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School days — in days gone by

Students' early education marked by tin pails, chalkboards and a tough trek

By Cheryl Hoefler

For the Blue Mountain Eagle

Today's students have it pretty easy.

For most, the biggest concern is waking up early enough to make a mad dash to the car or bus stop on time, dressed and with school supplies in tow. Even those who walk probably have a short trek and can push their morning routine with minutes to spare.

But for students trying to get an education a century or more ago, the school day started long before they entered the classroom door — and ended long after. Chances are, those stories from your parents, grandparents and great-grandparents about trudging many miles to school in the "olden days" are true. You can be sure, however, that they didn't make the trek "uphill both ways."

After the gold rush in the 1860s, families followed miners into Grant County and other parts of Eastern Oregon, populating the area. More people arriving into the 1900s meant more children needing



Contributed photo/Grant County Historical Museum

Riverside School students, top row, from left, Walter McLeod, Chester Reynolds, Chester Bennet, Dave Laurance and teacher Anna Williams; next row, from left, Carrie Deardorff, Fred Deardorff, Violet McPhearson, Hazel Laurance, Archie Peterson, Harry Coombs and Blanche Preston; next row, from left, Anna Bennett, Myrtle Hiatt, Etta Hiatt, Alpha Nash, Blanche Deardorff, Frances Stanbro, Mae Bennet and Dora Coombs; front row, from left, Gladys Sweet, Eldon Deardorff, Hattie Cooley, Naomi Stanbro, Alfred Coombs, Hilda Preston, Avis Preston, Harold French, Clyde Laurance and Charlie Cooley. Teachers were Lee and Anna Williams. Date unknown.

an education — at least as far as the eighth-grade level. As a result, small one-room

schoolhouses popped up by the dozen across the land. However, without modern

paved roads and bus transportation, the journey to school was still often an arduous and



Contributed photo/DeWitt Museum

Rebel Schoolhouse, Canyon City, date unknown.

lengthy one — on foot or animal powered, and in all types of inclement weather.

Many of the schools served ranch families in that area, each having its own teacher. According to a Jan. 27, 2003, Eagle article by Nadia Turner Schultz of Prairie City, "Early teachers, who received little pay and usually boarded at the pupil's home, were responsible for making sure drinking water and a dipper were available, and a fire was going before the students arrived and that wood for the heating stove was carried in and ready for use. The teachers usually were young people who

finished school through the eighth or ninth grade, or one or two grades of high school."

And there were no cafeterias serving breakfast and lunch in those days. Students carried homemade lunches in tin pails or whatever container they had available. Lessons were done on chalkboards, and often the students had their own small ones at their desk. No laptops or smart boards in those days.

By the mid-19th century, good roads and busing helped students travel farther and easier. The abundance of small

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Oldest weekly newspaper in Oregon turns 150

The Eagle celebrates its sesquicentennial

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Blue Mountain Eagle at 150 years is the oldest weekly newspaper in Oregon, although it operated under different names until 1898.

According to George S. Turnbull's "History of Oregon Newspapers," the Eagle "traces its ancestry clear back to the beginnings of the little old City Journal of early statehood days." A journalism professor at the University of Oregon, Turnbull published his history in 1939.

The City Journal was the

first newspaper published in Grant County, with its first edition issued in October 1868. The printing equipment was brought in by pack train from The Dalles.

"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," publisher R.H.J. Comer announced June 28, 1869.

The newspaper's name changed in the 1870s to the Canyon City Express, Grant County Express, Grant County Times and finally the Grant

County News, which published on Saturdays.

Ownership also changed in the final decades of the 19th century before P.F. Chandler and Robert Glen acquired the paper in 1898. Law school graduate Clinton P. Haight bought an interest in the paper in 1908, establishing the firm of Chandler & Haight.

A separate branch in Grant County newspaper history brought the Eagle name to the present-day newspaper. The Long Creek Eagle was founded by C.E. Dustin and Peter Connolly in November 1886 when the official population of

Long Creek was 150.

After two ownership changes, the newspaper's name was changed to the Blue Mountain Eagle in 1898. The newspaper moved from Long Creek to Canyon City in 1900, and Chandler & Haight acquired the newspaper in 1908. The Grant County News and the Blue Mountain Eagle were then consolidated under the Blue Mountain Eagle name.

