

SINCE 2001

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ISSUE 42

WALLOWA QUARTERLY

Magazine of the Wallowa History Center

— Preserving Our Past for the Future —

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The Home Place, 1900

**The Short Life of Evans,
Oregon (Part 2)**

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**Wallowa: Ideal
Community, 1910**

And More!

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WALLOWA QUARTERLY

FALL 2021

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The *Wallowa Quarterly* is a publication of the Wallowa History Center, Wallowa, Oregon. The editor of this issue of the *Wallowa Quarterly* is Mark Highberger. All errors within—factual, historical, technical, and grammatical—are his responsibility. We welcome not only ideas for articles, but also well-written manuscripts of approximately 500-1,000 words. Before submitting, contact the editor for guidelines and requirements at highberg@eoni.com. Unfortunately, payment to authors is limited to copies of the *Wallowa Quarterly* in which their articles appear.

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Wallowa
History
Center

Front cover: Thresher in front of Wallowa Mercantile Co., located at northwest corner of First and Storie, c. 1899.

WALLOWA QUARTERLY

PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES EACH YEAR: SPRING • SUMMER • FALL • WINTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Restoring Buildings, Reviving History

By David Weaver, WHC Board President

It's been 85 years since construction began on the Bear-Sled Ranger Station in 1936. Over the intervening years, the buildings have held up remarkably well—a testament to the craftsmanship and skill of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the U.S. Forest Service crews who built them. But time and the elements have taken their toll on the structures.

When the Wallowa History Center moved to the Bear-Sled Ranger Station and took on the job of restoring and repurposing the buildings, we knew we were taking on a long-term project. In this endeavor, we've recently completed an important step in the process: *the Bear-Sled Ranger Station Conservation and Development Plan*. This work—led by consultant Henry Kunowski of Heritage Conservation Planning and funded by the Oregon Cultural Trust, the Braemar Charitable Trust, the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, the Skylark Foundation, and an Oregon Museum grant—will serve as our guide as we restore and develop the site.

Included in this plan are the intended future uses of each building: The ranger's office will function as our office, archive, and research library; the fire warehouse will become our interpretive center and public presentation space; and the ranger's house will become a short-term vacation rental for visitors to experience a stay in a restored-to-the-period ranger's home. In addition, the plan calls for visitor parking and ADA access, a floor plan for the interpretive center, an RV hook-up for a camp host and site manager, interpretive signs for self-guided tours of the site, and a picnic area and restroom.

Now that Wallowa History Center board has the conservation and development plan in hand, the next step will be to prioritize future work and seek additional funding opportunities. As part of this, a public meeting is planned for this fall to present the project, solicit feedback, and recruit additional volunteer help. Keep an eye out on our social media for the time, date, and location of this meeting; we'll share it there. In the meantime, those interested in reviewing the conservation and development plan can receive a digital copy by requesting one at Wallhist@gmail.com.

* * *



Our words define us: They reveal who we are, what we believe, and the times in which we live. As a result, historical material in the Wallowa Quarterly may occasionally contain language considered to be stereotyped or prejudiced. Retaining this language, however, is often necessary for understanding the historical context in which it is used.

HISTORY CENTER'S VISION FOR NEW HOME COMING TO FRUITION

By Ronald Bond

From the *Wallowa County Chieftain* (June 1, 2021)

The Wallowa History Center's vision for its new home is moving closer to reality. Board President David Weaver said last week the center will have its site plan and exhibit plan for the four-building home of the center at First and Madison streets in Wallowa by next month, and at that point, they can move to the next step of restoring the old Forest Service buildings and converting them into a history hub.

"By July 1, we'll have all those products, and then we'll start chipping away at moving forward with that bigger plan," Weaver said. "It's a long-term process. We'll start looking at which pieces we want to tackle, and start the capital fundraising. We're four to five years out. So we'll start doing some of the identified restoration work."

The center began leasing the property — which includes five buildings — from the city about three or four years ago, Weaver said. Previously, it had been deeded to the Forest Service. "This was the Bear-Sled Ranger District," Weaver said.

Among the features of the center's home once it is complete will be a research library for individuals to dig—both online and through print resources—through history of the city. There also will be an interpretive center. For now, though, getting some of the basics taken care of on-site is the focus.

"The stages that we have been in now, we sort of have the collection moved in there and have set up shop for that, and

did the electrical work and the plumbing work, insulation and new storm window," Weaver said of the building that previously served as the ranger's office and will be where the research library is.

The hope is that when the center is complete, it will be a location that doesn't take away from the Wallowa County Museum, but that makes photos, artifacts, and more accessible.

"Our plan is basically to have a timeline around Wallowa history in this building, centered on natural resources," Weaver said. "It won't be a museum, because we already have a good museum, and it's great up there [in Joseph]."

Mary Ann Burrows, the center's director, in addition to having a location for history memorabilia, wants to see the buildings restored to what they once were.

"The house is in really bad shape," she said. "It is going to take multiple years to complete the project because there is so much work that needs to be done. It's an addition to our area for people who are interested in history."



Wallowa (Bear-Sled) Ranger Station, 1950s

RANGER STATION NOTES

Wallowa Compound

The Wallowa Ranger Station compound is historically significant as it represents a 54-year period in which the Forest Service was active within the town of Wallowa.*

Bear-Sled Ranger District

The original ranger districts on the Wallowa National Forest were the Bear Creek, Chesnimnus, Imnaha, Snake River, and Sled Springs districts. The name Bear-Sled came about when the Bear Creek and Sled Springs districts combined in 1919.*

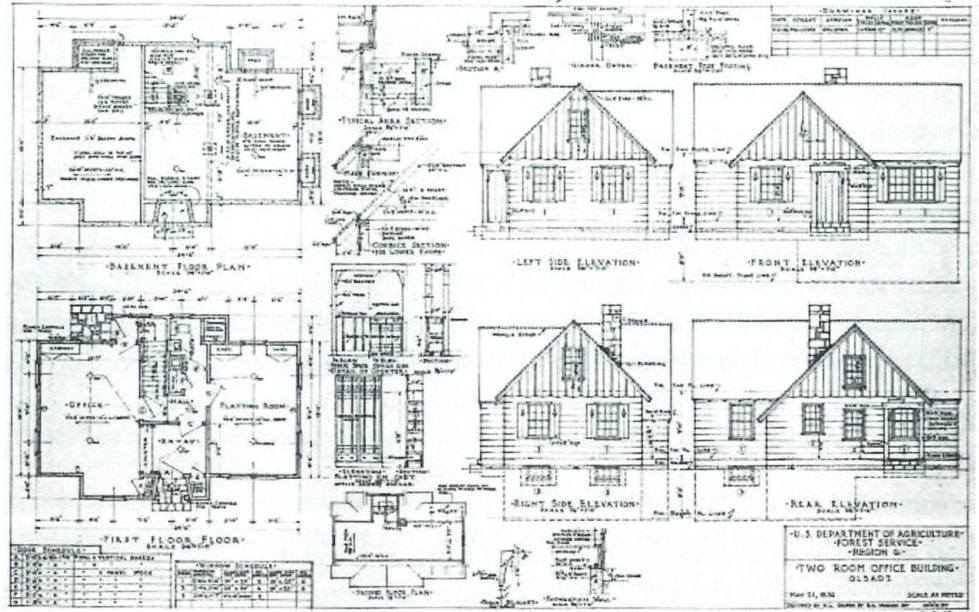
Civilian Conservation Corps

It is unlikely the compound would have been built were it not for the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC arose from the Great Depression as a means of providing work to the many thousands of unemployed youth...CCC boys were paid \$30 a month with \$22 being deducted and sent back to families. This provided relief to their families, many of whom depended upon this as the sole source of income.*

