

Wallowa History Center *Preserving Our Past for the Future*

*The Wallowa History Center works to save the memories, stories,
and photographs that define the history and culture of the places we call home.*

– Newsletter Number 15 • January 2011 –

Childhood Memories of Forrest Carpenter (Part I)

From the time of the marriage of Mother and Father until we moved to Wallowa, Oregon in 1919, we lived year-round at the Sled Springs Ranger Station. The move to Wallowa was prompted by the need for [brother] Jack and me to attend school. There was no year-round school where we lived. Mother enrolled both Jack and me in the first grade the fall we moved to Wallowa. I lasted about a month before the school administration decided I was too young. Mother taught me at home, and I enrolled in the second grade the following year.

For several years after we moved to Wallowa, we would return to Sled Springs during the summer months. A ritual during each spring and fall was to walk the “old cow” the 20-odd miles to and from Sled Springs. Over the years we had several milk cows, but I don’t recall that any of them had a name. They were always the “old cow.”

The cow-walking duty was assigned to Jack or me (or both), and I still recall how relieved we were to have the long trek completed. I am sure the “old cow” was also relieved. She didn’t produce much milk for a couple of days.

Mother was a “gatherer.” She loved to gather things to eat. During the huckleberry season in July and August, Mother would scour the woods looking for huckleberry patches. One summer we made a trip to Kuhn Ridge, lying north of Sled Springs, and came upon an acre or more of the most unbelievable crop of berries that you can imagine. Mother was like a child in a candy store. She sat in the middle of the patch and, without moving, filled all the containers we had brought along.



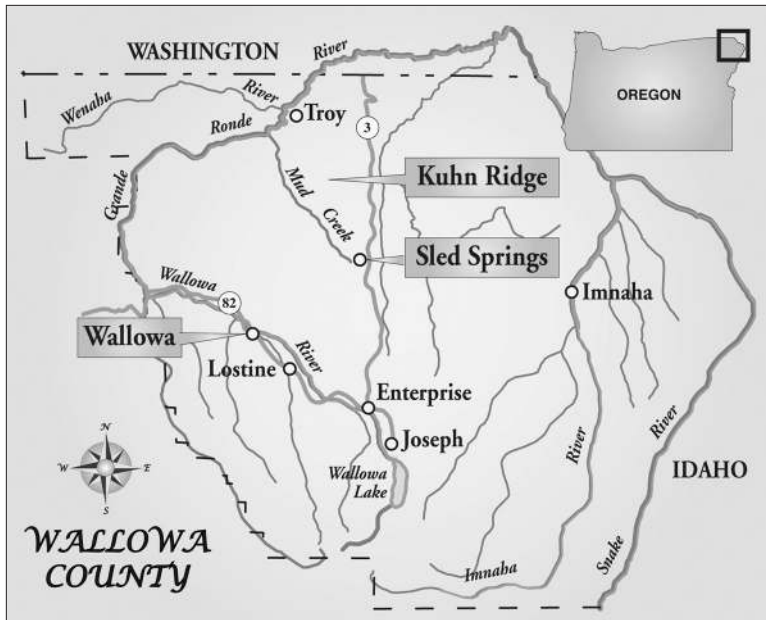
Forrest Carpenter
8th grade



Looking east on Main Street, Wallowa, 1921

There were no trout streams in the Sled Springs area but when we moved to Wallowa, we moved to a trout-fishing paradise. The Wallowa River flowed through town and it was just a matter of walking a few blocks to excellent fishing.

Wallowa in the 1920s was a thriving community. Main Street contained virtually all of the commercial activities normally associated with a larger town., including a movie theater, a library, a telephone office, an auto service station, a bank, a pharmacy,



two barber shops, a general mercantile store, a hardware store, a dental office, a bakery, a hospital, at least four churches, an elementary school, a high school, a pool hall, a realty office, two variety stores, a post office, a lumber mill, and the Wallowa National Forest Headquarters office, where Dad was the Senior Ranger in charge of the Sled-Bear Ranger District.

The movie house, The McLean Theater, was owned and operated by Duncan McLean, an old Scotsman who used a cane and talked with a marked Scottish accent. We children were deathly afraid of “Old Dunc.” When we were able to inveigle a dime from Mother or Dad, we would attend

the Saturday afternoon matinee to catch up on the continuing *Adventures of Tarzan of the Apes* or the *Perils of Pauline*. The movies were, of course, silent and any noise in the theater would be very disturbing. We kids were required to sit on hard, front-row benches and remain quiet. Kids being kids, however, it was not long before the rules would be broken. I can still hear “Old Dunc” coming down the aisle, rapping his cane and telling us to quiet down or we would have to leave.

The bakery was owned and operated by Ottmar Frick and his wife Anna, who were German immigrants, and well skilled in the art of bread and pastry making.

The hospital was a two-story frame building operated by Dr. John B. Gregory, who came to Wallowa from Alabama. He was an excellent general practitioner and very highly regarded. I still recall his soft Alabama drawl and how he addressed us boys as “young sprouts.”

