Jim savage 1852 ECV

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Going to School at Huntington

The year is 1912 and Henry Hunington is ready to start one of the most complex hydroelectric projects of the 1900's. By the end of 1913 powerhouse #1 is ready to come online. In that same period three dams are constructed on Big Creek forming Huntington Lake. Following that over a period of time facilities include 27 dams, miles of tunnels, and 24 generating units in nine powerhouses.

It didn't take very long for valley residents to discover the lake. It was not an easy trip. One had to go up the old Tollhouse Road to the lumber mill at what is now Shaver Lake (the Shaver dam wasn't completed until 1927) and the take the road to the powerhouse #1 and then head up the steep climb to Huntington lake. One of the first groups to make trips were the students from the Fresno Normal School in 1914.

Beginning in 1914, only three years after the Fresno Normal School first began enrollment, students and faculty packed up and headed into the wilderness for six weeks of classes. In 1918, the Normal School leased a piece of land from the federal government at Huntington Lake in the Sierra National Forest. Sierra Summer School provided opportunities for learning and

adventure for Fresno State students. During the six weeks at Sierra Summer School, students took six credits with an emphasis on art, biological sciences, geology, music and nature study. Most of these classes were, according to the 1929 class catalog, “conducted in the open among the beautiful pine and fir trees.” Outside of class, students enjoyed a library, an open-air theater, basketball, volleyball, horseshoes, croquet and tennis courts. Students also wrote and edited a weekly newspaper, *The Sierran*. The proximity of Huntington Lake provided opportunities for boating and swimming, and the lake was well stocked so visitors could fish. On the weekends, faculty and students enjoyed hikes to nearby sights, including Twin Lakes, Mount Givens, Florence Lake, Mono Creek Dam and the McKinley Grove big trees. During other times of the year, the Huntington Lake campsite also served as the annual preseason football camp. Students attending Sierra Summer School stayed in tents with board floors provided by the school, or in the cottages and tents at the nearby Lakeshore Resort or Camp Cedar Crest. Many students also chose to camp at the nearby public campground. A cafeteria on the Sierra Summer School campus provided meals, but some students preferred cooking over a campfire in the great outdoors.

The final week of the summer sessions ended with a presentation of a play or music performance by the students at the Sierra Forest Theater, and a graduation ceremony and banquet to

celebrate the graduating class. Sierra Summer School ran through the summer of 1950, with a short interruption during World War II. Thereafter, Fresno State relocated the summer courses to different campuses around the Valley,



Cafeteria and Office





More to follow in the future+

Francis Sullivan ----co-historian