

The woman behind the school's name

March is women's history month and one woman who made a large contribution to the education and well-being of the children of Watsonville was school teacher Mintie White.

She was born in Iowa in the year 1850 and named Arminta Elmire Allison. The family traveled to California in 1854 by covered wagon, making for a long and tedious trip before finally settling in Vacaville.

Mintie's father, Napoleon Allison, made a trip down to San Diego and passed

through the Pajaro Valley on his way. He liked what he saw and decided to move his family here in 1859; his wife, Sara Jane, and their three children: Arminta (Mintie), William (who died at the age of 9) and Byron. A fourth child, Ethel, was born in Watsonville and was to marry Arthur Dresser.

Mintie and her sister and brother attended local schools and Mintie's classmates were Boney Tuttle, James McQuire, Edna Andrews, Benella Shepherd, Mrs. J.W. Linscott and Mrs. Alabama Tyus Williams, the latter who had been the



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Local columnist

first white girl born in Watsonville.

Mintie went on to attend the San Jose Normal School, graduating in 1879. This same year she married Professor William White, her former schoolmaster. He became the principal of a school in San Francisco and two children were born of this union — Eva, who died of consumption at the age of 24 and son William.

Professor White suffered a stroke and the family moved back to Watsonville where he was to die in 1896. This same year, Mintie purchased property at 104 East Third (Beach) Street and hired architect William Weeks to draw plans for her new home. The cost was \$1,562 and the contractors were Andrews and Christenson.

Mrs. White was now teaching the

first grade in the old primary school, then located on Lake Avenue, and she brought to the children in her classroom a dedication and inspiration that reflected her own way of life. Mintie was also very active in the Presbyterian Church, which was located just two doors up the street from her new home.

In the old church building there was a room eventually named the Mintie White room in honor of this well liked teacher and where the Mintie White service group of the church would gather to meet.

When Mintie White died in February of 1928, John W. Linscott, school superintendent, wrote: "I cannot refrain from speaking of one primary room whose teacher ever met me with a hearty greeting and a happy smile, Mrs. Mintie White, one of the truest friends and one of the best teachers I have ever known."

In May of 1927 work was commenced on a new school building of California Mission and Spanish style architecture on Palm Avenue. It was designed by architect Weeks and the contractor was Jack Renfrow. The following is from the Watsonville Register, April 5, 1929:

"\$100,000 Mintie White School Dedication This Afternoon — The Mintie White School is more than a memorial. The name was given in memory of one whose life and work will be a living force long after she may be forgotten. Hers was the dear responsibility of shaping for little children those habits of thought and action that go to make character. How well she discharged her responsibility is testified to by hundreds of men and women who were made nobler by their early association with this devoted teacher."

Miss Loretta Allison was principal of the new school with the following teachers: Miss Helen Hopkins, Mrs. Nellie Uren, Miss Janet Kane, Miss Tacy Dempsey, Miss Elizabeth White, Mrs. Arthur Atteridge, Mrs. Fern Hyde, Miss Frances Byers and Mrs. Katherine Lake. Today's principal is Mrs. Agnes Clark and there are approximately 670 pupils in the school — kindergarten through fifth grade. Mintie White's former home still stands on East Beach street and is used as a rental.



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Mintie White died in 1928, a year before a new school building in Watsonville was dedicated to her.