Our library was small, with a limited number of books, but it was well used. It was one of my favorite places. I was fascinated by stories of the early pioneers, including mountain men, fur traders, cowboys and Indians. I recall, particularly, a series of books, written by Joseph A. Altshelter, which detailed the adventures in the Kentucky wilderness of a young pioneer named Henry Ware. Quite frequently, the librarian, who was interested in seeing that my literary education was expanded, urged me to read books of greater substance—without success. I was in the library when the librarian excitedly informed me that a young aviator named Charles Lindbergh had just flown across the Atlantic Ocean to France.

When we moved to Wallowa, we were as poor as the proverbial church mice, but that decade was one of the happiest periods in my life. We didn’t have much money but we had everything else essential to a good life. Our original home, which we occupied through most of a decade, was an old one-story frame building with an attic, two small bedrooms, one closet, a small living and



From left: Ottmar Frick, Katherine Gregory, Anna Frick, Dr. John Gregory

dining room, and a kitchen with a pantry. We had no bathroom facilities but had recourse to an outdoor privy. Initially we only had a cold water system, so warm water was either obtained from the reservoir on the wood-burning kitchen range or from water heated on top of the range. Baths were given in a wash tub on the kitchen floor, using one fill of water. It was always a contest on Saturday night as to who would get to bathe first! The house was wired for electricity after it had been built, so the wiring was exposed throughout the house on the interior walls.

We two older boys were assigned specific chores. Jack was responsible for milking the cow twice a day, and I was responsible for seeing that the wood box in the kitchen was full at all times. Before the girls were old enough to help, we also had to wash and dry the dishes and pots and pans from the evening meal. There was invariably procrastination about getting started and arguments as to who would wash and who would dry. I am sure that Mother would often feel that it would be easier to do the dishes herself than to listen to the complaints, but Dad would have nothing of that.

We lived next to a hill (Green Hill) on the south side of town, and an excellent slope just outside our front fence provided a great deal of winter entertainment. It was always filled with young people with their toboggans and Flexible Flyers.

The Roy Smith family lived across the street from us. They had about the same number of kids as we, and they were about the same ages. We were always competing with them, whether it was baseball, marbles, fishing, or what have you. We were bitter antagonists during the summer but, for some inexplicable reason, became good friends during the school year. *(To be continued in the June newsletter.)*

The Wallowa Sun

Friday, February 26, 1909

The Christians are Building
Structure will be 40 x 66 When Completed
Sunday School Room Built First — Work now Well Under Way

The members of the Christian Church are busy this week with the work of the new church building which they have raised the money to build and have started the work of construction for the first part of the building. With the characteristic promptness which has marked all the operations of the church since its organization by the Ritchey Brothers a little over a year ago, the congregation, under the leadership of Evangelist L. F. Stevens, has planned the erection of a church building, and within less than a week the money has been subscribed, the lots purchased, and the work of construction is well under way.

Two lots were purchased last week by William Sherod from Mrs. Elizabeth Eads, through Couch and McDonald, and donated to the church. Other members have subscribed liberally toward the building fund, and businessmen have contributed. The plan is to evidently build a church structure 40-by-66 feet in size, but for the present a building 26-by-40 feet is being built and will be connected with the larger room by folding doors when the building is complete. The structure will cost about \$1,000 and will form part of the completed church. Rev. Stevens is a contractor as well as an evangelist and is giving his time to the church building as well as preaching. The new church is located at the corner of Second and Alder streets in the same block as the Hotel Wallowa.

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*As a member you receive three free copies of
historical photographs from our archives, and
10% off your purchase of regional history books.*

The Wallowa Sun
November 15, 1917

Telephone Exchange Moved in New Building The Home Independent Telephone Co. Moved into New Home

The first of the week the Home Independent Telephone Company moved into their new home on the corner of First and Storie streets. The building is 24 x 70 feet, one story and one of the finest buildings in the county. The frontage of 24 feet on First Street is pink pressed brick, with large plate glass windows on both First and Storie streets, making well-lighted rooms for the office and operating room alike. There is a large basement underneath which will be used for a wood and coal cellar. In the office are three public booths, two of which are in use at the present time. Back of the operating room are four living rooms which are used by the local manager, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hood. The rooms consist of a living room, kitchen, bath and two sleeping rooms and a pantry. At the rear of the building is a garage and work room.

The past week head lineman Kelly had a force of men at work installing new fuse racks and cables leading into the building, changing the wiring and making new connections, and now everything is in first class running order. For several years the company has figured on this building, but not until this summer could they buy the lot at a reasonable figure, hence the delay in building. Their new home is one of the finest in Eastern Oregon, and the people of Wallowa, as well as Mrs. Hood, the local company manager, feel proud of the improvement to the city and the service, which the growing business of the company requires. There is something like 250 phones on the switchboard, and it is the intention of the company in the near future to install a new switchboard and make other improvements as the business grows.

Special thanks to Wayne Johnson for donating the space for the Wallowa History Center.