

Old School Register Has Much To Tell On Early Days In Coos County

BY EMIL R. PETERSON

What stories an old school register can reveal! What memories it may revive! The names of teachers and pupils, lists of visitors, directors. Old days recalled to memory!

Such a register was brought to light at a pioneer meeting in Powers recently, Powers on the South Fork of the Coquille, twenty miles beyond Myrtle Point. We are reminded that prior to the days of Powers, the community was known as Rural. For twenty-five years it had a post office by that name—Rural.

In that old school register, two names are listed more often than all others combined—Wagner and Hayes. This was primarily because there were more Wagner and

Hayes children than all others in the district. And to this day in 1950, these names are known at every turn in the road for miles in every direction from Powers.

Turning again to the old register and harking back to the seventies, we are reminded that a good many families in North Carolina, following the ravages of the unfortunate Civil War, were unsettled. They were unable to forget the smell of powder and the roar of the deadly cannon. Their lives had been upset. They wanted to get away from it all. Their thoughts turned to the Far West—out "where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound, save his own dashings."

Many families had a hankering to go. But scouts must pave the way and report back.

Such scouts were David Wagner and his son-in-law, John Hayes. The year was 1870, when emigrant trains were replacing the covered wagon of the prairie schooner days. David Wagner and John Hayes, with their families and all their worldly belongings, boarded the train that landed them in the Sacramento Valley, California. Here the women and children rested for a time while the men made ready with horse teams, wagons and saddle horses.

When all was loaded and ready, they headed north. Even with the big lift across the continent, there was still a long, hard, weary trek ahead of them, crossing and re-crossing streams in the winding, twisting canyons of northern California, climbing over steep mountain ridges and down precipitous, so-called roads. Finally by way of the old Dollarhide toll road—or was it built by that time? Frankly, I don't know. Anyway, the Wagner and Hayes families had to come over the Siskiyou, into the Rogue River valley. Here they rested for a year.

And they kept their promise to the friends they had left in North Carolina. "Yes," they wrote, "come on, Oregon is wonderful." "The hills rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, the vales stretching in pensive quietness between; the venerable woods—rivers that move in majesty, and the complaining brooks that make the meadows green . . ."

So they wrote to their families back in North Carolina—William P. Mast and others, who came and settled what is sometimes referred to as the North Carolina colony, coming by way of the Coos Bay Wagon road when it was first homes along the East Fork and the North Fork of the Coquille.

In Douglas county, in the neighborhood of Roseburg, the two groups diverged, the Wagner-Hayes party took to the Camas Valley route, down the Middle Fork and then up the South Fork of the Coquille. And here is where we find members of those two families, down to the fifth generation, in this year of 1950.

Let us turn again to that old school register. We find that in

1881, T. C. Land was the teacher, continuing to teach through '82, '83, and into '84, when he was succeeded by William F. Volkmar. Other teachers that followed were Charles Wilkins, Frank C. Kinncutt, Robert Airey and Edward Jenkins, the last named opening the school in September, 1890. At this point the district must have taken up a new register.

In the old one we find the Wagner family represented by Susan E. And right here we ponder on the "E," believing that it stands for Emma, for there was an Emma Wagner who grew up, married a brother of Binger Hermann, and is living on the Hermann farm at Broadbent. She is known as "Aunt Emma." Please tell me if I'm wrong.

But I started to tell you about the Wagner's in that old school register. Besides Susan E., we find Robert, David L., Fannie E., Tice, little Ella who was just five years old, and William C. who also entered at the age of five, and Charley—perhaps this was the William C. previously listed, and Lillie; Lee—could this be David L.? The last Wagner name that we find in the pupil list is Dolly.

In the Hayes families we find Dollie C., Julia A., Lou R., J. McD., John P., Mary S., Jacob M., Thomas J., Joseph and Peter. Other family names include Weigand, Morris, Jeferson, Beach, Hervey, Neal, Kehncutt, Jenkins, Giles, Warner, Berry, Carman, Guerin, Greene, Johnson, Bigelow, Gordon.

The visitors' list is too long to include here but we feel impelled to snatch such familiar names as Benjamin Gant, Calvin Gant and Reuben Summerlin. And we learn also that A. J. Sherwood was the county school superintendent in the eighties.

Before getting away from the list of teachers in that school, we are reminded that the name of T. C. Land appears in Dodge's Pioneer History, page 410, where he is credited with the authorship of a poem, "Our Beautiful Coquille." (The same poem in somewhat different form is found in Bennett's History of Bandon and the Coquille River, credited to Col. Beale.)

Some things in particular are noticeable in this old register: Unlike most of the oldtime rural schools, which usually opened in the spring and continued through the summer for three or four months, this school opened in the fall, usually as late as November and continued into February, having as little as eight weeks. A few times the school opened in August, but the attendance during that month was very poor. The year 1897-98 was a banner year, opening in September and running for twenty weeks, ending in February. F. C. Kennicutt was the teacher and the record indicates that attendance was excellent that year. The second point of special note is the fact that several pupils were enrolled at the age of five, and some continued through their teens and even into their twenties, one being listed as of age 23.

It is interesting to note that Joseph McD. Hayes headed the spelling class apparently more often than any other pupil which such records were kept, and that ten to fifteen years later, in the nineties, he was the contractor for carrying the mail to Rural from

Myrtle Point and that he hired John P. Hayes to do the actual carrying.

Information about the mail service is recorded in this same old register, but this story is already too long. That subject together with the industrial and social activities, including the old grist mill, will be told at a later date.

Fairview Grange Visitors Here

Entertainment for the May 26 meeting of the Coquille Grange was directed by Mrs. Harry Hubbell, lecturer of the Fairview Grange. Fairview members swelled the attendance to a large appreciative audience.

The Twin Hunt, a mixing game, disclosed four pairs of birthday "twins" present in the group. One pair, Norma Burcher of Coquille and Janet Leatherman of Fairview, shared May 26.

A brief historical background of Memorial Day and its varied observance in different states was given by Mrs. Hubbell. Her daughter, Diedra, gave a recital of "Tom." When Carolyn Roos played her selection on the auto harp, the listeners applauded for an encore. Violet Gettner read "Why the Choir Was Late," from the Reader's Digest.

Walt Laird, Coquille, accompanied upon the extemporaneous request of his old friends from Fairview.

The glove relay game included egg peeling, needle threading, coat patching and candle lighting. Mr. Walter George's experienced "harem" won by a wide margin. parent-teacher skit entitled "School Days."

Curry County Classes Set By Homemakers

Classes for making footstools will again be held in Gold Beach, June 28 and 29, Dorothy Newton, county extension agent, has announced. Miss Newton, who will be assisted by project leader, Mrs. Zella Harwood, urges all women and men interested in learning fundamental steps in upholstering to sign-up at the county extension office by June 16. Certain upholstery supplies need to be ordered from Portland which makes adhering to the June 16 deadline extremely important.

Supply and equipment lists are available at the Extension office and will be mailed to you upon request.

A footstool, easily made in two days, will add comfort to your home and provide a way to learn upholstery methods which can be piece of furniture.

Sentinel

COQUILLE, OREGON.

JUNE 1, 1950



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