* *Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service*

Construction Plans

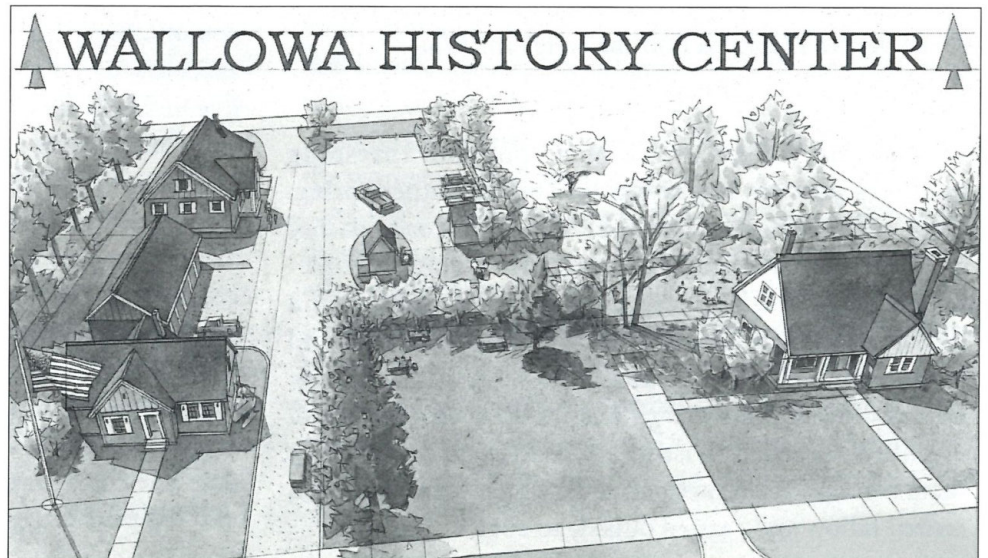
The Wallowa National Forest is contemplating the construction of a ranger station in Wallowa which will consist of an office, warehouse, residence, garage, barn, and corral which will call for an investment of \$40,000. The Forest Service cannot obtain funds to buy the site and is asking the city to donate property suitable for the requirements. – The Wallowa Sun, September 26, 1935



Architectural drawings, Wallowa Ranger Station, c. 1935

IMPORTANT DATES

- 1905 U.S. Forest Service created; President Theodore Roosevelt establishes Wallowa Forest Reserve.
- 1906 Wallowa Forest Reserve headquarters moves from La Grande to Wallowa.
- 1907 First Forest Service telephone line completed from Wallowa to Sled Springs.
- 1909 Wallowa Forest Reserve becomes Wallowa National Forest.
- 1919 Bear Creek and Sled Springs ranger districts combine into Bear-Sled District.
- 1933 Forest supervisor's office moves to Enterprise., but district headquarters remains in Wallowa; President Franklin Roosevelt establishes CCC.
- 1936–1939 CCC builds Wallowa (Bear-Sled) Ranger Station.
- 1981 Wallowa Ranger Station closes.
- 2009 Wallowa Ranger Station listed on National Register of Historic Places.
- 2018 Wallowa History Center moves into ranger station.



WALLOWA LIFE IN THE 1870s

By James W. Powers (1869–1953)

From *Frontier Days of Oregon and the Life of Winslow Phelps Powers* (1941)

Like most sections of the United States, the Wallowa Valley was first settled by people who came before the wagon road, the railroad, the supply store, the repair shop, the saw mill, the planer, and ample protection against Indians were established. Yet in other ways, the early settlers of the Wallowa had advantages over settlers of other sections. They did not have to clear the land of timber or stones before making a crop. There was an abundance of fish in the streams and plenty of deer and elk in the hills and mountains. Sometimes in early winter, herds of them crossed the valley in passing from the higher mountains on their way to winter quarters in the lower altitudes to the north.

Houses

Nearby was an abundance of straight trees of various diameters, which the early settlers made into houses, furniture (such as it was), barns, fences, and bridges by the use of the axe, saw, mall, wedge, glut, knife, fro, sledge, auger, gimlet, mallet, hammer, scratch-all, chalk-line, brace and bit, and various kinds of hand-planes and chisels. The house logs were usually hewed on the perpendicular sides and peeled on the others. After the walls of a dwelling were made by the proper placing of logs that were soon covered with a shake roof, the outer surface of the walls was chinked and plastered with mud. Daylight entered most of the homes through only a few glass windows. The fireplaces were made of rocks plastered with mud. None of the earliest settlers had heating stoves, and in some homes the cookstove was wanting. In these dwellings, ministers proclaimed the gospel, lovers were united in wedlock, and the first children were born.

Stock

The great majority of early settlers came to the valley in wagons drawn by horses, though a few used mules or oxen. Some settlers brought with them herds of cattle or horses. A few pigs were hauled into the valley in 1873.

Light

Back in the 1870s—before horse-powered threshing machines gave way to steam power, before leather-spring, horse-drawn stage coaches gave way to railroad coaches and automobiles, and before pleasure riding in horse-drawn hacks and buggies gave way to automobiles and motorcycles—the people of the Wallowa used beef and mutton tallow in making candles for lighting their homes. Candles were made by tearing strips off a worn-out sheet or pillowcase, then twisting these strips and stretching them through the center of molds, which were filled with melted tallow and carried outside to cool.

Nearly every family owned a set of candle molds. Those who did not, either borrowed from their neighbors or laid a twisted rag string in a saucer of tallow and lit the end they had placed on the saucer's edge just out of the grease. Others got by with the light from their fireplace. Mutton tallow was also used for greasing shoes, oiling saddles and harnesses, and rubbing on sore or chapped hands and on little boys' chapped feet. Hog fat was used almost exclusively for cooking purposes; cracklings obtained from rendering hog fat was used with other cracklings in making soap.

Soap

The process of making soap was a little more complicated than that of making candles. In the first place, people wishing to make soap cut a quantity of wood from any kind of trees that shed their leaves in autumn, except the tamarack. The cottonwood or the willow was preferred. For a period of months during the warmer and dryer part of the year, this wood was burned exclusively in both cook stove and fireplace, and the ashes were saved.

After some fifty gallons of ashes had accumulated, they were placed in the ash-hopper, which was of home construction, made of shakes and poles. It was filled with ashes to within about five inches of the top. This remaining five inches was then filled with water, and an iron kettle was placed under the lower end of the trough.

Within forty-eight hours, the dark, amber-colored lye began dripping into the kettle. In another twenty-four hours, the leaching was completed. Then lye and cracklings were placed together over a fire in a large iron kettle and permitted to boil until the cracklings were dissolved and the mixture became stringy, something like taffy. The contents of the kettle were then poured into a soap barrel and, when cool, the soap was ready for use. The kettle was then refilled with lye and cracklings, and the process repeated.

In those early days suet, tallow, lard, and cracklings were worth as much or more than meat. When Indians wanted tallow, they traded fresh salmon, venison, or elk meat for it pound for pound. It was a common occurrence for two or more squaws to ride up to a farm house, and for one of them to untie a salmon from her saddle and bring it to the door and say, "Swap salmon grease." As a rule, the second one would want to trade something else for carrots.

Coffee

Merchants bought raw coffee beans by the barrel. When a consumer asked for coffee, the merchant lifted the lid from a barrel or opened a bin, and then scooped up and weighed the required amount of coffee beans.

The housewife put a thin layer of the beans in a bread pan and toasted or browned them in the oven. Grinding coffee was a part of preparing breakfast. To retain the favor, the coffee was not ground until immediately before it was put in the pot for boiling. A coffee mill fastened to the wall was common. Notwithstanding, a few used the immigrant coffee mill which was held between the knees for grinding.

Spinning

Many early settlers brought their wool cards and knitting needles with them. A few brought spinning wheels, while others made their spinning wheels when they had an opportunity to obtain wool. Women used homemade yarn for knitting mittens, gloves, caps, scarfs, wristlets, mufflers, and shawls for their families and for presents for relatives and friends.

Women scoured the wool until it was dry, then carded it into rolls and spun the rolls into yarn. Single thread yarn made of fine wool was made into women's and children's stockings, while the coarser wool was first spun into a single thread then doubled and twisted and then knitted into men's and larger boys' socks. Hosiery of this kind lasted both men and women for a year or more, and when the toes and heels wore out, the women knew exactly how to ravel them out and knit in toes and heels of new yarn. Homemade hosiery thus repaired lasted as long as though it was all new material.

Beds

At that time in the Wallowa, spring beds were unknown. Yet as a rule, the settlers' beds were very comfortable. They placed the many cross slats of their bedsteads close together, and a straw-tick was placed on the slats. Some placed a feather mattress over the straw-tick while others used a wool mattress.

