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## SAN ANDREAS SCHOOL

By Anna Belle Aldridge Edwards

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**ABSTRACT:** Anna Belle Aldridge Edwards, at age 84, recalls her days at the San Andreas School; where she attended sixth, seventh and eighth grades, and graduated in 1926. Anna Belle moves us into the casual environment of a one-room school house and takes us through the daily activities of 1920s-style schooling. We see the ingenuity of children who have to improvise their own recreational activities, and the community help in putting on plays and programs. In the early 1990s the San Andreas School house was damaged by fire, but it has since been restored to almost the same condition as when Anna Belle studied there seventy some years ago.

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:** Anna Belle Aldridge Edwards was born in Flagstaff, Arizona on 2 July 1912, and lived in Blythe, California until 1915. When she was three, her parents moved back to their ranch in Brown's Valley, near Watsonville. She lived the rest of her life in the Pajaro Valley, the last 55 years on Larkin Valley Road. In the mid-1980s she started recording childhood memories for her children and grandchildren.

The San Andreas School still sits between San Andreas Road and Buena Vista Drive, next to the railroad on the west side. San Andreas School was one of our oldest schools and our oldest rural school. It opened in 1861 and was closed in 1949 when it was annexed to Freedom School. The building passed from public domain into private hands. It was severely damaged by fire in the early 1990s, but has since been restored to almost its original condition.

For 85 years school children of the San Andreas School District studied the "Three Rs" in this small, white, frame, one-room schoolhouse nestled between the railroad tracks and San

Andreas Road. There were green wooden shutters on all the windows. Every day the train passed by, distracting the lessons. The building would tremble as if it were as excited as the children. The hanging kerosene lamps would sway and the old wood-burning stove would send up sparks as a log shifted inside. On some days the train would stop to pick up a passenger, or to let one off.

Sixth Grade: 1923-1924.

We moved to San Andreas in the Fall of 1923 when my brother, Frank, and I started attending the school. I was in the sixth grade and Frank was in the second. Mama went with us the first day. We arrived a little early and the teacher signed us up. Our teacher was Miss Harness. She lived in Santa Cruz and rode the train to school each day, and home again every afternoon.

When classes were ready to commence, she came out on the steps and rang a little bell. Everyone lined up in two lines. We saluted the flag that was brought out and put up earlier. Then Miss Harness put us through a lot of exercises before we marched in and took our seats.

I was given a seat close to the other sixth grade students. They were Victor Kester and Tom Cunha. There were 23 or 24 students in all the eight grades, all in the same room. Our first class was music. We sang several songs. Among them were "America," "The Star Spangled Banner," "America The Beautiful," "Dixie Land," "Old Folks At Home," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Old Black Joe," and many others. Our teacher did not play the piano and she did not sing well either. But we sang, although nobody heard us.

After music we had penmanship. Miss Harness really drilled us in that. We had to conserve paper so we wrote on all the lines on both sides and then turned the paper sideways and wrote in the margins. We wrote with a dip pen. Each of us had a pen and an ink well was set in each desk. All written work except arithmetic was done in ink. Papers could not be handed in with ink spots on them.

One blackboard was full of the schedule for the day. Over this blackboard hung two large pictures, one of Washington and one of Lincoln. Each grade was given so many minutes to recite each subject. While each class recited, students in the other grades studied for the next lesson. If one used the study time for study, there was no homework to take home. But many did not, as it was not easy to concentrate when others were reciting. Our teacher kept pretty good order and had few problems. The County Superintendent came regularly to check on the school.

The teacher's favorite punishment was writing lines. For talking in school we might have to write "I will not talk in school" one-hundred times. If the offense was large we might have to write five hundred lines. These all had to be written during our recess time, noon hour, or after school. We also stayed after school for being late to school. The teacher did not mind having to stay at the school after hours because the train to take her home did not come until five o'clock. She spent her time correcting papers and cleaning the school room.

Our drinking water came from a well out in back of the schoolhouse. There was a hand pump. I do not remember having cups. We mostly leaned over and drank from the pump. We did not have towels either. There were two outhouses at the far back of the school yard. The one for girls was up close to San Andreas Road and the one for boys was straight down the hill along the fence. We were not restricted to the school yard.

We had no play equipment except a baseball and bat, so we played baseball most of the

time. There were not enough of us for two teams so two or three of the oldest boys would stand several of us. Each day we continued the game from the day before. Many times the two or three boys would be up for several days at a time.

We also played anti-over the schoolhouse. It was very hard for a small child to throw the ball over the tall building, but some of them did. Sometimes we played hide-and-seek. Everybody played then. There were very few places to hide on the school yard so all the bigger kids went off the yard to hide. Some hid in the little Ellicott train station, some in the pit under the train tracks, some in the field, and some even went up to the next ranch to hide -- it was vacant at the time. There was no way the person who was "it" could catch those kids. All he could catch were the little ones. Most of the time we were like a big family. We had our disagreements, but we were still friends.