Shortly after the Blue Mountain Eagle left Long Creek in 1900, Charles A. Coe started another newspaper called the Long Creek Ranger. The newspaper was acquired

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File photo

CANYON CITY 1902 - Washington Street in Canyon City in 1902 was the scene of much activity. Boardwalks 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 were destroyed by fire in 1937.

THE GREAT WAR

Grant County men called to service

Draft expands as war drags on

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

One way World War I entered into the lives of Grant County residents in 1918 was through the draft.

By the time the United States entered the war in 1917, the federal government had conscripted soldiers in two prior American conflicts — the American Revolution and the Civil War.

President Woodrow Wilson opted to rely on the draft after only 73,000 volunteers enlisted in the first six weeks of the war when the target was 1 million. The Selective Service Act allowed exemptions for dependency, essential occupations and religious scruples.

The 1917 act authorized drafting men between 21 and 31 years, and 10 million men were registered. Eligibility was expanded to 18 to 45 years in

"The Eagle advises all registrants to comply with all orders pertaining to the draft."

1918, and 24 million men registered.

By the time the war ended, 3 million men had been inducted, with little of the resistance seen during the Civil War thanks to a major campaign by the federal government to build support for the war. Newspapers and magazines that published articles opposed to the war were shut down.

The Wilson administration also imposed restrictions on German aliens. On Jan. 18, the Blue Mountain Eagle reported that all German men

14 years or older must register in the first week of February. A permit with their thumb print would be required if they wanted to move around the country.

By the end of January, 630 Grant County men had registered for the draft, and 200 in Class 1 were ordered to report for physical exams in Canyon City. Sheriff Howell and County Clerk Powell were busy handling the federal requirements. The Eagle printed the names each week of the men who were required to show up for exams or registration.

"Few delinquents must answer now," a Feb. 1 headline said. "The Eagle advises all registrants to comply with all orders pertaining to the draft," the front-page article said. "If they do not, a term in a federal prison will await them."

About half of the men who showed up for physicals did not qualify. Problems included hernias, bad

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Letters from the front

Local doughboys describe war conditions

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

When World War I broke out on July 28, 1914, it was called the Great War. Later it was called the "war to end all wars." More than 70 million military personnel were mobilized in the global conflict.

By the time the war ended on Nov. 11, 1918, more than 9 million combatants had died and more than 6 million civilians had been killed.

The United States entered the deadly conflict after declaring war on Germany on April 6, 1917. Through 1918, the Blue Mountain Eagle ran letters from local soldiers on the front page

each week — some from training camp or troop ships, and some from the front line.

On Jan. 11, a letter from Alexander Harper, Dayville, writing from "somewhere in France," ran in the paper. Censors read every letter and deleted sensitive information.

"We saw some towns that were pretty badly smashed up by the Germans," Harper wrote. "It seemed that the country all around us was a mess of guns, pits, trenches, dugouts and barbed wire entanglements. It looks impossible for men to go through the wire as it is everywhere and awful masses of it."

Harper served in an artillery battery.

"It was a wonderful sight to see the guns blazing away, and the sky seemed to be on fire," he wrote. "A fellow feels a little

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SPANISH INFLUENZA STRIKES FEAR IN GRANT COUNTY

Deadliest natural disaster in human history

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Troop movements during World War I are blamed for making the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic

the deadliest natural disaster in human history. Some scientists have traced the origin of the disease to Haskell County, Kansas, but it was reported early on at 14 military camps across the United States.

The flu is a very contagious disease that can prove fatal if proper medical treatment by today's standards is not available. In 1917, as U.S. soldiers were mustered at training camps and sent to Europe on cramped ships, the disease rapidly spread among the millions of troops sent abroad.

Scientists who have investigated the 1918 flu have pinpointed the major troop staging and hospital center at Etaples, France, as a key location in spreading the disease among the soldiers in the first global war.

The flu soon made its way to the general population. Lasting from January 1918 to December 1920,

the pandemic infected an estimated 500 million to 1 billion people and killed from 50 million to 100 million people — which at the time was 3-5 percent of the global population.

More people died of the Spanish flu in a single year than in the

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