

HOSPITAL

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on vacation," Lewis said. She said she would have stayed several days at the hospital, but her aunt and uncle from Washington picked her up and brought her home.

Lewis waited until her husband, Gerald, returned home from logging before naming their third child, who was also their third girl.

"We looked at that beautiful baby," Jessie said. "Her name was going to be Melody, and I said she doesn't look like a Melody."

Lewis' friend Kathy Hammack, who was also a Canyon City resident back then, gave birth to a baby boy at the same hospital the day before Holly was born.

Jessie said she enjoyed the hospital in Prairie City.

"It was the neatest thing we had in our community," she said, adding she was happy to see how the new hospital in John Day was organized as well.

Train signals for doctor

When Dr. Virgil Belknap practiced in Prairie City, about 1913 to 1921, it is said that if

there was an injured logger, the whistle would sound using the doctor's three-digit phone number as a signal as the train crested Dixie Summit. When that happened, the train would pick Belknap up and take him back to the site of the injured worker.

Records highlighting hospital

(Written in 1946)

• 1913: Dr. Virgil Belknap and Dr. J.H. Fell, his brother-in-law opened a hospital of five-bed capacity, serving general and surgical cases. A two-story farm building on the south side of the city known as the Bill Taylor home or Fisk Farm Home.

• 1916: Belknap and Fell continued their practice, moving equipment to the second floor west wing of the present Hotel Prairie, with eight beds and one surgical room. The move was directed by Miss Elizabeth Cummings, a graduate of Chicago Poly Clinic Hospital, who rented the space and operated it under her own management and as supervisor.

• 1918: With increasing demand for hotel space, the doctors moved the hospital across the street to the second floors



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter **This wheelchair, on display at the DeWitt Museum, was used at the first hospital in Prairie City in 1921.**

of the Masonic building. Cummings continued operation and supervision of the hospital. The new location offered an increase from eight to 11 beds and required the additional services of one registered nurse and one helper to the staff.

• 1921: It was decided to have the city purchase, from the Board of Education, the abandoned school building. This was rented to Belknap and Fell for \$50 a month and named Grant County Hospital. Cummings retired and left the city. Both doctors sold their interest to Dr. Lawson, who operated it for a few years and then sold his interest to Dr. Hugh Brown. Brown sold his interest to Dr. Hugh Fate.

• 1936: Cummings, now Mrs. Morrow, former superintendent and operator, returned and accepted superintendency of the hospital.

• June 1938: Dr. Fate sold his interest in the hospital to the city and went east to study.

• January 1940: The hospital, now with 13 beds, was leased by the city to Alex Repp, a male nurse, who operated it.

• March 1940: Hospital was closed for cleaning and repairs.

• March 19, 1940: Opened under management of the city and supervised by Elizabeth Morrow and assisted by Izeta Walker.

• May 1940: Building of the new hospital as it appears today (1946) was begun in the rear of the school home on present site.

• Sept. 14-15, 1940: New hospital opened with 17 beds and nine nurses with Drs. Gerold and Martha van der Vlugt.

• September 1945: Hospital taken over by Prairie City and put under supervision of Mrs. Viola King who was paid a salary by the city. She remained in charge until August 1946.

• September 1946: Mrs. Jones took over for one month until the arrival of Glenn Howell who was given complete administration of the institution.

Courtesy of Blue Mountain Hospital, John Day.

Blue Mountain General Hospital to hold open house

July 18, 1947
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Blue Mountain General hospital at Prairie City will hold an open house for the general public, Friday, July 18, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Refreshments will be served to all attending, and everyone is cordially invited to attend and inspect the hospital and the many improvements that have been added recently to the hospital.

A special program will be held for mothers and prospective mothers, featuring Walt Disney's Technicolor film, "Bathing Time For Baby."

In the evening there will be a banquet at the city hall served by the Junior Women's club.

Due to the limited amount of space the banquet has been confined to invitation only. C. W. Reynolds, manager of the Cor-

vallis General hospital and president of the Oregon Association of Hospitals, will be the principal speaker.

V. C. Belknap, who practiced for many years in the John Day valley, will be present at the open house celebration.

Dr. Belknap is very well known all over Eastern Oregon and for the past several years has resided at Nampa, Idaho. Dr. Fred Hunter, now with the Portland Sanitarium, also plans to be present for the occasion.

Both Dr. Belknap and Dr. Hunter have been appointed Honorary Members of the medical staff of the Blue Mountain Hospital, along with Dr. C. J. Bartlett of Baker and Dr. D. J. Lawson of Mt. Vernon, Washington.

At this time it is not certain if Dr. Bartlett and Dr. Lawson will be present.