The wool mattress was made by carding the clean, dry wool into fluffy battens about eight inches long and three and one-half inches wide, and when new about one inch thick. These battens were carefully placed four-deep on a piece of ticking of the required dimensions. A ticking top was then placed over the battens and sewed to the side pieces, then the mattress was tied about every six inches.

Nearly every bed was provided with sheets and a pair of blankets. The remainder of the bedding was quilts of which the filling was wool battens, usually made by the housewife or a daughter.

Quilts

About half the families had homemade quilting frames. Those who had no frames borrowed from their neighbors when there was to be a quilting bee, which was both a social and a productive affair. All the women of the neighborhood seemed glad to attend them.

Prior to the time of a quilting bee, the lady who was to be the hostess tied her quilt in a few places, fastened the edges to the frames, and swung it by cords about the height of a low table from the floor, in a room that was cleared of other household effects as much as was conveniently possible. Then she chalk-marked the lines for her guests to follow in stitching the quilt. Chairs were placed along the sides of the quilt, and when the ladies arrived they sat down and went to work. When a quilting bee was in progress, another was frequently arranged to be held at the home of one of the guests.

Carpets

No worn-out cotton, woolen, linen, or silk goods were thrown away. They were washed and laid away in what was called a rag box. After a considerable amount was accumulated, the owner of the rags, with what help she could get from her family, tore all the rags into strings and invited her neighbors to a rag-tacking party. Men and women, old and young, were all invited. Boxes or baskets containing rag strings were placed in convenient places for the workers to tack them together.

As the strings were sewed together, the worker rolled them into a ball. At noon, all were invited into the kitchen where they partook of a good wholesome meal. At quitting time, the balls of carpet strings were weighed, and the person who presented the heaviest ball was given a prize. After the carpet tacking, the balls of string were taken to a neighbor who had a loom. Not too long afterward, a rag carpet of the dimensions ordered was ready to be placed on the floor.

Knitting

After the advent of stores, home knitting really became an industry. The first merchants were all willing to buy the good homemade socks that were for sale. They also bought homemade gloves, mittens, and stockings. Everyone in the family who knew how to knit (sometimes including the men) joined in the winter evenings' knitting. Many families made the sale of socks and gloves pay their grocery bill and some of them did better than that.

With some exceptions, the wool cards and the spinning wheel were kept busy each weekday for hours. Women even knitted while on their evening strolls. A lady would sometimes walk as far as a mile for a visit at a neighbor's home, knitting while going and coming, as well as while she was visiting.

Mail

The first U.S. mail for the valley was carried on horseback and came once each week, except sometimes when snow and drifts on Smith Mountain made it impossible for a horse to get through.

Some of the early settlers took the weekly *Oregonian*. These people were sometimes disappointed in their desire to read the outside news by snow falling so deep that carrier could not bring their papers from La Grande.

At other times, snow would prevent the stagecoach from bringing the mail from Umatilla Landing to La Grande, and occasionally the Columbia River would freeze over to the extent that the river steamboats could not reach Umatilla Landing, and in such cases the settlers would sometimes be without their papers for a term of weeks.

* * *

More to
the Story

WHAT *REALLY* HAPPENED TO WALLOWA'S LAST GRIZZLY

"Now then, get your equipment...and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me." – Genesis 27:3

Issue 41 (Summer 2021) of the Wallowa Quarterly gives an account of the 1931 killing of what some believe was the last grizzly bear in the state of Oregon. In that account, credit is given to government hunter Evan C. Stoneman for shooting the huge bear in a close encounter:

"[Stoneman] came on the grizzly when she was behind a log, only a few rods away. As she reared, he fired a bullet through her throat, breaking her backbone, and she fell and did not rise again." – *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (September 17, 1931)

But history, after it's rested a while, often doesn't play nicely with what we've been told is the truth:

Account of Grizzly Killed Near Billy Meadows

By Vic Coggins

From *Memoirs of a Backcountry Bio: 50 Years Managing Wallowa County Wildlife* (2018)



Evan C. Stoneman
(1889–1979)

While helping Wade Hall with a Snake River Divide range survey in July 1969, he told me a grizzly bear story.

Wade was the USFS Chesnimnus District Ranger stationed at the Billy Meadows Guard Station in 1931. He said a grizzly killed some sheep near Hay Pen Meadows on the East Fork of Peavine Creek, and the government trapper, E.C. Stoneman, was called in to kill the bear. Stoneman brought the head and hide to the ranger station for Wade to examine.

In a newspaper article, [Stoneman] claimed that he had shot the bear, but told Wade that he actually poisoned the animal. Because there was concern at the time about killing the last grizzlies in Oregon, Stoneman didn't want to admit he had poisoned the bear. The date was September 1931. The animal was a female with well-worn teeth, including the canines. The head and hide was reportedly sent to the Smithsonian Museum.

THE HOME PLACE, 1900

By Lois J. Fleshman

Adapted from *Arthur: The Man, His Tales and Whoppers* (1986)

When Joseph F. and Frances ("Fanny") Applegate Johnson first arrived in the Lower Valley of the Wallowa country in 1872, they staked their claim near the mouth of Wallowa Canyon and the shadow of Smith Mountain. Here they built their home, fenced their land, planted and harvested their crops—and began creating for themselves and their family what became known as "The Home Place." (In her description of this Home Place near the turn of the 20th century, Lois J. Fleshman refers to Johnson, her grandfather, as Joseph, Joe, Paw, or simply J.F., and her grandmother as Fanny.)

The land [of the Home Place] lay along both sides of the Wallowa River and included two deep bends of the river. The land itself was rich beaver-meadow with several small spring-fed creeks. At the east end and along the south side was a gravelly area with many mature pine trees, which made ideal building material. The buildings of the home place were clustered on or near the river channel where it made its first bend on the homestead.

1 This stream is referred to as the **Old River Channel** because in about 1890 a big log jam diverted it at about the point where Bear Creek enters the Wallowa River. By the time the spring runoff was finished, the river had cut itself a new channel, and the river ran along the edge of Diamond Prairie, and returned to its original channel in the Wallowa Canyon. The buildings of the Home Place were clustered on or near the river channel where it made its first bend on the homestead. This is the west end of the Johnson holdings.

2 On the north bank was an English **weeping willow**, planted by Fanny Johnson, beside a good flowing spring that burst out of the gravelly bank. Joe had built a spring box there. By leaning close to the surface, you could see little fountains of fine sand leaping up and down about two feet below you. A wooden trough led the water out and away so that it could not cut the gravelly bank between the spring and the river.

3 Access to the pole corral was by a **footbridge** that paralleled the "ford," a shallow crossing for team and wagon.

4 A permanent fixture was the **salt log**, a section of a big old cottonwood windfall that had been hollowed out by fire and adze to hold rock salt for the livestock.

5 In the southwest corner was a holding pen, a **pole corral**—a night lock-up for the dairy cattle, with a small shelter where the milking was done. It was built of poles about 10 feet long that were stacked alternately at the ends with those of the next section and tied together with rope, strips of buckskin, wire, or whatever came to hand.

6 On the north bank of the river were the **log barns**—four log "cribs" about 12 feet square with split-shake roofs that sloped toward the river. These were of flimsy cover of poles and brush. Straw was piled into these to be used for

