

FIRST SCHOOL IN LA GRANDE OPENED DOORS IN 1862

Rude Log Cabin In Old Town Taught by Providence M. Currey.

Seventy-two years ago, one year after the first house was built in La Grande, education in the Grande Ronde valley put in an appearance, the stepping stone to cultural progress that today sees La Grande as the educational center of a great area, seat of the only institution of higher learning in Oregon east of the Cascade range of mountains.

In a rude log cabin in Old Town, Providence M. Currey taught the first school in La Grande in 1862. Today his grandson, George H. Currey, is in business here. Providence M. Currey's school was a private one, located in his home on B street. The first five students to attend were Joe Baker, Sarah Russell Chaplin, William Russell, Ada Brown Rogers and her sister, Esther Brown Ellevorth.

A few years later the first public school was erected on a little knoll near the mouth of Mill canyon. The building was a two-story wood structure with two rooms—the older children upstairs and the younger ones on the first floor. There were no graded classes then and as soon as a child finished the books that were used downstairs, he was moved to the upstairs room.

In 1863 the "old white school" was built on Second and K streets, back of where Central school now stands. It furnished the first high school course available in La Grande. But it proved inadequate, and two years later a two-room brick school was erected on Fir street. Then came the old Blue Mountain university which for many years was a leading institution of higher learning in the state.

In 1899 Central school was built, serving as both high and grade school. Greenwood was next in 1906, and the others followed in rapid order.

Five years ago the Eastern Oregon Normal school was built here, marking the final step in the present educational set-up here. Already hundreds of students have been graduated at the E. O. N., with a class of 69 receiving diplomas early this June.

The La Grande High school graduating class numbered 128 this year, and in all the schools in the city, including the Normal school, there are nearly 2500 students receiving education through the spring, winter and fall months. The public schools here not only draw from La Grande, but many from elsewhere in the county send their children to this city for their first 12 years of education.

UNION COUNTY COURT HOUSE A 'TRAVELER'

Stories about early days in Union county are hardly complete without some mentioning of the "travelling" court house. In brief, here's the facts about the matter:

The court house and county seat first was established in 1864 in La Grande, but before long, other towns started attempts to get it. In 1872 a vote was taken to decide whether La Grande, Oro Dell, Union, Summerville or Cove should become the county seat, but none of the five received a majority. So a second election was held, this time in November, 1874, with Union and La Grande the chief contestants. Union won, and when it came to moving the county seat to Union, a Union delegation came to La Grande and loaded the old log jail on wheels cut from a log and moved the entire thing to Union, fording Catherine creek to get there.

Union remained the county seat until 1892, when it was moved back to La Grande, several men of this city going to Union one Sunday and bringing the books and court records back with them. The present county court house, built by the city and rented to the county for many years before it finally was purchased outright, was built that year.

PASTOR RESIGNS
Rev. Alexander has resigned as pastor of the M. E. church in this city and will go east for a two-year course in a theological institute. Rev. O. M. Irwin has been secured to officiate as pastor.—La Grande Chronicle, May 17, 1893.

CELEBRANTS QUIT SPEAKER WHEN FIRST TRAIN WHISTLED

"You bet I was there when that first train pulled in," says Mrs. Margaret Wallinger Oliver, now here from Portland for the big celebration. "We had a big family of children, but I never stayed at home of the children's account. I had seen pictures of engines pulling trains of cars and I had a pretty clear idea of how they should look, but I had never seen a real puffing, smoking, chugging one. When the date was set for the grand entry of that train into La Grande, I knew I would be there. A trip to La Grande was always something of an event and occupied the greater part of a day, but never had a trip been looked forward to with such eagerness as the Fourth of July celebration in 1884.

"Mr. Oliver and I, with some of the children, went to town in the family hack. We lived at the old home place (now in the Valeria district) and the hack drawn by two farm horses could get us to town in one and a half to two hours. We proceeded to the place up on the hill where the celebration was to be held, with the big barbecue dinner at noon. We all took our dinner baskets and had some of the meat from the animal which had been roasted in the pit.

"Among other things on the program was an address by Col.

