

OUT OF THE PAST

Blue Mountain Eagle
Jan. 19, 1967
50 years ago**Blue Mt. Eagle Begins Its 99th Year Of Publication**

Most readers probably didn't notice it, but the Blue Mountain Eagle took another step toward a milestone with the first publication of the new year. Under the flag on top of the front page was the notation, "Volume 99 Number 1." This signifies the beginning of the 99th year of Oregon's oldest weekly newspaper.

Founded in 1868, the Eagle is the continuation of the Grant County News, The Prairie City Journal and the John Day Valley Ranger.

Its birth is traced back to the colorful gold mining days in Canyon City. The first paper was published in Canyon City in October 1868, under the name "City Journal," by R. H. J. Comer.

Comer brought his printing equipment to Canyon City from The Dalles by pack train. The equipment consisted of a job press and enough ad and body type to put together a small newspaper.

The City Journal, a three-column folio, 7 3/4 by 10 1/4 inches over all, was published "semi-occasionally" by the Typographical Society for the proprietors." The fourth issue of the paper appeared eight months following the first publication.

The policy of the paper concerning local news was, "Local news being of such a nature that everybody, or any other man, knows every other person's business, except their own, we shall publish only such as suits

our purpose."

Joaquin Miller, former Eugene newspaper man and later Grant County Judge, known to world-wide fame as the "poet of the Sierras," was a frequent contributor to the Canyon City paper in the sixties and seventies.

In the early seventies, the name of the paper was changed to the Canyon City Express and later to the Grant County Express.

H. R. Gale became editor in 1876, about the time the name was changed to the Grant County Times. In 1879 a new owner, S. H. Shepherd, changed the name to the Grant County News, an independent paper issued on Saturdays.

The Grant County News had the first telephone in the county with the installation of the "strange instrument" in 1898.

In 1908, Clinton P. Haight, a University of Oregon law school graduate, became half owner of the News with P. F. Chandler. In the same year the new firm purchased the Blue Mountain Eagle, which had been moved from Long Creek to Canyon in 1900. The papers were consolidated under the name of the Blue Mountain Eagle.

The Long Creek Eagle was founded by C. E. Dustin and Peter Connolly in November 1886. The population of Long Creek was approximately 150 persons.

In 1898, the name of the Long Creek paper was changed to the Blue Mountain Eagle. Two years later, it moved to Canyon City. When the Eagle moved to Canyon City, Charles A. Coe started the Eastern Oregon Ranger, a Friday indepen-



From Jan. 19, 1967: CANYON CITY 1902 - Washington Street in Canyon City in 1902 was the scene of much activity. Board walks saved the residents from sloshing in knee-deep mud during rainy weather. The office and shop of the Blue Mountain Eagle is shown on the corner of the left side of the street. On the extreme right is the historic St. Thomas' Episcopal Church. The Eagle office and the business section of Canyon City was destroyed by fire in 1937.

dent Republican weekly. Later the name was changed to the Long Creek Ranger.

This was the beginning of the John Day Valley Ranger. In 1908, Coe sold the paper to J. H. Allen, present justice of the peace and former county judge, and W. E. Weir who retained ownership until it was sold to

Arthur R. Jones in 1930. Jones was a minister but had been publishing a paper at Mitchell.

Jones moved the paper and printing plant to John Day in 1930. He operated the paper until the 1937 Canyon City fire when it was purchased by Chandler and Haight.

Three major fires swept

through Canyon City with the first occurring in 1870. The second fire, which started in the Elkhorn Hotel Nov. 11, 1898, destroyed the entire community except the newspaper office.

But luck ran out for the paper in the third fire. Starting in Hotel Canyon April 20, 1937, fire completely destroyed the business district of Canyon City, including the Blue Mountain Eagle. The Canyon City paper put out a special edition, through the courtesy of the John Day Valley Ranger, while the fire was still raging out of control.

Lost in the fire were the complete files of the old Canyon City papers. Only scattered issues of the early papers remain.

After publishing for 42 years, the Prairie City Journal was absorbed by the Blue Mountain Eagle in 1942. The paper was first named the Prairie City Miner and was changed to the Grant County Journal in 1912. Later the name was changed again to the Prairie City Journal.

The Blue Mountain Eagle and the John Day Valley Rang-

er consolidated in August 1948. Both papers had been under the same ownership and management since 1942. The name of the Grant County Blue Mountain Eagle was selected as the official title of the paper.

Other papers made brief appearances in Grant County. One was the John Day Sentinel and another was the Avalanche Journal.

Since the last consolidation in 1948, the Eagle continued to broaden its scope in the tradition set by the earlier editors and publishers. In the past few years, news was categorized into sections such as society and sports. The Eagle has taken on a more modern look in the past year to enhance readability of news, features and advertising.

Last week the Eagle printed 2,405 copies, the highest in history. The Blue Mountain Eagle is enjoying its highest circulation, which is larger than when the population of Grant county was greater. At least 93 percent of all homes in the county receive the Eagle each week.

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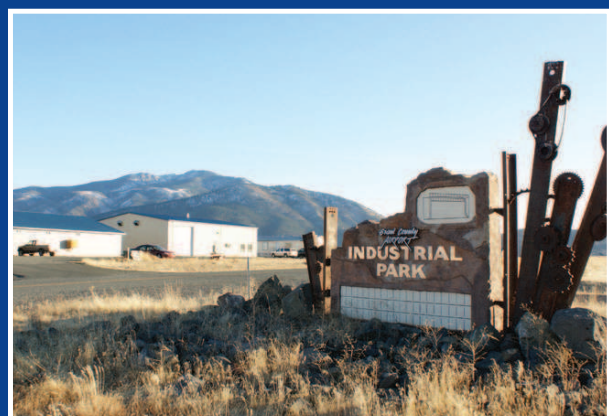
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