

Coquille's oldest business celebrates 120 years

The Coquille Valley Sentinel is the oldest continuous business in Coquille. Its first issue was published Sept. 9, 1882, by John A. Dean and his brother, 19-year-old Doctor (his real first name) Franklin Dean, under the name of the Coquille City Herald. It was a four-page, 7 column weekly paper; subscriptions were \$2 per year.

In 1890, John Dean sold his interest in the paper to J.S. McEwen. "Doc" Dean kept his interest in the business. Doc bought out McEwen in 1901 and operated the newspaper alone until 1912, when he sold it to Lew A. Cates.

Orvil Dodge had started a rival newspaper, The Coquille Sentinel, in 1906. In 1909, Dodge sold his paper to J. C. Savage. In 1913, Savage sold a half interest in The Coquille Sentinel to Coquille City Herald publisher Cates, who became the editor and publisher.

A year later, Cates sold his interests in both papers to H. W. Young. Young kept both papers operating until he consolidated the Sentinel and the Herald on Sept. 7, 1917, naming the merged publication The Coquille Valley Sentinel.

The 1920's were prosperous years for the paper. In 1921 the paper was ten pages in length, and still sold for \$2 a year. But there was much advertising on a local and national scale. It was not odd to find advertisements for Camel cigarettes, Bergmann Shoe Oil, or the Standard Oil Company. The local news was still the big feature, with special items about the people in Myrtle Point, Arago, and the East Fork area.

During the next five years the paper ran off and sold 2,000 to 3,000 copies a week. The merger of the two papers was succeeding. The success made it possible for a new home for The Sentinel to be built.

In 1926, a modern concrete building was constructed at the corner of First and Willard (now Birch)



This building was likely The Coquille Herald's first home. Its location has been lost in the mists of time. This photo, and a 1883 issue of the newspaper, were graciously donated by Margaret Dean to The Sentinel this year .

Streets. The Sentinel office was located in that building until February of 1976, although the names of the streets had been changed and considerable remodeling had taken place.

Young remained with The Coquille Valley Sentinel until 1927 when he relinquished its publication to his son H. A. Young and his daughter, Marian Grimes.

In the early 1930's the paper was changed from a Friday to a Thursday edition. The main reasons for this change were that the businessmen wanted their advertisements out before Friday, and rural mail routes came to the area.

In the May 13, 1932 issue, which appeared in two sections of eight pages to a section, the editor said:

"The Sentinel this week is distributing more than 3,500 copies all over southern Coos and northern Curry counties. There has been no special edition feature in connection with it, but the businessmen of Coquille have been most generous with their advertising patronage, and the management appreciates their cooperation."

H.A. Young and Grimes continued to co-publish the paper until 1945 when Mr. Young sold his interest to Ralph P. Stuller. The paper was then

co-published by Grimes and Stuller, with Mr. Stuller as editor.

By 1949, the paper and the staff continued to enlarge. The paper now had a specific sports page, womens section, classified advertisements page, and was sub-titled, "Southwestern Oregon's Largest Weekly."

As the years passed, there was more and more work that had to be done on the paper. In 1952, Mr. Stuller bought Mrs. Grimes' interest in the Sentinel, thus ending her thirty-six years of service to the paper. At this time there was approximately 2,000 papers circulated a week for a city population of about 3,500. The staff was still at seven people.

Stuller continued to edit and publish the paper until 1961 when he sold it to Fred Haas of North Bend, who published the paper until 1978.

In the 1970s the paper usually consisted of at least two sections and used a wide variety of color advertising on a regular basis. The office moved into the old Barton Building at 141 North Central on Feb. 1, 1976. Subscription rates were \$6 per year and a single copy price was \$.15 cents.

In 1978, the paper was purchased by Gold Beach publishers Robert and Betty Van Leer. Then followed a rapid succession of owners: The VanLeers sold to a Californian in 1979, who in turn sold to an Idaho concern in 1980. It sold to Laura Isenhardt in 1982; she sold it to Sykes, Olson & Sykes of Reedsport in 1985. At some point, the publication day was changed to Wednesday to accommodate grocers, who preferred that their ads appear on that day.

Oregon native Fred Taylor, former executive editor of The Wall Street Journal, bought the paper in 1989. Janet and Del Richardson purchased it from Taylor in 2000, and published its first full-color issue in the summer of 2001.

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