


The Maleny Provisional School → Teutoburg Provisional School → Teutoburg State School → Witta State School



 SCHEDULE I.
APPLICATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL.
Maleny Township, Blackall Range. 1891

To The Honourable The Secretary for Public Instruction, Brisbane. ;

SIR,

(1) To be modified in case of Provisional Schools. (1) At a public meeting held on the *Sixteenth* day of *February* 1891, at *Maleny Township*, of which fourteen days' notice was duly given in accordance with Clause 7 of the Regulations, the following gentlemen, namely, *J. Warne, L. Bergmann, R. Manistky, W. Sommer*.

(*) Omit "Building" were elected members of a (2) Building Committee for promoting the establishment of a (3) *Provisional* School at *Maleny Township Reserve*.

(2) "State" or "Provisional." 2. The number of children, between the ages of five and fourteen years, likely to attend the proposed School, is *Fourteen*.

3. The amount of local subscriptions already promised is £
The total amount expected to be collected is £

(*) Insert acreage and description, and state whether the land is freehold, selected, or Crown land. 4. The proposed site consists of (4) *Four Acres of a Reserve in the Parish of Maleny on the Blackall Range* and is situated (5) *Surrounding Portions 21 22 26 24*

(*) Describe position exactly, giving No. of portion or allotment if possible. 5. The timber available in the district consists of (*)

(*) Give names of trees. and most of the buildings are built of (*)

(*) Split or sawn hardwood or pine, or both, as the case may be. 6. The price of sawn timber delivered on the ground is for hardwood s. d., and for pine s. d. per 100 superficial feet

The average cost of substantial two-railed fencing is s. d. per rod.

(*) Describe proposed means of securing water. 7. A supply of water can be obtained by (*) *A Spring on proposed site*

(*) Insert (if any) names of places and distance from proposed site. 8. The nearest school maintained or subsidised by the State is at *Blackall Range* distant *about 8* miles from the proposed site by the nearest road. The nearest State or Provisional Schools within a radius of ten (10) miles are the following (*) *Blackall Range above mentioned*

9. Annexed is a list of the children likely to attend the proposed new school, and of their parents, which we certify to be correct.

10. Enclosed is a rough plan (or tracing) of the locality showing the position of the proposed site and of the nearest existing schools. The nearest Post Office is at *Maleny Parish*, distant *six* miles.

11. Mr. *W. Sommer's* has been appointed Secretary to the Committee. His postal address is *Blackall Range Maleny*

We have the honour to request that the Governor in Council may be pleased to authorise the establishment of a (10) *Provisional* School, as proposed.

J. Warne
L. Bergmann
R. Manistky
W. Sommer

Members of the Committee.

* This Application should be accompanied by a letter giving full particulars.
 NOTE.—In the case of Provisional Schools, paragraphs 5 and 6 need not be filled up.

See back of this.

Application to establish the Maleny Provisional School on the Maleny Township Reserve, dated 16 February 1891. Queensland State Archives.

1891-1892

The Maleny Provisional School

Early in 1891, the district had fourteen school-aged children in five families. The Bergann family had three, the Manitzky family had two, the Sommer family had seven and the Vandreike and Warne families had one each. With so few students, there was no chance of the Queensland Department of Public Instruction (now the Department of Education) opening a State School yet a Provisional School was a definite possibility.

Queensland had commenced Provisional Schools in 1869 to provide a basic education to a scattered population with a limited education budget. Communities were responsible for their own Provisional School buildings, often built to a low standard. Moreover, teachers' salaries were also low and their training correspondingly poor. As the name implied, a Provisional School was intended as a temporary measure which might be replaced by a State School or might close if the population waned.¹

Such a school needed an average attendance of twelve students in the 1890s.² Concerned that some children had been without schooling for twelve months, a public meeting was held on 16 February 1891. This resulted in four fathers from the five families being elected as a School Building Committee: Ludwig Bergann, Rudolph Manitzky, Wilhelm Sommer and Frederick Warne. Confident that the Department would send them a teacher, they erected a small schoolhouse on the north-west corner of the 160-acre Reserve for Public Purposes in the centre of the settlement (Crown land which had previously been set aside for their use).³

On forwarding their application for a Provisional School on the "Maleny Township Reserve",⁴ they also requested Charlotte Warne as its teacher. The wife of Frederick Warne on the School's Building Committee, they believed her to be a "proper and efficient person". The Department disagreed. One official noting:

*"The whole thing looks like a scheme to find State employment for the person nominated as teacher – or who says she is asked to act as teacher."*⁵

Not only did the Department refuse to employ Charlotte, it refused to open the school. A decision based solely on the fact that their small number could not maintain an average attendance of twelve students. The Committee responded by stating that *The State Education Act of 1875* entitled them to a teacher for twelve children. In reply, the Department offered a compromise – a half-time school if the parents contributed £25 towards a teacher's salary of £65. Pleading financial hardship, this counter-offer was rejected.

