

The History of Our School District: A Digital Collection

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Introduction

Situated in California's Sierra, the rural township of Fresno Flats was founded in the 1860's and later became known as Oakhurst in 1912 (Fresno Flats, n.d.). The area has been servicing elementary and middle school students since the founding of its first school in 1868 (Madera County Historical Society, n.d.). Today the greater Oakhurst area is home to two school districts, Bass Lake and Yosemite Unified, home to seven schools servicing rural students from kindergarten to the twelfth grade.

In 2021, as the schools reopened from Covid closures, I was hired to replace the sole Instructional Library Technician for Oakhurst Elementary School. When I first arrived at Oakhurst Elementary School Library, I uncovered stacks of old documents that were loosely and haphazardly stored in a cupboard behind the former library tech's desk. At quick glance it appeared all documents pertained to the history of the local area or the school and were collected by a librarian decades ago. I delicately boxed these items and stored them elsewhere until I could find the time to begin assessing the contents, analyze their archival value and determine their preservation and future fate. Now, assigned with the task of considering the digitization of items in my workplace, there is no better time to dust off the boxes, assess its content, their digitization needs, and all items' final resting places.

Copyright & Selection

Before items underwent selection, copyright of the collection was evaluated and determined that Oakhurst Elementary School and the greater school district did not hold the copyright to most of the items in the collection. According to the best practices outlined in NINCH, "if this investigation shows that the institution does not itself hold the copyright in the

material, then the institution has three options: (a) abandon plans to digitize the material, (b) secure permission to digitize the material; or, (c) proceed with the project anyway under one of the exemptions to the exclusive rights of the copyright owner found in U.S. copyright law, such as the fair use exemption, but on the understanding that this involves an assessment of the risks of doing so (University of Glasgow, 2003). Options B & C were determined feasible for all items in the collection and after selection occurs permissions will be sought as the authors of many of the items are local members of the small rural community making the permissions process less difficult than other collections. Newspaper clippings will be shared under terms of Fair Use (17 U.S. Code § 107).

Closer analysis of the collection for selection, which included an assessment of the “physical objects, their condition, characteristics, and educational, cultural, historical, and aesthetic value,” unveiled a potpourri of documents in various states of degradation with a wide range of intellectual and historical value (Ross, 1999). Amongst these documents were decades old student generated essays related to the history of the area, newspaper clippings related to both the history of the area and the school district, school board agendas, school related publications, yearbooks, letters, and photographs. The most compelling and relevant items that seemed to justify utilizing limited school resources to create a digitized collection were those items pertaining to the history of the school and the school district. This limited the scope for the digital archive to these items and helped define the digital collections users as teachers, students, administrators as well as people interested in local history dating from its Gold Rush era to today related to our schools. The following criteria was developed for selection of the items for the digital collection:

- All item formats will be considered- i.e. student essays, photographs, school generated documents, newspaper clippings, etc.
- Is it relevant to its intended user community (teachers, students, administrators, researchers)?
- Is the information accurate?
- Does it improve access to the user community by digitizing it?
- Is the item fragile or deteriorating? Could it suffer irreversible damage by the handling of elementary school aged students?
- Does the item contain intellectual value? I.e. Does the item contain history about the local area and its schools either during the town's tenure as Fresno Flats or its current name, Oakhurst? Or is it authored by a notable student, or about a notable student's family?
- Will it withstand the test of time? I.e. will the information remain relevant to the identified user community?

For all remaining items, because some are compelling in historical and intellectual value to Oakhurst and the greater mountain area but do not pertain to the area's schools, will be donated to Fresno Flats Historical Archive where their user community would benefit greatly from the donation and the capacity to store the physical objects properly is far greater than the school district can provide.

Preservation & Technical Production

Due to lack of budget, only resources available to Library Instructional Technicians are those already in-house. Work on the collection will be done during the Library Tech's hours when students are not present and other library duties have been fulfilled. In-house technology

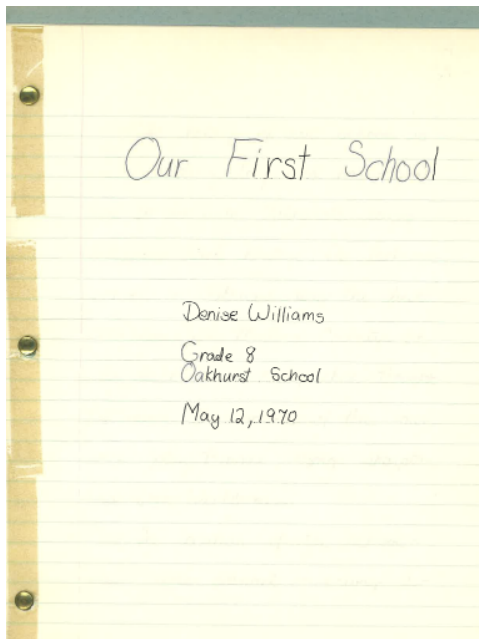
will be utilized to create the digital collection and existing supplies in the possession of the school will be utilized to preserve the collection.