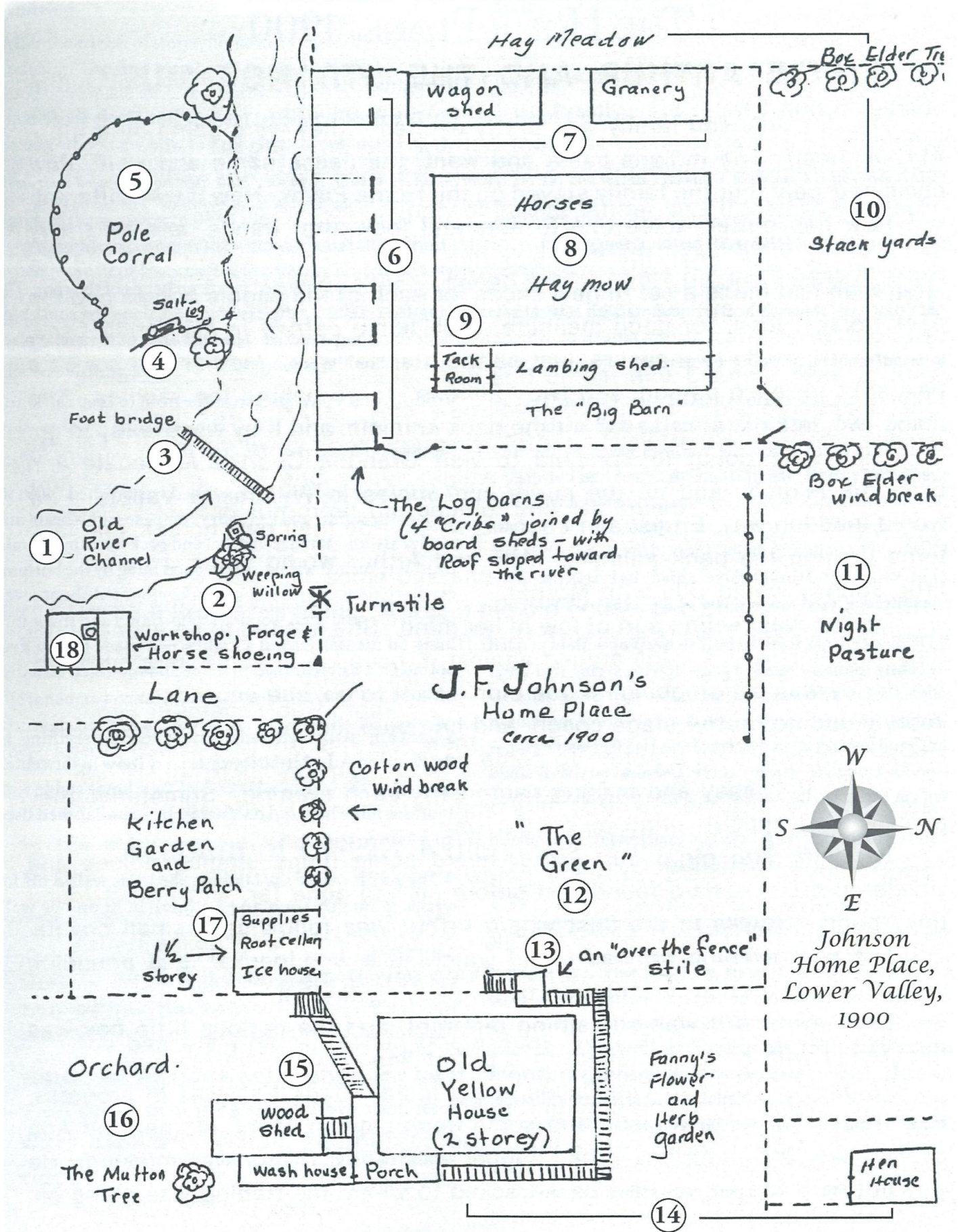
bedding, and a pole put across the front to keep cattle and horses from tramping it. Sometimes passing travelers asked permission to sleep in the straw sheds.

7 At the west end was a three-sided **wagon shed** "with its back to the storm" and a **granary** complete with a beam and steelyards, and standard bushel and peck measures. Grain bags were turned wrong-side out and hung by the bottoms on sharp tines of broken pitchforks mounted about seven feet off the ground. A wooden scoop-shovel and straw-fork hung on the wall, as did a grain scoop made from a five-pound lard pail trimmed to shape and mounted on a disc of wood with a carved grip.

8 The barn quadrangle had room for nearly everything. In the center was the **big barn**, with a **hay mow** in the center, flanked on the west by a lower shed-type **horse stable** with a loft for more hay, and on the east by a similar shed used for **lambling pens**.

9 The south end of the lambling shed was walled off for a **tack room**. This contained a bunk built on one wall, hooks for sets of harness, a rack for saddles, a workbench with storage space for odd pieces of leather and whole tanned hides, shelves containing everything needed to work leather—a set of knives, awl and hammer, needles and pack-thread, a cake of beeswax, copper rivets and a small anvil for setting rivets, and a keg of neatsfoot oil.

The southeast corner was a brick-lined alcove for a small sheet-iron stove sitting on a base of small rocks and clay. The stovepipe ran out through the east wall through a ventilated collar. You can't work cold leather; the neatsfoot oil was applied hot, and harness to be mended was mostly laid by until the weather was so horrible you couldn't do anything else.



The room was used during the lambing season to care for orphan lambs, and a place for the night men to rest. The boys sometimes took refuge there when the house became untenable because of a quilting bee or the like.

10 North of the barn quadrangle are the **stack yards**. These are surrounded on three sides by **box elder trees** that were planted by Fanny as a windbreak for the “new house” Joe built for her and which burned. The enclosure was ideal for stacking the wild hay that grew on the beaver meadows.

11 The long narrow **night pasture** was used for pack strings or the horses of visitors. The hitching racks beside it would serve about a dozen horses.

12 The central portion of the map was known as “**The Green**” Sometimes it was totally empty. Often Fanny’s geese and some ducks waddled about. Sometimes it was the scene of foot races or a wrestling match. The stile made a good viewpoint for any activity and was usually occupied.

13 Another peculiar feature was the presence of the narrow wooden sidewalks all around, and an **over-the-fence stile**. The stile was a set of steps parallel to the fence to a platform atop the fence and down the matching steps on the other side of the fence.

14 The east end of the home place was dominated by the **old yellow house**, surrounded by Fanny’s **flower and herb gardens**, orchard, kitchen garden, and work areas nearby. There was one big old juniper tree and a whole row of small ones planted along the north fence as far as the **chicken lot**, which was once enclosed by a makeshift fence woven in some peculiar fashion from willow switches. Some of them had even taken root. Later it had a regular chicken-wire fence.

15 The **wash house** was equipped with a small stove, copper wash boilers, benches, wooden tubs, and washboards carved by Joe from slabs of cottonwood. About a third of this building was a **woodshed** that held only pitchy wood and dry kindling. The regular stove wood was ricked outside. Behind the wash house was a well. It had a curb and a rope with a pulley and two buckets. For the most part, the water from the well was used for baths, washing, and household chores.

16 The first apple tree in the **orchard** beyond the wash house was called the “**mutton tree**.” It had a limb exactly the right distance from the ground from which to hang a butchered mutton. Fanny would let the meat cool overnight, then she would swath it in old sheeting to keep it cool and free from dust or insects. She would go out with a sharp knife and a dishpan and carve off what she wanted to cook each day.

17 The square building in the plot labeled “**Kitchen Garden**” had been built in a peculiar style and had varied uses [**ice house** and **root cellar**]. First, a pit about 4 feet deep and about 12 feet square was dug. Walls of rather small logs, which had been roughly squared and notched, were built from the bottom of the pit up to a height of about eight feet. On top of this was laid heavy sawed joists that stuck out two feet beyond the log walls, and a second story added.

The outside of the whole building was covered with rough-sawed boards and roofed with shakes. Stairs went up the outside to the second story, and down inside of the bottom part. A lantern hung under the landing of the outside stairs to take with you into the lower part, for there were no windows.

At one end were bins for storage of root crops, and at the other a bin of sawdust where ice was stored when a winter was severe enough to make ice-cutting possible.

The upper story had all sorts of shelves and cupboards and bins where supplies for sheep camp were kept, as well as barrels of molasses, sorghum, flour and sugar and bags of dried fruit. Hanging from the joists were festoons of dried herbs for medicine.

There was one small window to the south through which you could see the entrance to the land, and on the north another window that overlooked “The Green” and through which one could see the big barn.

18 On the bank of the Old River Channel was a building that was J.F.’s **workshop**. The sights and sounds and scents were tantalizing when anything was going on there (and it usually was).

One end was equipped for woodworking, the other for blacksmithing. Each had its own set of tools, and even if they somewhat resembled each other, they were never to be borrowed or loaned.

The south end had a full set of cabinet-making tools—saws, saw-set, and files, brace and bits, drawknife and spoke-shave, hand planes and block planes, steel square and miter-box. There was even a set of blades for making moldings and picture frames. And there was both chip glue and gutta-percha.

The other end of the shop was the busier of the two. It housed the forge, built of hewn rocks and mortar. It had a huge set of bellows made of wood and leather which was operated by anybody who might be free at the moment.

The shop was also set up for horseshoeing. J.F. knew how, so he was able to judge whether the job was done right, but he did as little as possible. For many years a resident farrier whose crippled leg kept him from doing other tasks did the work.