Currey, prominent local orator, father of George Currey. There was a big crowd present. I remember. What Col. Currey was saying, I do not remember, but I do know that before his address had progressed very far, that engine whistled and did that audience get up and run! Where? Oh, over to the edge of the hill where I think the Normal school now stands, and there stood part of Col. Currey's one-time respectful audience, all breathless and excited, greeting the noisy, smoky iron horse in varied ways. The children went wild and the older folks were not very far behind them in the matter of thrills."

MASONIC GROUP ELECTS

The following were elected and installed as officers of La Grande lodge, A. F. and A. M., Dec. 20: W. M., H. S. Strange; S. W., F. J. Holmes; J. W., John McAllister; treasurer, M. P. Honan; secretary, J. L. Curtis; S. D., H. C. Cotner; J. D., B. F. Owsley; tiler, C. G. Stacey; stewards, E. Reynolds and F. Allen.—La Grande Gazette, Dec. 26, 1890.

BRANCH COMPLETED IN 1908

In the year 1908 the extension of the La Grande-Elgin branch line railroad was completed into Joseph, providing an additional 64 miles of line. The road to Elgin was built in 1890.

LA GRANDE BOASTS OF FINE RECREATIONAL ADVANTAGES

La Grande, and the surrounding country of Union and Walla-walla counties, presents the leading recreational area in Eastern Oregon, in fact in most of the Inland Empire.

Situated as it is at the gateway to Wallowa lake, "the Switzerland of America," annually thousands of people, from both here and outside points, pass through La Grande en route to the mighty Wallows for a period of camping, hiking, fishing, marvelling at the magnificent scenery, perhaps climbing the 10,000-foot Matterhorn or Eagle Cap, or in some way enjoy an out-of-door vacation to the fullest.

Of the thousands who go to the Wallows, hundreds stop in this city to play golf on the La Grande country club course, unquestionably one of the finest, sportiest in the northwest. Other hundreds, especially in the late summer, stop here to drive to the top of Mt. Emily, 6000-foot peak north of La Grande where an unusually impressive pastoral poses, and bring a fine income waters throughout Union and Wallowa counties attract hundreds of others.

In fact, taking La Grande as the hub of a recreation center, there is little that can be sought for and not found—from swimming in faultless pools here, at Pine Cone and at Cove, to hunt-

ing phasants, grouse and deer in the fall, or from snaking a 20-inch trout from any of a number of fine fishing streams to picnicking above the timberline after a marvelous ride over well kept roads through sometimes virgin forests.

The recreational possibilities of this portion of the state is one of the chief charms of existence here, and as a result nearly every citizen is an ardent sportsman, following out a course, his own particular ideas in the sport he chooses to enjoy.

OWNS BREWERY

Julius Roesch is the proprietor of the only brewery in the city. He has had the misfortune to have two brewery buildings destroyed by fire but now has a substantial building of brick that is practically fireproof. He is a member of the city council and is among La Grande's most progressive citizens.—La Grande Gazette, Dec. 26, 1890.

MIGHTY HUNTER

While on a hunting trip last Sunday, G. M. Richey succeeded in bagging a good sized coyote. "Mac" is becoming quite an experienced hunter, and with "Mine leetle vee tog" at his heels he wages war with anything that crosses his path.—La Grande Gazette, Sept. 23, 1892.

1884 - 1934



Here With the Railroad

We are proud of the fact that it was Oscar Wheeler Moon who was the engineer on the first train to run into La Grande, 50 years ago.

Proud, pleased and well satisfied too, that he was followed here by his son, Edward M. Moon, father of Edward O. Moon, Harry W. Moon and Elmer H. Moon, proprietors today of the Moon Drug Co., of this city . . . Proud we are too of the business built and the part the Moon family has played in the growth and progress of La Grande . . . With our patrons we have constantly strived through fair and honest dealing to repay the favor of generous public patronage accorded this firm over these many years we have succeeded here in business . . . And we pledge a continuance of square dealing into the future of what we hope and trust will be most successful, happy years for one and all of La Grande and surrounding territory.

MOON DRUG CO.

FIR AT ADAMS