Mr. Bollinger, Mrs. Cunha, and Mr Hagan were the trustees that first year I was there. They came quite often to check and see if the teacher needed anything. Mr. Bollinger really dominated the teacher. He lived up at the end of Spring Valley Road. His wife had died and he had two daughters. Florence, the oldest, had graduated from our school and stayed home to keep house for the family. Esther was my age and went to school. There were two grown boys who were home part of the time. Esther was my friend. We walked to and from school together.

Mrs. Cunha lived on the ranch next to the school on the south side. She and her husband had several children -- Frank, Tom, Agnes, Clara, Emily, and another little girl too young for school. They were real nice people.

Mr. Hagan lived across Spring Valley Road from us. He lived with his father and cousin. The cousin, Tom Hagan, was my brother Frank's friend. He was grown but we thought of him as our age. He went with us after the cows and to pick wild hazel nuts.

Mary Larson lived with her grandparents, nearly two miles up Buena Vista Drive. Her mother had died. Her grandfather brought her to school every day in a horse and buggy. After school, if she was not out by the road waiting for him, he would turn around and go home without her. She was also my age.

The little Gorham children lived near Mary. Their driveway turned off on the other side of Buena Vista Drive and went way back to the edge of the slough. There were three of them -- Carl, Lois and Clinton. Carl drove the horse and buggy, he was nine. One morning someone was putting up the flag as they drove into the school yard. The waving flag frightened the horse and it bolted. Carl fell out and broke his arm. As soon as it healed he was back driving to school.

There were two Galigan children -- Bartley and Louise. They walked down the tracks to their home -- it was only a short way. They were cousins of the Cunha children. Walter Hill lived way down San Andreas Road and back through the fields close to the railroad tracks. He always walked up the tracks to school. Loretta Flynn lived on the ranch next to the Hills. She was a pretty little redhead. She always walked along the road. The two Malatesta children -- Andrew and Ida -- lived down San Andreas Road a short way and way down close to the beach. Their father raised artichokes.

The Ash family lived across the road from Manresa Beach and way back at the end of a long driveway. Their boys were five and seven years old. The parents had kept Edward out of school a year so they could start the two of them together. Edward did well in school but little Jimmy had to struggle. He was just too young. They had to leave home at seven each morning to walk almost three miles to school.

All of us carried our lunch to school. No one lived close enough to go home for lunch and hot school lunches were unheard of in those days. One of our favorite places to eat was on top of the wood shed. It was built on the side hill so the back was quite low to the ground and easy to get onto. I have often wondered why it did not break through. Many times some of us sat out there on the roof and studied. It was nice and quiet there.

There was no electricity in any of the San Andreas area at that time. Everyone used kerosene lamps and cooked on wood stoves. There was only one telephone in the area. It was in Charlie Lenord's house. He and his mother lived a short way from us. They were lovely neighbors and let us use their phone any time we needed to. Mostly a phone was used to call a doctor. Doctors made house calls in those days.

Charlie was the first in our area to get a radio. It was operated on batteries and squeaked and squawked and was often hard to understand. But we thought it was one of the wonders of the world. He invited Frank and me to come over any evening we wanted to listen to it with him. Charlie was a sheep farmer with lots of sheep. When he wanted them to come in from the pasture, he would go out and whistle real loud. A goat ran with them and was their leader. When the goat heard the whistle he headed for the barn and all the sheep followed single file. One day my brother Creston's wife whistled early in the day and the sheep all went home to the barn.

School was out for the summer at the end of May. Our teacher put on a nice program for the one graduate, Frank Cunha. All of us were ready for a rest from school. We always looked forward to summer vacation when our whole family went to Uncle Lafe's ranch in the mountains. It was up Brown's Valley. We camped out and cut apricots. Sometimes we were the only ones cutting cots. At other times Uncle Lafe had a big crop and had to hire many people. His first wife's stepmother and two young sisters sometimes came. They stayed in the house with him. We had many good times together. We would cut apricots all day and then run down the hill to the creek and soak our feet in the cold water. Then we would have to climb the hill. We loved the mountains and the creek, and we liked cutting apricots too.

Seventh Grade: 1924-1925.

We started back to school in September. Miss Harness was still our teacher. As we were standing in line to go in the school the first morning, a little boy came running down the tracks huffing and puffing. The teacher asked him his name. He said "Clyde Ingram Barro." From then on the other kids called him "Clyde Ingrambarrel." His name was actually Clyde Arrow Ingram. His parents had bought the vacant ranch up the tracks from the school. His father soon became one of the trustees, taking Mrs. Cunha's place. He was quite a ladies man and became quite friendly with the teacher. Mr. Bollinger was attracted to her too. They both dominated her. She was afraid of them.