THE SHORT LIFE OF A SMALL TOWN

Evans, Oregon (1908–1943)

Part 2 of 2: 1912–1943

The town of Evans started with an idea: If the railroad wouldn't come to Lostine—instead bypassing the town in favor of a route farther north—then Lostine would have to go to the railroad. So that's exactly what some townspeople did: jacked up their buildings, hitched them to horses, and skidded them a mile north to the newly-platted townsite of Evans. Here, the real estate ads promised, buyers would find "Bargains and then More Bargains in Land," both "Farms and Town Property." More important, they would be situated next to the OR&N railroad, a location that, according to the conventional wisdom of the day, ensured the prosperity and the future of any town lucky enough to become a train stop.

1912 Lostine-Evans Row Taken to Court

The Lostine vs. town-of-Evans fight reached the courts on Monday when County Judge J.B. Olmsted issued a temporary injunction restraining Sheriff Marvin from collecting the tax levied on the Evans' holdings of L. Couch. Mr. Couch and his partner in the real estate firm of Couch and McDonald of Wallowa and Evans own a large tract of the site of the new town.

Other property owners in the main have preserved their rights in the matter by making tender to the sheriff of all their taxes excepting that part levied by the city of Lostine. They will now await the outcome of the injunction suit brought by Mr. Couch through his attorneys, Sheahan & Cooley of Enterprise. This action undoubtedly will be carried to the Supreme Court of the state. Judge Olmsted's order will remain in effect until the case can be heard by the

circuit court. If the procedure stands as a legal annexation, lawyers suggest the wagon road from the county seat to the north end of the county and the town of Flora could be voted into the city of Enterprise.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (April 4, 1912)

1912 New Meat Market

Byron Homan has moved to the new town of Evans, where he has opened a meat market.

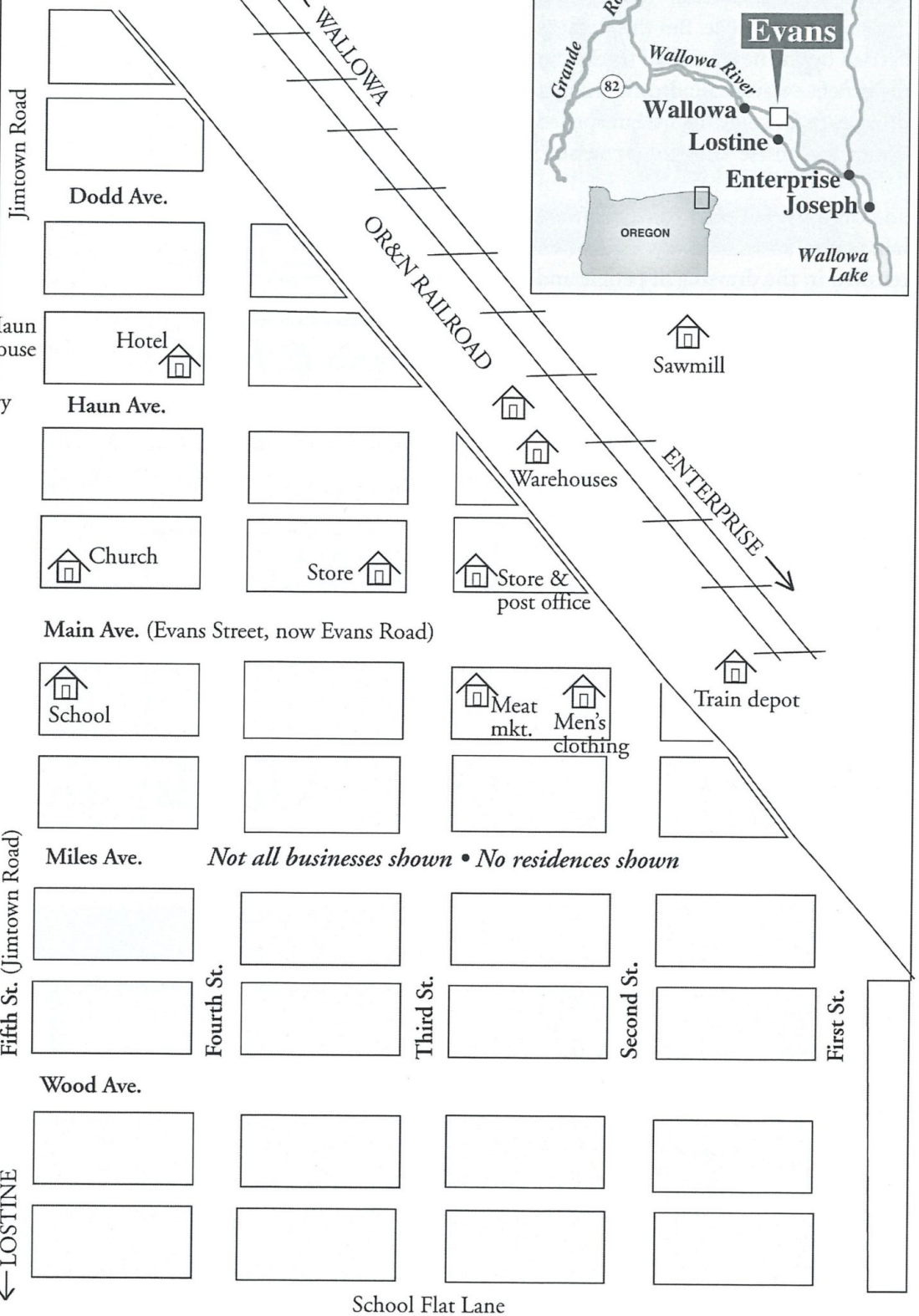
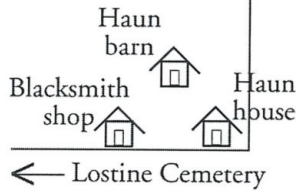
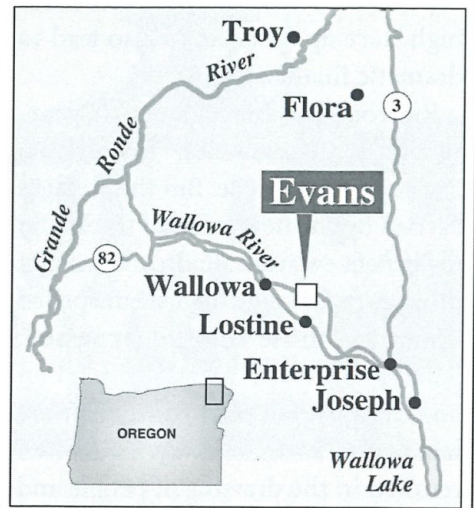
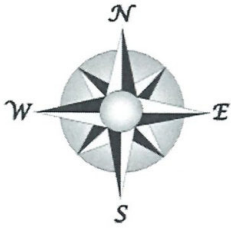
– *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (April 4, 1912)

Train Routes

Railroad companies typically followed frontier roads and trails when surveying routes. This was in part because existing routes offered a path of least resistance through the wilderness. This is also because railroads were fantastically



Evans, Oregon



- EVANS
BUSINESSES
& BUILDINGS**
- Auto garage
 - Bakery
 - Barber shop
 - Blacksmith shop
 - Butcher shop
 - Church
 - Creamery
 - Grain elevator
 - Livery
 - Meat market
 - Men's clothing
 - General stores (2)
 - Post office
 - Real estate
 - Sawmill
 - Schoolhouse
 - Train depot
 - Warehouses (3)

← LOSTINE

Not all businesses shown • No residences shown

expensive to build. However, these high start-up costs could also lead to dramatic financial gains.

Railroads offered low-cost, year-round transportation for goods, livestock, and people. But the changes carried by the new railroad tracks did not benefit everyone. Railroads brought prosperity for some towns, but spelled doom for those the rail bypassed. Some prosperous towns shriveled up and disappeared after railroads were laid just a few miles away. This often resulted in the drawing of people and businesses to the new rail junctions.

– Archival Records
Oregon Secretary of State

1912 New Church

The new Union church at Evans was dedicated at a service attended by residents of Lostine, Evans, Enterprise, Wallowa, and farms in between.