To create the digital collections items will be scanned on the existing scanners located on the OES campus. The image resolution, bit depth and standards will be limited to technology already in the school's possession. At present the school has a Canon ImageRunner Advanced 6555i. This scanner has the capacity to scan at 300dpi, 8-bit depth, RGB and 600 dpi in greyscale. Both PDF and jpeg files can be delivered in these resolutions. Unfortunately, there are limitations to the scanning size of the documents- legal and letter. All selected items will be scanned and delivered electronically to the Library Tech's computer. Items containing text will be scanned two ways- if their text is difficult to read after the initial scan that captures the entirety of the record, a second round of scanning will happen to ensure all text in the record is readable that is relevant to the collection.

Since the nature of the collection is predominantly paper, preservation guidelines for paper material outlined by the National Archives will be followed to ensure the best possible physical storage of the items at the OES library. All news clippings will lie flat, in a firm box, stored in their own see-thru vinyl notebooks pouches (National Archives, 2017). All other papers will be stored in a similar fashion, individually. They will be placed in a cupboard inside of the library where year-round humidity and temperature does range closely to the preferred archival storage techniques for paper. For most of the year, items will be stored at 40% to 50% humidity and temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees (National Archives, 2023). Summer poses the biggest threat as temperatures may occasionally exceed 70 degrees as maintenance sets air conditioners at 78°. For this reason, photocopies of all important text will be stored alongside the original material in a separate vinyl enclosure as well.

Metadata

The following items and charts below outline the required metadata- including all technical, structural, and descriptive metadata- for each record in the digital collection. Technical metadata includes copyright information and digital preservation information. Structural metadata includes the totality of the item digitized. Descriptive metadata includes unique identifiers as well as bibliographic and physical identifiers (Cornell, 2003). The following two records demonstrate items that passed selection and how these records will be shared with the public digitally with corresponding metadata.



[Link to digitized item](#)

Identifier	Required	OESL01
Title	Required	Our First School; An essay by student Denise Williams
Creator	Required	Denise Williams
Contributor	Optional	n/a

Publisher	Optional	n/a
Rights	Required	The archive holds and manages the permissions for this item per permissions from the items author. If you need information about the reuse of this item submit an email to the archive discussing your intended use and file format needs. Cost will be determined based on use.
Description	Required	A student essay about the first school in Madera County located in Fresno Flats, California, handwritten on notebook paper by 8th grader at Oakhurst School, Denise Williams.
Subject	Required	Madera County, Oakhurst, schools
Location	Required	Oakhurst, California
Date	Required	1970-05
Type	Required	Text
Format	Required	Notebook paper
Language	Required	eng
Digital Specifications	Required	PDF, 300dpi, 8 bit, RGB, Canon ImageRunner Advanced 6555i
Physical Repository	Required	Oakhurst Elementary School Library



[Link to digitized item](#)

Identifier	Required	OESL02
Title	Required	First School in County was at Fresno Flats; a newspaper article from the Madera Tribune
Creator	Strongly Recommended	The Madera Tribune
Contributor	Optional	n/a
Publisher	Optional	The Madera Printing and Publishing Company
Rights	Required	The archive shares this document under Fair Use, 17 U.S. Code § 107 (1992). If you need information about reusing this item please contact the copyright holder for permissions.
Description	Required	A newspaper article discussing the history of schools in Madera County while highlighting the first founded school that was in Fresno Flats.
Subject	Required	Madera County Schools, Fresno Flats Schools, Oakhurst Schools
Location	Strongly Recommended	Oakhurst, California
Date	Required	1968-05

Type	Required	Text and still images
Format	Required	Newspaper pages, pdf
Language	Required	eng
Digital Specifications	Required	PDF, 300dpi, 8 bit, RGB, Canon ImageRunner Advanced 6555i
Physical Repository	Required	Oakhurst Elementary School Library

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