

J.C. PENNEY: Customers often traveled to town on horses in the early days

Continued from 1A

The sound of laughter between clerk and customer wafted upstairs as the cashier rang up a shirt at a fraction of its original price.

The store, the 26th branch opened by the company, will soon shut its doors, along with 137 other branches around the country.

In Mizerka-Peters' office, a portrait of founder James Cash Penney leans against the wall. The manager recently took the picture down to box up and mail to company headquarters. Wearing a bowtie and a snowy white mustache, Penney looks contemplative in the black-and-white photo. Penney launched the mega-chain with two partners whom he eventually bought out.

The Pendleton store is the oldest in its original location.

"We were in the first wave of J.C. Penney stores. We've been here for 106 years," said Mizerka-Peters. "We haven't moved."

A 1911 advertisement in the *East Oregonian* gives a glimpse of the prices at the Golden Rule Store, as it was called then. Bib overalls cost 25 cents and a wool serge suit, \$14.72. Horsehide gloves cost 98 cents. Besides clothing, the store also sold dress goods and notions. Competitors at the time included The Peoples Warehouse, The Greater Alexander Department Store, Workingmen's Clothing Company, F.E. Livengood & Company, the Wohlenberg Department Store, Bond Brothers, The Hub and H.H. Wessel.

In the early days of J.C. Penney's, customers often traveled to town on horses, which were tethered to rings just outside the store.

Inside, things were different than these days



An advertisement from 1911 that ran in the *East Oregonian* touts the standards of the Golden Rule Store, what J.C. Penney was called when I began over a hundred years ago.

of high-speed internet. In the mid-1900s, sales transactions traveled from the floor to the mezzanine via a canister pulled by wire and pulley.

"They put the transaction slip and cash into a metal tube and it shot up to the office," Mizerka-Peters said. "The cashier would make change and send it back down."

Mizerka-Peters has worked for the J.C. Penney Company for 25 years, the last two in Pendleton. When she first interviewed with the company, she had planned to finish college and launch a career as a geologist. Then she married a Marine and moved to California. Needing temporary work

before returning to school, she applied for a job at her local J.C. Penney store. She discovered that "retail is in my blood."

"I loved it," Mizerka-Peters said.

Her career took her to Wisconsin and North Bend before she finally became general manager at Pendleton and La Grande stores. For the moment, while focusing on liquidation, she is burying any feelings about the closure. Her customers, however, aren't holding back.

"They're sad about it," Mizerka-Peters said.

The saddest are likely former employees such as Nora Pointer and Suzie Fortier. The two Pendleton

retirees worked a combined 60 years at J.C. Penney starting in the 1970s and 1980s. At the announcement of the store closing, Pointer said, "I was absolutely shocked. Our store has shown good sales over the years and survived a lot of cuts."

Fortier said she felt like crying after learning of the closure of the place she spent so many hours.

"I just loved the people - I miss the customers so much," she said. "Everyone shopped there and it seemed like everyone worked at Penney's at some point."

The basic layout of the J.C. Penney store on Pendleton's Main Street hasn't changed in 106 years, though some departments have come and gone. The basement once housed fabric, patterns and notions. In the rear of the main floor, employees manning a catalogue desk once helped people order items from the massive J.C. Penney catalogue, which contained wedding dresses, sewing machines, appliances and furniture and myriad other merchandise.

"The store was geared toward the working person," Pointer said. "There was a lot of farm and ranch clothing - jeans and heavy shirts."

Fortier worked first in lingerie, then men's and home décor departments. She rang up sales on a cash register a few generations removed from today's

computerized version. She ran credit sales by putting a triplicate sales slip into a flatbed credit card imprinter and running the slider back and forth. She wrapped purchases in brown paper secured by tape.

Pointer worked upstairs in the office where she first ran a 10-key adding machine. She hand-typed invoices, paid bills, did payroll. Her children often came to the store after school and did their homework in the breakroom.

"Penney's was their second home," Pointer said.

J.C. Penney touched three generations of Cori Applegate's family. Applegate, who teaches eighth-grade language arts in Hermiston, remembers spending time with her grandmother, Juanita Applegate, as she worked in the yardage department. In addition, Applegate's mother sewed drapes for the store and her father worked part-time as a clerk for a short time.

At the store, Applegate remembers having lunch with her grandma in the employee break room and being free to explore the store, including a warehouse area near the fabric department.

When Applegate's grandmother died in 2003, Applegate inherited a necklace her grandma had received at 15 years. Hanging from a chain is a ruler and three diamond chips, one for each five years served.