The building is pretty and is furnished with excellent taste. It cost \$2,311, of which all but \$735 was paid before Sunday service. About \$235 was pledged Sunday, leaving a debt of \$500. The church is to be open to members of all denominations.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain*
(May 30, 1912)

Hip! Hip! Hurrah Evans is on the Map

The long looked for results are coming.

Evans is taking her place as one of the leading towns of Wallowa county. A highway extended, thus giving to the traveling public a water grade and shorter route to La Grande and going directly through Evans is proposed and largely financed.

A grain elevator in the hands and ownership of the farmers is being agitated and looks not only favorable but highly probable.

New business enterprises are under way for the near future. Inquiries are received for business locations.

We are encouraged by the constant increase in our patronage from the surrounding communities, mail orders are coming thicker and we are sure we have the stock and make the prices right.

Are you in line for a business opportunity? If so write the undersigned firm and get particulars and offer.

Its coming and if you get in on the ground floor you will have the advantage. In the near future we will be able to announce the business opportunities taken.

Williams & Haun

Real Estate and General Merchants
EVANS, OREGON

Evans newspaper ads, 1917–1918

Free Delivery

On and after Monday, June 25th we will make two deliveries each day except Sunday. Our first delivery will be at 10:30 in the morning and the second delivery at 3:30 in the afternoon. Phone in your orders, large or small, and they will receive prompt and careful attention.

We carry a complete stock of Groceries, Dry Goods, Hardware, etc.

We carry a line of cutting machine extras.
YOURS FOR BUSINESS.

Minnick & Harris

THE EVANS STORE

1912 Annexation Suit

The Lostine-Evans annexation suit may come to trial in the circuit court at its August term. The question at issue will be the validity of the election by which land at the townsite was annexed to the city of Lostine.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain*
(June 20, 1912)

1912 Annexation Decision

The problem [of annexation] was settled in court, and the Evans community was not annexed into Lostine.

– Irene Barklow
Lostine: Heart of the Wallowas
(2012)

1914 Green Roofs

In the town of Evans, Mr. Haun has erected one of the finest residences in this big county. It rests on a stone foundation, is two stories high, contains 20 rooms, partly plastered, electric lighted, equipped with bathrooms and lavatories, and with its white painted exterior and green roof attracts attention from a great distance. A neatly kept lawn, shade trees and shrubbery are factors in making this homesite still more beautiful. A barn, 102 x 58 feet, 40 feet to peak of roof,



Steam tractor on Evans' Main Avenue, in front of Haun's store and U.S. Post Office

shelters the livestock. It is painted red, trimmed in white, and when completed the roof will have a coat of green paint. Green-painted roofs are characteristic of the town of Evans. Nearly all the structures in the town have roofs of that color, and it cannot be denied that they enhance the attractiveness of the place.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain*
(March 19, 1914)

1915 First School

On June 28, 1915, John and Maggie McDonald sold and deeded to [the] school district, the land to build a schoolhouse in the town of Evans. A lovely two-room school was built that year, following standardized plans calling for a “hipped” roof.

– Irene Barklow, *School Days in the Wallowas* (1992)

1917 New Garage

The Evans Garage is a new business at Evans. It is conducted by A.M. Williams and Lloyd Evans and will be run in connection with the Evans blacksmith shop.

– *Lostine Reporter* (July 6, 1917)

1918 Good Growth

From the talk of a new highway being opened in direct connection with the main highway and coming through Evans, and the proposed new business enterprises, it looks now as though Evans is to make a good growth during 1918. To the businessman who is seeking a location, there is no better opportunity anywhere than in Evans, Oregon. A new town with practically the richest territory in Wallowa County to draw from. There are many business openings. If you are interested, write to Evans Real Estate Co.

Miss Marcie Woods is now employed in the Williams & Haun store, the great increase in their business demanding extra help.

THE EVANS ROUTE *In spite of “graft” and “corruption” charges foisted upon the railroad for its 1908 decision to bypass Lostine, the route finally chosen was arguably the best as far as efficiency was concerned. It made it so the tracks from Wallowa to Joseph (the terminus of the line) followed the river—the much-desired “water route” that surveyors of the day constantly searched for—in a gradual climb through the valley without a hill to cut through or go over. The Lostine route, however, would have required a deep road-cut on the eastern edge of town, as you can see today in following Highway 82 out of Lostine and toward Enterprise.*



There are strong rumors in favor of an elevator being erected at this place in the near future, also a creamery.

– *Wallowa County Reporter*
(January 2, 1918)

1918 Evans News

A fine crowd at the Sunday school last Sunday, but we missed you. We shall look for you next Sunday at 10 o'clock.

The Evans school is in a better condition than it has been for a long time, and we are looking forward to even a better year for 1918. There will be added inducements coming from this community for the next year for new students to enroll.

There are several new buildings proposed for Evans this year. It looks now as though Evans will take her place that belonged to her for so long. There are no knockers in Evans, which is shown in the fact that everybody is pulling for their hometown.

– *Wallowa County Reporter* (February 20, 1918)

1920 County Nurse's Report on Evans School

Stove, no jacket, floors oiled once a year, desks adjustable, drinking well, jar and fountain, wash basin and soap, no towels, outdoor toilets, no paper. Recommendations: paper toweling, a sweeping compound, and toilet paper.

– Irene Barklow, *School Days in the Wallowas* (1992)

1940 Evans Becomes Ghost Town

Men will come and men will go, and so changes come and what was once a thriving country town wakes up some morning to find that it is but a skeleton of its former self and only a apart of the surrounding country.

That has been the experience of Evans in Wallowa County, which was at its peak about 1918 and boasted a creamery, a butcher shop, a barber shop, a baker, a blacksmith shop,

a store, a church, a two-room school building with an attendance of 35 pupils, and a post office, nothing of which remains except a one-room school with 12 pupils and the post office, and after February 1, only the school will be left because the post office will be moved to Lostine and run in connection with the Lostine office.

Mrs. Josephine Elliott, who has been a postmistress for the last 16 years and who was 70 years old on January 1, will be retired on a pension.

The Evans post office in its 27 years of existence has had quite a hectic life, having been housed in three different buildings and having had six different persons in charge.

The post office was first housed in the back part of Haun store in what was known as the Fitzpatrick Building, a building moved to Evans from Lostine. The next owner of the store and post office was L.P. McCubbin, who sold to a cooperative organization and placed Frank Minnick in charge. Minnick later purchased the holdings from the cooperative and sold to Roy Haun. The Hauns put up a new building with a full glass front, and here the post office found its second home.

— *The Wallowa Sun* (January 18, 1940)

FINDING EVANS TODAY *From Jimtown Road's junction with Highway 82 on the southern edge of Lostine, drive north one mile to School Flat Lane. This is the south side of the townsite of Evans. Turn right on School Flat Lane and follow it a quarter-mile to its junction with Evans Road, where you turn left. In less than a half-mile, this route will take you along part of Evans' eastern border, which still skirts railroad property, and then through the center of the old town, until you return to Jimtown Road. Unfortunately, no remnants of the old town remain. Turn left to return to Lostine. Turn right to see the former Haun house and barn.*

Evans Timeline

- 1908 Lostine residents decline to pay a \$1,500 fee to the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company for its tracks to be laid through town.
- 1908 Railroad arrives in Wallowa Valley, bypasses Lostine by a mile.
- 1909 Train depots built at Wallowa, Lostine (a mile from town), Enterprise, and Joseph.
- 1909 James Haun moves his Lostine home and outbuildings to site of Evans.
- 1909 Lostine City Council votes to extend city limits north to Evans site.
- 1910 Town of Evans platted.
- 1912 Evans church dedicated.
- 1913 Evans post office established.
- 1914 Evans School District 83 forms.
- 1915 Evans schoolhouse built.
- 1936 Evans' namesake, Mrs. Louisa Evans Wade, dies.
- 1940 Evans post office closes.
- 1943 Evans school closes (consolidates with Lostine the following year).

Note: *The end of life for Evans, Oregon—as it has been for so many small towns across the rural West—came with the closing of its school. Even though most of the town had died earlier than that, it is almost always the closing of a community's school that sounds the death knell for the community itself.*

* * *

The Town That Picked Itself Up and Moved

Lostine was not alone in its efforts to grow closer to the railroad. In 1872, for instance, when the Oregon & California Railroad bypassed Oakland, Oregon, by two miles, a fellow named Alonzo Brown thought if the train wouldn't come to the town, then the town would have to go to the train (sound familiar?). So he bought some land adjoining the tracks, laid out a "new" Oakland on his property, and persuaded local homeowners and businessmen to join him there. They loaded their stores and shops and homes onto rollers and skids, and teams of horses and mules dragged the buildings to the new site. Virtually the entire town moved, and the new location brought with it a rosy future for years to come.