The little Ellicott Train Station sat by the tracks in the corner where Buena Vista Drive forks into San Andreas Road. A train ticket from Watsonville to Ellicott cost ten cents. One could flag the train down and pay the ten cents for a ride into Watsonville. At night one had to have a lantern to flag the train. If the train did not stop to let a passenger off, the passenger would ring the bell and then the train would stop. On Saturday mornings I rode in to town with Mama as she went to work. I took my music lesson and then caught the train home. After I got off the train at Ellicott I had a mile to walk on home. The train was a great help to us and we enjoyed it. It was noisy but we got used to it. Several went by each day and sometimes a freight went by at night. A few times Frank jumped on a slow-moving freight coming up hill

from the direction of La Selva Beach and rode it until it started to speed up going down hill as it neared the school. He wanted me to try it but I never did. I was afraid to.

There were two cattle guard pits under the tracks where they crossed Buena Vista Drive, one on each side. Sometimes the boys from school would get in one and let the train pass over them. But one day a boy was sprayed with steam. That stopped that. They could have been badly hurt.

One morning the train did not stop to let our teacher off. The conductor waved at us as the train sped by. Of course we were all happy because we thought there would be no school and we could play all day. After a while we saw someone walking down the tracks. Soon we could see it was Mrs. Ingram. When she arrived she asked why we were not in school. We told her the teacher did not come. So she told us to all go inside and she would be our teacher. Of course we were not happy about that. She told us to get out our books and prepare all of the lessons we had been assigned, but we would not recite any. So we all went to work on our lessons.

After a while Victor, Tom and I decided to see how much she really knew so we searched through our math book for what we thought was the hardest problem. We finally picked one and asked Mrs. Ingram for help with it. Well, she studied it a few minutes and said it was best to let the teacher show us her way of working it. We were disappointed. We thought she would work and work on it and then give up. Then we could say she did not know much. After a while she dismissed us and we went home. Later I found out that our school would have lost money if there had been no school that day.

My little sister, Marjorie, started school in 1924. Frank had played school with her ever since he started, so she knew most of the first grade. She could read better than the second grade children so Mama asked the teacher to put her in the second grade. The teacher said she could be in the second grade but she would have to read all the books the first grade had read the past year. And they had to be read to the teacher. So every recess and noon hour Marjorie kept at it until she had them all read. She also did well in the second grade. It bothered the teacher that Marjorie did so well and was taught not by a teacher, but another child.

We had a school Halloween party. It was our first. Some of the mothers brought food. Somehow one of the boys spilled a tub of water on Marjorie and got her all wet. I had to take her home and change her. It was two miles round trip. When we returned we had missed several of the games, but we did not miss the refreshments. The teacher said I should not have taken her home, she would have dried. But I thought Mama would have wanted me to.

One morning we came to school and it had been broken into. It was a mess. The teacher did not leave the previous afternoon until the five o'clock train to Santa Cruz came. She had cleaned the school house real good and locked both doors and fastened all the shutters before she left. The windows were too high from the ground for anyone to reach without something to stand on. Well, a door lock had been broken. The trustees decided it was a tramp who did it. The fire extinguisher had been taken down and sprayed all over. What a mess! But we all pitched in and helped the teacher clean up. Nothing was taken. There really was nothing there a tramp would want.

Each Spring all of the rural schools in the county participated in a Play Day. It was a big field day held at Soquel School. There were races, high jumping, and broad jumping for all grammar school age groups. Most of us participated. We started training early in the Spring so we would be at our best when the big day arrived. All of our noon hour and recess time was spent running and jumping. Each day we tried to beat our record of the previous day. Finally

the big day arrived. We were taken to Soquel School by parents in cars. We took sack lunches and all ate in a group. Of course we had saved our nickels to spend for ice cream cones. It was our big day of the year. Everyone was excited. We arrived at Soquel school and were assigned to various events. There were kids everywhere! Lots of ribbons were won but there were a few disappointments too. We had done our best but each vowed to do better the following year.

There were two graduates in 1925 -- Walter Hill and Loretta Flynn. Irma, my brother Creston's wife, helped with the program. She played the piano and assisted with the costumes. It was a great help for the teacher. The lighting was very poor with the kerosene lamps but the house was packed. Every child had a part in the program. The County Superintendent came and handed out the diplomas. It was a very special event for us all.

After school closed for the Summer I picked berries for Mr. Bates. Esther and Florence Bollinger also picked berries. One day Mr. Bollinger took all three of us to the Board Walk in Santa Cruz. We spent all of our money and had a great time.