¹ History of Education, Department of Education, Queensland Government.
<https://education.qld.gov.au/about/history/Documents/primary-education.pdf>

² While regulations stated that a Provisional School could open with twelve children, the community were unaware that the Department of Public Instruction used twelve as the average attendance. With students absent for many reasons: sickness, truancy, to help at home, or particularly in rural districts to work on the family farm, more than twelve children were required to open a Provisional school.

³ This schoolhouse was 18 feet x 12 feet (5.4 metres x 3.6 metres). Built without authority on Crown land, its fate remains unknown although it's possible the timber was re-used for the community's second schoolhouse. The second school was 28 feet x 14 feet (8.5 metres x 4.2 metres), built on land surveyed as a School Reserve by the Queensland Government. In 1893, a Cemetery Reserve would be gazetted on the north-west corner of the Reserve for Public Purposes.

⁴ The community used "Maleny" as their address or described themselves as "settlers of Maleny" in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

⁵ Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM16263.

Not discouraged by building a schoolhouse without authority on Crown land, nor disheartened by the government's refusal of a teacher, the School Building Committee applied for 10 acres on the Reserve for Public Purposes in the Parish of Maleny in June 1891. The Department of Public Lands granted them 13 acres as a School Reserve (the additional 3 acres to reach a spring) but "Owing however to a careless misdirection to the surveyor by the Chairman, the intended water supply is still outside the boundary of the reserve."

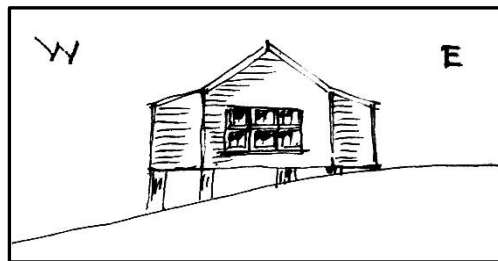
Also in June 1891, Frederick Warne and another school representative personally lobbied the Department of Public Instruction for a school and for Charlotte Warne as its teacher. They believed her to be their only hope and, if the school was simply opened, it would grow and Charlotte could possibly step back for another to take her place. This was followed up a few weeks later when Charlotte and Frederick Warne visited the Department in Brisbane. Charlotte had completed an "Application for Admission as a Teacher", citing her experience as a:

*"Teacher in a Private School for three years from January 1884 till February 1887 at Skelton High Green, Cleveland, Yorkshire."*⁶

Attached was a single reference from "The Committee of the Proposed School" signed by her husband, Bergann, Manitzky and Sommer. Charlotte was interviewed and given a short examination. Regrettably for her community, her results in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar, Comprehension, Geography and Arithmetic showed a limited education and the Department declined to employ her.

Building the School

As the search for a teacher continued, Ludwig Bergann and Friedrich Vandreike (an older brother of one prospective pupil) offered to build the schoolhouse, tables, forms and toilets for £45. An offer not accepted on the grounds "that it was most improbable that so large an amount could be met by so few people". Nonetheless, the men collected about £25 by public subscription,⁷ declaring they "had the good of the place at heart" and were prepared to wait a year or more for the balance.



Sketch showing the school's west and east aspects. Queensland State Archives.

With local assistance but no contract, plan or specifications, Bergann and Vandreike started work. When the building neared completion, they demanded the final £20 from Wilhelm Sommer, Secretary of the Building Committee. In fact, according to Sommer's letter seeking advice from the Department, Vandreike held the keys though both men threatened to use the building themselves if the money was not immediately paid. Financial pressure may have been behind Vandreike's insistence on payment. He went bankrupt the following year owing more than £200.⁸

⁶ Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM16263.

⁷ The subscription list ended with 71 names for a total of £41.10.1. Shortly after the school opened, the Committee asked the Department of Public Instruction for a subsidy to offset its cost. An investigation was undertaken by the District Inspector who reported that the building and its furniture had been poorly constructed using inferior workmanship. He recommended no subsidy but, as the parents were farmers struggling with the difficulties of a new settlement, suggested the Department pay all/part of a proper water supply and all/part of some remedial work on the building and its furniture.

