

## Ben Lomond's Alba School

# Save The Little Red School House

By Margaret Koch  
Sentinel Staff Writer

For more than 45 years the desperate cry "Save Alba School!" echoed through the redwoods above Ben Lomond.

Since 1940 the cry has changed to "Save Alba Schoolhouse!" And area residents up there are hard at work doing just that.

They are staging a miscellaneous sale and bazaar July 10 to raise money for digging a well. Sale hours will be from 10 a.m. to "sold out time," according to Mrs. Odessa (Guichard) Ryan. She serves as chairman of the Alba Recreation district board. In charge of the fund-raising event next Saturday is Roy Inlow.

The sale will include foods to eat on the spot, antiques, plants and a wide variety of articles.

The "little red schoolhouse" (it really is) was finally closed as a school in 1940. In 1952, it became the nucleus of Alba Park Recreation and Parkway district.

Now it houses a library. But it takes money to maintain the picturesque little building, which is used as library and community center. At present a water supply is badly needed; the former supply is no longer available.

Mrs. Ryan, who has long fought to save the schoolhouse, is spearheading the drive to maintain the building. She knows its history inside out. Her father, the late D. R. Guichard, founded the school in 1894 after a clever bit of strategy to gain the backing of officials who wanted it located elsewhere.

Mr. Guichard clinched his case for the Alba road site by offering County Superintendent J. W. Linscott a chicken dinner if he would walk the distance to Alba road from the rival sites. Linscott didn't walk it — he took a horse and buggy — but he was convinced immediately on the wisdom of the Alba location.

The name "Alba" was borrowed from the youngest daughter of the Joe Rossi family, close neighbors and friends of the Guichards. Jim Brooks donated land for the school site. Neighbors pitch in and staged a "school raising" event. The lumber company held back on collecting the bill for materials



Quaint Alba school, named for Alba Rossi, still being used as a community center and library.



The late D. R. Guichard, Alba school founder.



It's a one-woman fight — but she has plenty of help from Alba road residents.

Mrs. Odessa (Guichard) Ryan works in the Alba library.

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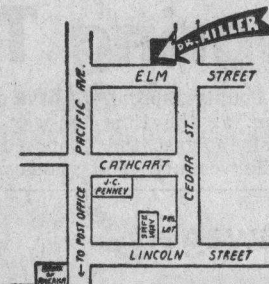
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until the Alba families could raise the money.

The fresh-cut lumber dried out, leaving large cracks in the spaces between the wall boards. But the school children gathered woodwardia ferns with which they stuffed the cracks, Mrs. Ryan recalls.

Miss Josephine Holyer was hired to teach at \$50 per month. And the little school was in business . . . it operated until 1912 mostly with Guichard and Rossi children in attendance.

During that time the present library and auditorium section was added to the building with lumber taken from the demolished Bear Creek school house.

Mrs. Ryan and the late Frank Walter thought they would be the school's last graduates when it closed the first time for lack of pupils.

Following the attendance slump of 1912, the Nerney family moved into the Alba area with 12 children and "saved the school."

Then came the Shipley family. And the school's "on again-off again" career was in full swing from then until it closed in 1940.

Maurice Roulet, who then owned the property, deeded library rights in an attempt to preserve the building as a community service center of some sort. And the schoolhouse has remained in that status ever since. Potluck suppers and social gatherings take place regularly.

The campaign to have it accepted by the state of California as a recreation district was spearheaded by the late county Supervisor Frank Clement, the late Walter Guichard and Frank Walter, and by Robert Sylvanus who still serves on the board.

Mrs. Ryan, whose memories and roots in the little school go back further than anyone's, is hopeful of having it made a state historical landmark someday.