

# Wallowa History Center

*Preserving Our Past for the Future*

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

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## Moving Maxville Jack Goebel May 25, 2013

Recently there has arisen some renewed interest in the town of Maxville. In 1937 I was able to accompany my Dad and Mr. Gene Hayes while they moved a number of houses from Maxville to various locations. I should begin by saying that most, if not all the following should/could be prefaced by the words "as I remember" since I was 5 years old at the time. But like most 5-year old boys, I tried not to miss anything that was going on.



**Charley Goebel and one of his loads.**

My Dad, Charley Goebel, owned a Ford logging truck. I think maybe a model 1936. He liked to haul anything he could load on it; steam engines,

hay, firewood and even houses. Someone had already moved 5 or 6 of the larger buildings from Maxville into Wallowa for special purposes. But a man by the name of "Columbus" Fisher approached my Dad about moving dozens of the actual dwellings into the Wallowa area. Mr. Fisher had apparently purchased the rights to the remaining houses. He was advertising that he would deliver a house on your property for a price of \$50. That was for a house that would measure 12X28 feet. The larger 14X32 size cost \$60. He offered Dad \$25 for each house that he would haul and deliver. The fact that all of the homes were of just two dimensions was apparently because they were all hauled into place from Wallowa on the rail cars that were being used for logging. Dad had been doing some logging at that time and the teamster who drove our big logging team was Gene Hayes, whose brother Hugh Hayes had bought my grandfathers homestead on Bear Creek. Gene agreed to work with my Dad and they devised a scheme to load and haul a house in about one day.



Leo, Jack and Harold Goebel

The exact procedure was fairly simple once all of the tools and equipment were obtained. The two men obtained 4 large railroad jacks designed to be placed under each corner of the rail car and lifted it high into the air. They shoveled a small flat bed for a jack at each corner of the house and simply jacked it up a few feet off the ground. Our single axle log truck carried a single axle trailer with a short wooden "tongue".

This trailer was unloaded at one end of the house and pushed under the house until the house could be lowered onto the logging bunk. The

cheeseblocks had been

removed from both bunks. Then they backed the truck under the other end of the house, now almost 30 feet away and lowered that end onto the truck bunk. Gene Hayes then got in the house and cut a hole in the floor so the short trailer tongue could be chained up tight to the bottom of the floor. When they pulled the truck back onto the road, it looked like a huge semi going down the road. Many people do not know that when they see a load of logs on the highway, the logs are not tied to the truck and the truck and the trailer is not pulled by the reachpole under the truck. That is under there to steer the trailer and carry the air hoses. It is the logs themselves that pull the trailer. And so it was with the houses from Maxville, one end sitting freely upon the bunk of the log truck the other end sitting upon the bunk of the trailer.

Before we drive away with a house I want to recall my part at the town site. The old school house was too big for us to move, maybe even having an L attached. So while the men worked at getting a house on the truck, I played at



Charley Goebel

the old slate backboard and sat in the school seats. The seats had been all attached in a row on boards and left out in the sun and rain so the desks were coming apart. But I recall that there was one family still living in town. The lady would call me over to visit and told me her name was Ruby Sassnet. About 40 years later I met Ruby and her husband Odell in Wallowa where they were good friends of Macy Hadnot. They said they now lived in La Grande.

Now time of day was important. If they delivered a house early in the morning, they tried to get the next one loaded by late afternoon. The reason was the 8' wide load limit on the Highway 82. They usually drove with the loaded house South on the Promise road to where the Dougherty Lane crossed. There was a

wide area there near the home of Clay Boyd. They parked the truck, planning to make the short run up to Wallowa at 4-5 AM with a load about 14' wide. That is where I came in. My two older brothers had to go to school, but I got to sit in the back of Mom's Plymouth, rear window rolled down and holding a



stick out of the window. My Dad would tie his big red handkerchief on the end of the stick and I was to flag down the oncoming traffic. In 1937 there were not a lot of cars on that road at 4 in the morning! After passing the Bowman-Hicks sawmill, we crossed the railroad and turned off onto what is now the truck route. Indeed one of our earliest sales was to unload 6-7 of the houses just as we left the highway, almost where the Lyons Club Park is now. These had been sold to Mr. Cecil Chrisman.

Where were others unloaded? I have no count of the number of houses we hauled into Wallowa but for some reason the number 57 sticks in my mind. We delivered them all over the NW parts of the county. I recall several in the Leap area, one for Jim and Estella Morton. Several came up Bear Creek one to our place and one up the awful muddy road beyond us. Glenn Sherod used it for a line cabin for years. A couple was delivered to Ward Evans across the



Charley Goebel

highway from what is now Schaeffer Automotive. One of the original houses can still be seen there behind Karen Goebel's store. Along Hook Straight across from the Scott house is a building with a tree growing out to the top that looks like another. And maybe one up along Allen Canyon Loop where Elsie Makin used to live. A few years ago Charley Moffit lived in a small home across the road from the Joe Rounsevall home. We discovered that Charley's place was two of the Maxville homes put together in a t- bone figure. And maybe some readers can remind me of others.

At the risk of dragging this story out perhaps I should tell of the one loss while moving a house. As far as I know all but one house reached the valley. It happened one day when Mr. Gene Hayes was unable to go out to Maxville. So

my Dad stopped on his way home to the ranch of Orié Mahanna. He had worked with Orié at times and knew him to be very capable and knowledgeable worker. He asked Orié if he would go out to Maxville and help the next day, in place of Gene Hayes. Well Orié was very interested and perhaps more that a little curious about the entire operation so Dad picked him up the next day and they went to Maxville with the logging truck. Everything went as usual while there and they pulled away that afternoon with a house loaded behind them, somewhat like pulling a semi. The house was positioned on the front bunk so that a door was right behind the running board of the truck, allowing Mr. Mahanna to step out on the running board, step up into the house and inspect things while moving down the road. As they approached the steep grade about at the junction with Akers Lookout road, Orié climbed back into the cab, saying everything looked all right "back there". Just then the road took a fairly sharp turn downhill to the right and Dad saw in his mirror the house slowly rising off the bunks. It rolled to the left right off the bunks and hit the shoulder of the road and disappeared out of sight over the bank, house trailer and all. They got stopped and looked over the edge to see the entire house was now a sheet of badly splintered lumber scattered down the hillside for a hundred yards or more. By hooking some log chains together, they pulled the trailer back up onto the road and eventually got home. That was the last and only trip Mr. Mahanna made to "help" move a house.

Of course in the process of any operation like this there were always "small" problems that arise but if you were a trucker like Charley Goebel, you just "deal with them". But this was the one and only time that an entire house was completely destroyed

Maxville House behind Oddball Junction



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Wallowa History Center  
P.O. Box 481  
Wallowa, OR 97885  
Email: [powwat@yahoo.com](mailto:powwat@yahoo.com)

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