⁸ *The Telegraph*, 6 September 1892, p2; *Queensland Government Gazette*, 10 September 1892, p100.

Unwilling to become involved, the Department let the community work it out for themselves. Sommer remained as Secretary until June 1892 before resigning over tension with the Chairperson, Frederick Warne. Martin Nöthling was elected as Acting Secretary in his place.⁹ He immediately wrote two letters: the first to the Caboolture Divisional Board petitioning for a road to their district;¹⁰ the second to the Department of Public Instruction seeking a teacher for the fifteen children then living near the school.

The Bergann family had three children plus a Noffke niece, the Flesser family (new to the area) had two, the Manitzky family still had two, the Sommer family were down to five (from seven) and there was no change for the Vandreike and Warne families with one each. This time, the Department's reply was favourable. If the Committee found a teacher whom the Department deemed suitable, a salary of up to £50 might be provided.

TEACHER wanted for Provisional School, 17 children on roll, in two months, about 22. Apply for particulars to C. M. Nothling, Secretary, Maleny Post Office, via Landsborough.

The Telegraph, 4 August 1892, p6.

Nöthling forwarded five letters for the Department's consideration. One promising applicant then wrote directly to the Department advising that he had since discovered how inaccessible they were from Landsborough. If selected, he would not accept. Meanwhile, the Department added a Mrs Elizabeth Winnett to the list of applicants. She was offered the position but, before it was finalised, the Committee found a suitable candidate of their own.

First Teacher

German-born Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Thiedecke¹¹ was teaching at the Slack's Creek Provisional School in the Logan district. A teacher in Queensland since 1872, he was fluent in English and known personally to most of the School Building Committee. After agreeing to be their teacher, he requested a Departmental transfer. The Department was amenable to sending Elizabeth Winnett to Slack's Creek with its £70 salary and transferring Thiedecke to the Maleny Provisional School with its £50 salary.

The first Blackall Range school had opened in May 1886 on Joseph McCarthy's selection.¹² More than six years later, Thiedecke opened the second on 3 October 1892 with seventeen first-day pupils (fifteen Lutherans, one Protestant and one Catholic). This number rose quickly to twenty-two, including the Ehlerth children from nearby Conondale. Most were from farming families, the exceptions being the Dwyer boys whose father was a timber-getter, and the Thiedecke children.

⁹ Martin Nöthling had no school-aged children in 1892.

¹⁰ At the end of 1892, the Queensland Government offered the Caboolture Divisional Board £50 to make a road from John Graves' property, close to the current township of Maleny, to the "German Settlement". Graves is reputed to have used two of his employees to cut a road out from Maleny.

¹¹ Carl Thiedecke, born 1851 in Berlin, arrived in Brisbane from Hamburg in 1872, taught in Queensland between 1872 and 1910. Mentioned in *The Logan Witness*, 19 November 1881, p2: "We have the pleasure to be able to notify this fact, Mr T. being a German who arrived in the colony in 1872 and engaged as teacher since then. It is owing to his own personal exertions that he is enabled to prove himself in an English school an efficient teacher, and the German population should feel honoured to be able to point out that another of their number again is able to show of what value German immigrants are to the colony."

¹² The teacher of this small, privately-funded school was a Mr A. M. Fleming (alias Moncrieff). McCarthy then had the school rebuilt with financial support by the Department of Public Instruction who also sent him "school requisites". It reopened in October 1886 as a government school named the "Blackall Range Provisional School" under a new teacher, William Verrent.

Note: In August 1886, with no clergyman in the Maleny district, Fleming read a Church of England burial service for Jane Dunlop, the first European woman to live permanently on the Blackall Range.

1892 School Students

Charles Bergann	Louise Ehlerth	Martha Noffke	Martha Thiedecke
Otto Bergann	August Flesser	August Sommer	Otto Thiedecke
William Bergann	Charles Flesser	Augusta Sommer	Adeline Vandreike
Jacob Dwyer	Mary Flesser	Christian Sommer	William Warne
Paddy Dwyer	Emily (Emilie) Manitzky	Elizabeth Sommer	
Charles Ehlerth	Max Manitzky	George Sommer	

Due to the extra students, Martin Nöthling wrote again to the Department. He hoped there could be an increase in Thiedecke's salary as:

*"The cost of living up here is a great deal higher than elsewhere in consequence of the carriage by Bullock teams from Landsborough."*¹³

In Brisbane, a 50-pound (22.68 kilogram) bag of best quality flour was selling for 6 shillings/6 pence. Nöthling gave the example that a bag of flour could not be bought locally for less than 36 shillings. Officials recommended no change until the end of the school year but, after a School Inspector had visited, it would be given consideration at the start of 1893.