The Honorary appointments were made by the City of Prairie City on July 14.

Prairie City hospital to close

April 25, 1957
Blue Mountain Eagle

A special tax levy in the amount of \$41,555.91, believed by the Blue Mountain hospital district directors and the budget committee to be necessary for the continued operation of the Blue Mountain general hospital, was disapproved by the district's voters in a special election Saturday, with 695 votes cast against the levy and 440 votes favoring it.

In view of the rejection of the special levy in excess of the six per cent limitation, and in consideration of the present financial condition of the district,

the directors have decided that the hospital must discontinue operations. As stated in a letter to Grant County residents quoted below, no patients will be admitted to the hospital in Prairie City after April 30.

While the amount of the budget within the six per cent limitation, \$31,044.09, has been levied for the coming year, a large part of that amount will be required to pay the present indebtedness of the district. At the present time the district owes \$11,000 borrowed from the Grant County bank, about \$12,800 in other debts, and will have a payroll in the neighborhood of \$5,000 to meet at the

end of this month. These items total \$28,800. All is not as dark as this figure would indicate, however, for the district has on hand about \$3,000 in cash and due accounts receivable total about \$19,000.

Financial difficulties of the hospital have been attributed to a number of causes by different people, but the basic cause is the lack of utilization of the hospital's facilities. Average patient occupancy during April has been only four, and for many months it has been less than nine.

Following is the statement from the hospital board, issued after a series of meetings Monday evening and Tuesday:

"To the People of Grant County:

"Last Saturday the voters disapproved the special levy needed to finance the Blue Mountain general hospital in Prairie City through the next year. This means that there will not be enough money available to continue to operate the hospital in Prairie City.

"Accordingly, the hospital at Prairie City will not admit

any patients after April 30.

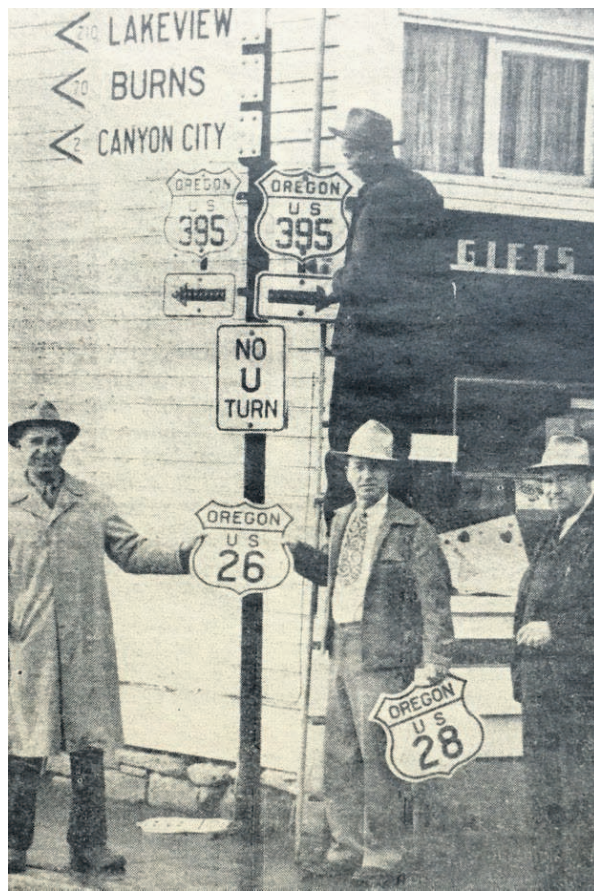
"The directors of Blue Mountain hospital district are going forward with an intensive study to determine what type and location of facility is needed to provide the people of Grant County with satisfactory hospital facilities.

"It is estimated that this planning will take from 30 to 60 days. During this period of time, under an arrangement made with Drs. Gerold and Martha van der Vlugt, patients of any medical doctor may be admitted for treatment in the John Day general hospital. This arrangement will continue until such a time as the voters approve or disapprove a different hospital service than has been furnished in the past.

"As your hospital board, we sincerely regret the necessity of closing the existing facility and solicit your cooperation and assistance. We hope to have a satisfactory alternative proposition for your consideration in the not too distant future.

"Respectfully yours,
"Directors of Blue Mountain Hospital District"

SIGNS OF CHANGE



Contributed photo/Tom Biggar

From Feb. 8, 1952: Signs marking the change of highway 28 to U.S. 26 were completed through Grant County Thursday. Holding the new marker is P. N. Shown (left), John Day Chamber of Commerce highway committee man, and Dan E. Scott, president of the Oregon Highway 26 association. Irving Hazeltine, highway association and chamber of commerce secretary, watches proceedings. Pole climber is a state sign crewman.

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