* * *

The Northwest presents the greatest opportunities for settlers of any portion of Uncle Sam's domain. For grains, grasses, fruit, livestock and minerals, the territory embraced in this map is unequalled. — From a 1906 OR&N map showing the region's rail lines two years before the first train reached Wallowa.

Ask the Wallowa History Center

SLED SPRINGS

What was Sled Springs and where was it located?

Old Sled Springs Stage Station *“Early-day travelers used the clearing west of this sign as a stopover and resting place during their journeys from Lost Prairie, Flora, Paradise, and other points north, to Elgin. Travel was by saddle horse, stagecoach, or wagon. It was known as the Sled Springs Station and was operated for several years before 1900 and to about 1925. In later years this same area was the site of a railroad logging camp. About 300 people lived in the vicinity.” – Historical marker on Oregon Route 3 north of Enterprise*

1883 : Naming Sled Springs

In the summer of 1883, George Allen and son James came into Wallowa Valley from near Summerville in Grand Ronde Valley with a pack horse, and viewed out a route along the Nez Perce trails, into Lost Prairie, and located a homestead and built a log cabin 14 x 16-foot square, and went back after his family, and with wagons and teams they started back to the homestead.

Coming down the steep Wallowa Hill where they had to use rough locks [chaining the rear wheel together] besides their brakes to the junction of Wallowa and Minam rivers and up the Wallowa Canyon, which had been made passable a couple of years before [1879] for wagons by driving around stumps and large boulders, then into the river and up it a ways, then out on small bottoms, the whole distance of nine miles.

Arriving in the Wallowa Valley proper, they wended their way up to the present site of Wallowa town and up through the Whiskey Creek country, following the main old Nez Perce trail as much as possible to the headwaters of Davis Creek, and following along the breaks of it and Joseph Creek by winding their way around the heads of canyons and fallen trees till they got to Mud Flat, where the snow was so deep they had to abandon their wagons and make a bobsled from a tree that had the desired crook, and proceeded on till they got to what was later called Sled Springs, where their sled broke down, and the snow being so deep, they made a squaw drag [travois] for [Allen’s] wife and children to ride on, and packing bedding, etc. on the horses they went on to the cabin, arriving there in November 1883, being over 12 days on the trip, a distance of about 70 miles.

That fall, others followed, making total of 8 who wintered in the 14 x 16-foot cabin, living principally on wild meat during the winter of 1883–1884.

– John H. Horner, “Wallowa River and Valley,”
J. H. Horner Papers (1953)

1884 : Sled Springs Wagon Road

When a few homesteaders began to settle in the Lost Prairie, Paradise, and Flora areas in the early 1880s, the construction of a wagon road became a real necessity. In 1884 Mr. H.A. Thomas, who homesteaded in the Paradise area, laid out and opened up a wagon road from Wallowa via Whiskey Creek, Sled Springs, and along the summit of the ridge west from Joseph Creek to Paradise. The road was laid out to Wallowa because at the time all supplies had to be freighted into Wallowa County from the Grande Ronde Valley points, such as La Grande, Union, or Summerville, or from Walla Walla. Elgin was not even a wide spot on the road until the fall of 1885.

The distance from the north-end settlements was too great for a loaded wagon or sled and team to make the entire trip in one day. So a halfway station was needed. This was at first just a place to camp where there was plenty of wood and water. The last location for this purpose was about a half mile or so north of the present Sled Springs Ranger Station, where there was easy access to water. This became a regular camping place. It was not long until a way station was built and operated at this location to serve the needs of the public.

– Gerald J. Tucker, from a letter of April 10, 1965



Sled Springs Stage Station

1886: Starting the Lewiston Road

Nearly every evening while sitting around the fire built in the center of the dirt floor in the cabin as the snow got very deep that winter [of 1883–1884], their main topic of discussion was a road from [Lost Prairie] to Lewiston, Idaho...saying a road to Lewiston couldn't be any worse than the one they had come over, as they would have to go over the same route to La Grande about 100 miles for supplies each year, and the distance would be about 50 miles shorter to Lewiston. This being the first talk of a road of what was later Wallowa County to Lewiston, Idaho.

Later on, as the district settled up, or about 1886, the settlers all met at the Allen cabin and decided to begin a road down Bear Creek. They were refused any help from the county court at Union, this still being a part of Union County. So taking their wagons, teams, camp outfits, picks, shovels, plows, etc. to the head of Bear Creek, they set up camp and went to work. And at last made it possible for wagons [to reach] as far as the mouth of Shumaker Canyon. This was all volunteer work, without pay.

– John H. Horner, “Wallowa River and Valley,”
J. H. Horner Papers (1953)



1890s : Sled Springs Hotel

Sled Springs [is located] on the Flora Highway [Oregon Route 3] north of Enterprise. Named for an old bobsled that broke down and was left there by James Alford, Ed Renfrow, and others in 1884. This was a popular camping place for the settlers from the north end of the county in the old days, on their way to the [Wallowa] valley. A large log hotel and feed barn was built here by Oliver Barnes in the 1890s for their accommodation.

– John H. Horner and Grace Bartlett,
Wallowa: The Land of Winding Waters (1949)

1907: Sled Springs Telephone Line

We began the line [from Wallowa to Sled Springs] July 1 and completed it last of October or first days of November 1907. Our instructions were as follows:

“Set the poles so solid a bull can't shake them. Stretch the wire, No. 12, so tight it bows up in the middle.”

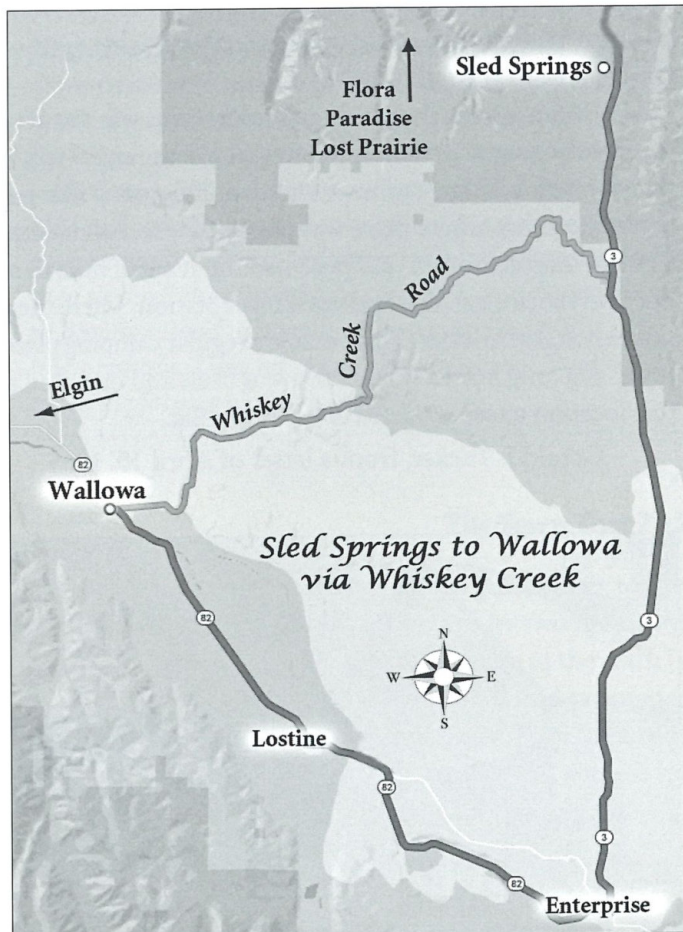
We did this on the pole line until we struck timber, then began putting in a lot of slack between brackets to take care of waving and bending of trees. We had no swing insulators at that time. After we had constructed several miles of line with slack, an inspector from Washington came over the forest and made us go back, take the line off, and retighten. After this we kept one man back repairing the line while two of us went ahead building the line according to instructions. This line caused so much trouble that it was completely rebuilt in 1909.

