Two awning windows replaced original double-hung windows to make room for these blackboards.

Photo 12 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Timothy Babalis

Date Photographed: August 14, 2013

Description of Photograph: Segment of wood and wire perimeter fence constructed in 1895.

Photo 13 of 13.

Name of Property: Bear Valley School

City or Vicinity: East side of Highway 25 approx. 16 miles south of Paicines

County: San Benito **State:** California

Photographer: Timothy Babalis

Date Photographed: August 14, 2013

Description of Photograph: Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) planted in 1923 in honor of teacher Horace Bacon. Tree stands within simple wooden enclosure approximately 100' north of schoolhouse.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name National Park Service, Pinnacles National Park
street & number 5000 Hwy 146 telephone (831) 389-4486
city or town Paicines state CA zip code 95043

Bear Valley School
Name of Property

San Benito, California
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





BEAR VALLEY

















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