Within weeks of Thiedecke's arrival, he had: opened the school; sought help from the United German and Scandinavian Lutheran Synod for a pastor to serve their small group of isolated Lutherans; sent a petition to the Department of Public Lands seeking land for a public cemetery; and was instrumental in requesting a local Receiving Office (a small post office of the time, sometimes licensed to sell stamps). As its Receiving Officer, such an office would facilitate:

*"The regular despatch of my letters in communication with the school."*¹⁴

Mail had been delivered to the Blackall Range since 7 November 1886¹⁵ with the first route running twice-weekly by horse from Woodford to Mellum Creek (Landsborough) via the Blackall Range Receiving Office on Joseph McCarthy's selection.¹⁶ This unpretentious Receiving Office consisted of a slit in the wall of the McCarthy's home through which letters were dropped into a box on the other side. Above the slit was written "Post Office".¹⁷ From 1 January 1889, mail was also delivered to John Graves' Maleny Receiving Office.¹⁸

¹³ Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM16263.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Postal history: Maleny (Blackall Range)* by Doug Pallisier, Australia Post Public Relations Office, published 1978.

¹⁶ A local mail service would be of great benefit to the more than 100 European residents then living on the Blackall Range, especially those in the timber trade. Prior to November 1886, mail had to be collected from "an unlocked box nailed to a tree" after the Brisbane to Gympie mail coach left the mailbag at the foot of the range. This was so inconvenient that the Postmaster-General had been successfully petitioned, with the support of Henry Conwell Wood of Durundur, M.L.A., for their own mail delivery.

¹⁷ *The Week*, 29 December 1888, p19. By March 1889, the Blackall Range Receiving Office was informally known as McCarthy's Receiving Office before being officially renamed by the Queensland Post and Telegraph Department in June 1891.

¹⁸ *Queensland Post Offices 1842-1980 and Receiving Offices 1869-1927* by Joan Frew, published circa 1981. Graves' Maleny Receiving Office was on Portion 1282, Parish of Maleny. This Receiving Office opened, in part, to benefit the many new selectors in the area which would become known as Teutoburg (Witta).

A “Teutoburg” Receiving Office

After the Queensland Post and Telegraph Department agreed to establish a twice-weekly mail service by horse between the Maleny Receiving Office and a new Receiving Office at the school, there was the urgent question of its name. The school had opened as the Maleny Provisional School but Graves already had a “Maleny Receiving Office” on his property.¹⁹ The solution? Choose a new name, one they could use for their Receiving Office, Provisional School and district.²⁰

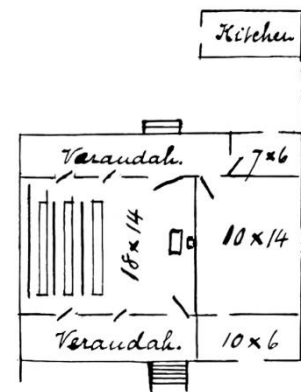
The predominately-German community agreed on “Teutoburg”.²¹ Accordingly, the Teutoburg Receiving Office opened on 1 December 1892. The next step was for Nöthling, as Secretary of the School Committee, to ask the Department of Public Instruction to rename the school:

“The settlers around Maleny have succeeded in getting a Post Office at our school under the name of 'Teutoburg' which name we shall like to be adopted for our school.”

Approval was granted on 16 December 1892 with a note on the school's file:

“Yes, if it gratifies Teutonic nostalgia.”²²

During Thiedecke's tenure at Teutoburg, he worked hard to improve the school grounds with tree plantings on Arbor Days and it must have been his “very nice garden with several fruit trees” which was going to ruin a year after he left. Nor were botanical interests confined to the school. He sent specimens of Brisbane Sassafraz (sourced from Wilhelm Sommer's selection) to The Royal Society of Queensland in Brisbane. A Dr Lauterer then extracted nearly 1 ounce (about 25 millilitres) of unrefined camphor oil from 12 pounds (about 5 kilograms) of leaves which he believed might be profitably distilled.²³



Right: Plan of the school, including the Thiedecke's living quarters. Queensland State Archives.