– W. Grady Miller, from a letter of December 7, 1938

1919: Bear-Sled Ranger District

Sometime early in the year 1919, the Bear Creek and Sled Springs districts were combined to form the Bear-Sled District, and Louis A. Carpenter was placed in charge.

– Gerald J. Tucker,
Historical Sketches of Wallowa National Forest (1954)



WALLOWA: IDEAL COMMUNITY, 1910

By R.H. Jonas, Editor & Publisher

Adapted from *The Wallowa Sun* (June 24, 1910)

Situated as it is in a valley by itself at an elevation of nearly 3,000 feet, Wallowa enjoys an ideal climate. Winters are cold but not extreme. Summer nights are always cool and refreshing, sleep comes every night in the year to renew the body and mind for the next day's labor. Pure air is abundant and clear mountain water, sparkling, pure and cold, is piped to the city from the melting snows of Bear Creek. Ample supply of wholesome meats and crisp, tender vegetables affords an appetizing and healthful diet at all times of the year. With refreshing sleep, pure air, pure, cold water, and the best quality of foods, no wonder Wallowa's health record is the best.

The town itself is an ideal place to live. Located in the midst of beautiful scenery, on the banks of the clear, sparkling Wallowa River, it is the only path of ingress or egress. No wonder its farmers are happy and independent, and its merchants prosperous and obliging. And Wallowa is growing! Four years ago when I came here, the town boasted barely 400 people, a few wooden shacks called store buildings, some few meager residences, one church, and a poor wooden schoolhouse with 5 teachers and 150 pupils.

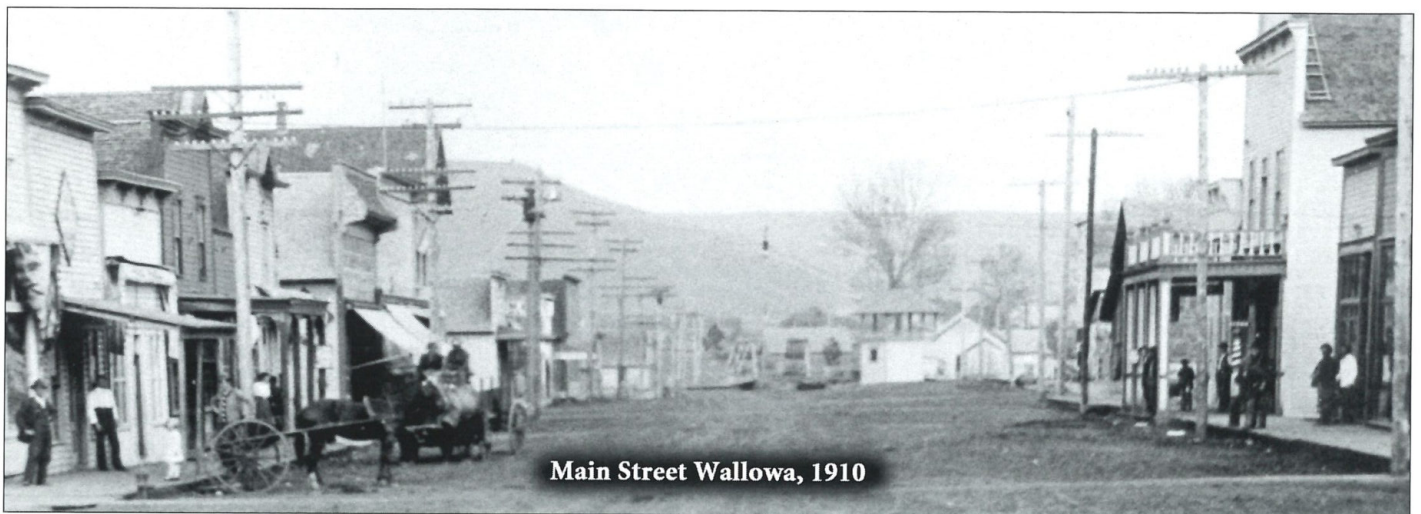
Today there are 1,200 people, several fine stores, many fireproof buildings under way, numerous fine residences, two additions with building restrictions equal to any city, three churches, a fine opera house, a national bank, a 12-grade school with 9 teachers and 400 pupils, a modern \$25,000 schoolhouse authorized, a \$10,000 gravity water system, an effective fire department, a \$15,000 electric light and power plant the equal of any in eastern Oregon, good streets and miles of sidewalks.

Wallowa is a wool shipping center. More than half a million pounds of wool are shipped annually from this vicinity to Boston. Wallowa has a creamery with a capacity of 2,000 pounds of butter daily and a reputation for the finest butter made. Big hay crops are grown here. More than 2,000 tons are shipped away annually.

But there are some things Wallowa has not. Among them are poor people, saloons, criminals, drunkenness, lawlessness, and vacant houses. The Presbyterian church, with a membership of only 60, is building a church costing \$6,000 with all modern equipment, including heating plant, cement basement, gymnasium, kitchen, banquet hall, and auditorium. The Methodist church, with a membership of 110, is spending \$3,000 in improvements alone. But Wallowa needs some things.

First of all it needs more people. It needs men with capital to help develop its latent resources. It needs men with willing hands to transform its idle land into productive fields. It needs more businessmen to meet the growing demand of the rapidly growing town. It needs a bakery, a shoe store, a first-class hotel, a feed store, a lumberyard—it needs manufacturing establishments and canning factories and woolen mills. For these latter it has ample power and raw material. No matter what your calling, if it be an honorable one, there is room for you in Wallowa.

Wallowa is a new town in a virgin soil, and fortunes will be made here. Come and join the circle of prosperous farmers. Come and become a wealthy mill man. Come and find ready employment at good wages and make a home in an ideal community.



Main Street Wallowa, 1910

Wallowa Then & Now

EAST OREGON MERCANTILE COMPANY

A Main Street mainstay since its opening in 1896, the East Oregon Mercantile Company is one of the last survivors of Wallowa's wooden downtown stores. Through the decades—and a number of owners—it has sold hardware, clothing, groceries, fuel, furniture, notions, toiletries, sporting goods, and almost anything else that Wallowans might need during the life of the store (1896–1939).



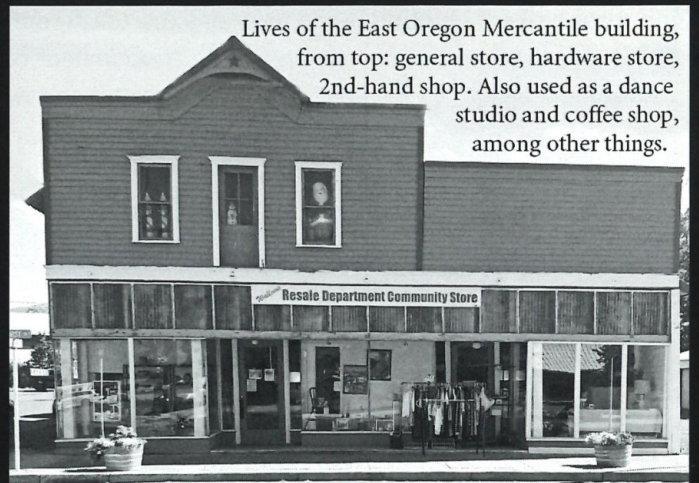
East Oregon Mercantile Company, est. 1896

The East Oregon Mercantile Company building . . . stands at the southwest corner of First and Pine streets in Wallowa. This building has a false front . . . and once had a verandah. The second story originally housed an apartment for the store manager. — Stephen Dow Beckham, *Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings* (1976)



East Oregon Mercantile Company, c. 1910

Our city is now graced with a model store of which any town can feel justly proud. By removing partitions and putting in archways, Wm. Sherod has greatly improved the appearance of his store. In addition to remodeling the structure, he has rearranged his stock in such a way that it presents a very pleasing sight. . . Not to be overlooked—for they make the electric lights look like candles—are four gas lamps which so illuminate the interior that it looks like sunshine has taken possession. With a few more gas lamps in town, it will have a metropolitan appearance such as is unsurpassed by any other town in the county. — *The Wallowa News* (May 4, 1906)



Lives of the East Oregon Mercantile building, from top: general store, hardware store, 2nd-hand shop. Also used as a dance studio and coffee shop, among other things.