Irma came out often. We hiked many miles over the hills hunting wild blackberries. Mama made us delicious pies and shortcakes with them. Sometimes we hiked over the hill to the beach and played in the water. Some days we even played in the water when there was a drizzle. We would gather lots of wood and build a big fire and then play in the water for a while. Then we would come out and get warm. Those were happy, carefree days.

Soon it was time to go to Uncle Lafe's to cut apricots. We camped in Aunt Kate's old house but slept outside. We made a little money but had the greatest vacation. Some evenings we spent with Uncle Lafe. He often played the violin for us -- mostly by ear. His wife did not like mountain life so had left him.

Eighth Grade: 1925-1926.

In the Fall of 1925 we started school with a new teacher. I was in the eighth grade and it was to be my last year at San Andreas School. The teacher's name was Mrs. Rutherford and she lived in Santa Cruz. Her husband had a small garage there. Her two boys went to school in Santa Cruz. She was a very sweet lady and I loved her very much, but she clashed with the trustees. She would not be bullied by them. They soon asked for her to resign. She refused. She said she had signed a contract to teach the year and she planned to do just that. And she did. Well, Mr. Ingram was very unhappy about it. He took his little boy, Clyde, out of school and his mother taught him at home. The poor child missed a lot. He could see the other children playing from his yard. He must have missed being with the other children very much. The following year there was a new teacher and he returned to school. Teachers at that time were paid about \$130 per month.

Irma, my brother's wife, helped again with the Christmas program. She did the piano playing and helped make the costumes, and helped the small children to change into them, too. The teacher appreciated it very much. There was only a small space to change and the kerosene lamps did not give much light. It was not easy but the parents enjoyed every bit of our program.

Early in the Spring we all started practicing for the Spring Play Day at Soquel School. We won quite a few ribbons that year, which we kept and treasured for years. They reminded us of many happy hours spent practicing and competing, and of our school friends.

One day a man came to school and passed out papers about a chicken club. I took mine home and Mama and Dad let me join. I was the only one in the school that joined. The club was a forerunner to the 4H Club. The Farm Adviser came and talked to Mama and Dad. They ordered fifty day-old white leghorn baby chicks for me. We were given plans for building a

brooder and Dad built it. The chicks were finally delivered. I had the full care of them. I even ran home at noon to feed them when they were tiny. I also had to keep books on them. Then on a certain date two pullets from each member's chickens were chosen to be in a contest. We each had to turn in an essay on "How I Raised My Chicks." Well, I did not do so well. I only received fourth prize. We learned later that the girl who received first prize had an old hen with chicks the same age and when one of her project chicks died she took one from the hen to replace it.

The first four prize winners received a trip to Davis Farm School for three days, so I got to go. Our food cost us three dollars and we took our blankets and slept on mattresses in a cottage.

The Farm Adviser took a boy from Salinas and me in his Model-T Ford. It started raining on the way so we stopped to put on the side curtains. We crossed the bay on a ferry. That was an experience for me. Our food was served Army style on a green field. There were assemblies at night in the auditorium. There were only the two of us from our area but there were kids from several counties. It was great.

Victor Kester lived close to the beach with his father and older brother. A few people had asked him for permission to go through his place to the beach. Soon he got an idea of how to make a little spending money. He painted a sign and put it up on San Andreas Road by his driveway. He allowed people to come in on Saturday and Sunday and charged twenty-five cents per car to come in and go down the cliffs to the beach. It was not long before his brother saw it had a good business potential so he built some picnic tables and fire pits in the eucalyptus grove, and stairs down to the beach. It became a thriving business. In a few years the state bought them out and it became Sunset State Beach.

All too soon graduation was upon us, and the end of my days in San Andreas School. Of course I was excited about graduating. My mother's Aunt Bessie had promised to send me a pretty white dress to wear. I was excited about that too. The County Superintendent came and gave us eighth graders the Civics test. All three of us passed it 100% so we were all sure of graduating. We practiced our songs, poems and plays for weeks. But it was nearly time for the big event and my dress had not come. Mama said I may have to wear an old one. I was worried sick! But just a day or two before the big event it came. Oh how happy I was!

In one of the plays several of us had to be made up to look like colored people. Afterwards we had to be cleaned up for the rest of the program. Well, it was a good thing that the lighting was poor because I am sure we did not get all of that makeup off. My pretty white dress had to be laundered.

After receiving our diplomas, we were given bouquets of flowers and gifts. All the people came up and congratulated us. We felt very important. Then it was over and we went home. That Summer we left San Andreas. But four years later we were back and my brother Frank and my sister Marjorie both graduated from San Andreas School.

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