Thiedecke had a good working relationship with his School Committee though their constant lack of funds meant they were unable to improve his “scanty” accommodation in the Teutoburg schoolhouse. Making his own alterations, he had expended money and labour on his family's small living quarters by installing a fireplace (£6) and an internal ceiling (£6).²⁴

¹⁹ A November 1892 departmental comment in Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM16263 thought it would “lead to confusion!” for there to be a school with a Receiving Office on site having a different name.

On 18 October 1886, the Blackall Range Provisional School had opened on Joseph McCarthy's property. Three weeks later, the Post and Telegraph Department opened the Blackall Range Receiving Office, also on his property. Since the “Blackall Range” name was not in use elsewhere in Queensland, it was straightforward for the Receiving Office to be given the same name as the school.

²⁰ As occurred in nearby Montville, originally known as Razorback. In 1897, a local man named Henry Smith asked the Post and Telegraph Department for a Receiving Office. Queensland already had a Razorback Receiving Office and he was told that “he would have to decide on a different name which would then also become the name for the place”. Smith's first suggestion of Vermont was refused, his second of Montville approved.

²¹ Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM142783 has a letter dated 22 October 1892 by Martin Nöthling to the Queensland Government's Surveyor General: “I herewith inform you that it has been agreed by the residents at ‘Maleny Reserve’ that the place should be called and registered ‘Teutoburg’.”

²² Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM16263.

²³ *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 December 1894, p7; *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland*, Volume XI, Part 1, published 1895, p22.

²⁴ Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM16263. Some later teachers boarded locally, or rented locally.

Lack of funds also meant the School Committee neglected to supply a book press to secure the school's records. Instead, books and paperwork would be weather damaged over several years before a large cedar book press²⁵ was finally provided. The Committee only doing so after the Department threatened to dismiss Thiedecke and leave them without a teacher if a press was not immediately forthcoming. Thiedecke remained until 9 March 1896 before moving to the Horton Provisional School, halfway between Maryborough and Bundaberg. Teutoburg's second teacher was 23-year-old Miss Jane Wassell who arrived from Brisbane on horseback²⁶ to take up her position on 16 March 1896. In 1952, she would return as Guest of Honour at the school's Diamond Jubilee.

Many teachers followed Thiedecke and Jane Wassell. Some for a short time, others for years. The school became the "Teutoburg State School" in 1909 and the "Witta State School" in 1926. It celebrated its 80th anniversary in 1972 yet, less than two years later and with only seven pupils, closed permanently in August 1974.²⁷

List of Head Teachers²⁸

1892-1896 Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Thiedecke	1915-1917 Henry Bennett Treloar	1950-1958 Harold Frederick Muller
1896-1898 Jane Wassell	1917-1918 Adolphus Elmer Loving	1958-1964 Joseph Jarvie Love
1898-1899 Llewellyn Jones (dismissed)	1918-1919 Gladys Annie Mansfield	1964-1965 Peter Ernst Jorm
1899-1906 John Sommerville McKenzie	1919-1922 Elizabeth Kate O'Mahony	1965-1968 Garnet Malcolm Watson
1906-1909 Ethel Marie Griffith	1922-1928 Henry Edward Gilchrist	1968-1971 Michael Joseph Stuart Delaney
1909-1911 Thomas Pelham Keys	1928-1934 Thomas Hobgen	11 June 1968 Bernard Lawton Young (temporary)
1911-1911 James Adam	1934-1941 Percival George Phillips	7 July 1970 Raymond William Capper (temporary)
1911-1915 Matthew John Fletcher	1941-1947 Clinton John Caskey	1971-1974 Graham James Miller
1915-1915 James Henderson (temporary)	1947-1949 Walter Robert Oswin	Closed, 9 August 1974
	1949-1950 Thomas Leo Henry Wakefield	

²⁵ The book press cost 10s., had one door and was about 1 metre x 1 metre x 600 millimetres.

²⁶ In 1906, Ethel Griffith, the school's fifth teacher, was advised that after arriving at Landsborough "conveyance to and from Landsborough are best on horseback, luggage can be brought up per Butter factory wagon and then with cream cart to Teutoburg".

²⁷ Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM61 1360. The remaining seven pupils were enrolled at the Maleny State School on 26 August 1974.

²⁸ *Witta State School, Centenary 1892-1992*, booklet. The school's third teacher, Llewellyn Jones, was dismissed by the Department of Public Instruction for professional incompetence and moral delinquency as the alleged father of a child born to a young Teutoburg woman in 1899.

