



Front Street, Coquille City, about 1907

Bits and Pieces of Coquille History

By CURT BECKHAM

The exact date of Evan Cunningham's arrival in the Coquille Valley is not known. He took up a land claim where Coquille now stands. He proceeded to build a cabin and do the necessary work to satisfy the government of his good faith in improving the place. On June 15, 1864 a patent was granted by the United States government to Evan Cunningham for 149 acres and 70/100 of an acre. Cunningham did not live to know that his patent had been approved for he died on July 6, 1864 and with the slowness of mail to this wilderness area several months went by before the papers arrived. He was the first white man to erect a residence within or even near Coquille.

Cunningham was in debt in excess of \$5,000 at the time of his death. The petition of his administrator filed May 23, 1865 showed his personal effects brought something over \$2300, leaving his homestead, appraised at \$400 to satisfy the remaining indebtedness. The homestead was conveyed to Elizabeth Leneve, wife of Dr. S.L. Leneve. The Leneves had arrived in the Coquille Valley in 1864. Elizabeth Leneve, better known as Gramma Leneve conveyed the land to Titus B. Willard on Oct. 9, 1866. On April 14, 1873 Uncle

Tite Willard laid out the first townsite, a row of lots along the bank of the Coquille River.

The place began to grow into a village with the arrival of the following families: The Vowells, Noslers, Moultons, Lórenzes, Messers, Bunchs, Deans, Sherwoods, Lyons, and Mehls. Dr. Leneve moved to Bear Creek but in a short time moved back to open the first drugstore in Coquille. Joseph Collier had a farm adjoining the town part of which was made an addition to the original five blocks that Willard had platted.

A Mr. Notley homesteaded 160 acres lying just east of the Cunningham claim and later his son, John, platted a portion of it into what became known as the Notley addition.

The first school was a log structure erected in the northerly part of town. As families moved into the growing village the log school house was outgrown and a larger and better building was made out of lumber cut from a new sawmill.

The first church was erected in 1887 by the Universalist Society.

The first newspaper was established in 1882 by John Dean who operated under the title of "Herald" until 1913 when he sold to the "Sentinel."