"I wear it with pride,"

Applegate said.

Applegate also has the ring with five diamonds that her grandmother received after 25 years.

One wonders what Mr. Penney might be thinking right now as the company he founded shrinks down further from its peak of 2,053 in the mid-'70s to half that number today. According to Dean Hales, curator of the J.C. Penney Museum in Penney's hometown of Hamilton, Missouri, Penney wasn't the type of guy to get hung up on his breadth of holdings.

"If you ran into him on the street, you wouldn't have known he had a dime," Hales said.

Hales said he knew Penney since Hale was a boy. He bought Penney's 1947 Cadillac and attended the department store tycoon's funeral after Penney's death in 1971. Hale now oversees the museum that contains a wax tuxedo-clad sculpture of Penney, his office furniture and his Masonic sword, among other memorabilia.

The Pendleton store will become a memory on July 31 when the doors close for good. Mizerka-Peters will especially miss the employees.

"They are hard workers and so positive," she said. "We have built some positive relationships at this store. We are family."

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

OPENINGS FOR OPERATORS OF NEW RETAIL LIQUOR LOCATIONS

OLCC is recruiting applicants for new retail liquor locations. The open recruitment process is a market-driven effort to improve customer convenience by expanding retail liquor locations with a measured, but consistent amount of growth.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission is accepting applications and aiming to add new retail liquor locations in the following counties:

Baker County	Grant County	Sherman County	Wasco County
Crook County	Hood River County	Umatilla County	Wheeler County
Deschutes County	Jefferson County	Union County	
Gilliam County	Morrow County	Wallowa County	

Applicants are evaluated on background, knowledge and work experience in:

- Retail business management
- Inventory/cash management
- Retail sales and operation
- Customer service/public relations in a retail environment
- Financial ability to open and operate a retail liquor location

A detailed business plan will be required as part of the application process.

For additional information on open recruitment for new retail liquor locations and application information, visit: http://www.oregon.gov/OLCC/LIQUORSTORES/Pages/liquorsalesoutlets_openrecruitment.aspx

Questions can be directed to OLCC.RetailServices@oregon.gov or call 503-872-5020 (toll-free 1-800-426-2004, Dept # 62). Provide your name, email address and phone number. Applications can also be picked up at 9079 SE McLoughlin Blvd., Portland, OR 97222.

An application with a business plan must be received at OLCC's main office in Portland at the above address, by 5:00 PM, Monday, July 31st, 2017. Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted. Additional open recruitments for these areas and others in the state may occur in the future.

NATIONAL Flag WEEK

Exchange your old flag for a new American Flag!

JUNE 12TH THROUGH JUNE 16TH
WE CELEBRATE FLAG WEEK
IN HONOR OF OUR AMERICAN FLAG AND OUR HERITAGE.

McKay Creek Estates
 1601 Southgate Pl.
 Pendleton, OR 97801
 (541) 276-1987

Elizabethan Manor
 44882 Mission Rd.
 Pendleton, OR 97801
 (541) 276-7157

Flags may be exchanged
 Monday, June 12 thru Friday, June 16
 between 9:00am and 5:00pm.

Limited supply, reserve yours today!
 There will be a ceremonial disposal of the retired flags collected.

Call to reserve your flag today!

www.PrestigeCare.com

ALL WHEELS WEEKEND

23rd Annual

Father's Day Weekend June 16-18 2017

- Main Street Show & Shine
- Friday Night Cruise
- Outlaw Lawn Dragsters
- Men's Drag Races
- Live Entertainment
- Golf Tournament
- Demo Derby
- Over 100 Trophies

WIN THIS CAR!
 10 RAFFLE

For more information:
www.allwheelsweekend.com
 Dayton Chamber of Commerce
 (509)382-4825

Little Darlings!

This special section will be filled with photos of and messages for adorable little darlings from Umatilla County. Families will want to keep this special keepsake for their child and family for years to come.

Olivia,
 I loved you from the very start.
 You stole my breath, embraced my heart.
 Our life together has just begun.
 You're part of me, my little one.
 Love, Mom

PUBLISHES:
 June 28, 2017

DEADLINES:
 June 08, 2017

Send in, or drop by, a full color high resolution photo, your child's name and a message to your child today!

Little Darlings
 211 SE Byers, Pendleton, OR 97801
 333 E. Main, Hermiston, OR 97838
 or email
classifieds@eastoregonian.com

Your Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Child's Name: _____

Message: _____

EAST OREGONIAN
www.eastoregonian.com

Hermiston Herald
www.hermistonherald.com