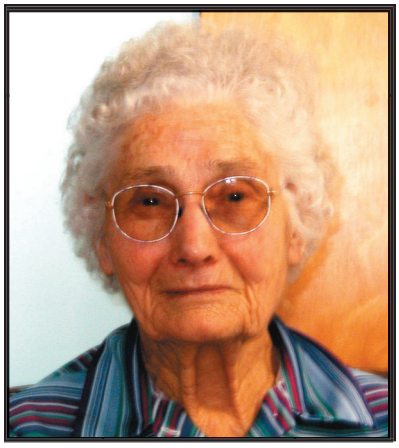
GERTIE HIBBERT

Union County resident for 89 years

AN ORAL HISTORY



Interviews in May & June, 2002
at her home in La Grande OR

Interviewers: Vanessa Clemens & Eugene Smith

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
2004
(revised from 2003)

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
An Affiliate of the Oregon Historical Society

A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation formed in 2002

In collaboration with Eastern Oregon University
Cove Improvement Club History Committee
Elgin Museum & Historical Society
Union Museum Society

Purposes

To record & publish oral histories of long-time Union County residents
&
To create a community encyclopedia

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copies of transcripts are $4.00 each + shipping & handling

Preface

Much of the history of a place is stored in the memories of people who have lived there. Their stories may be told to family members, but, unless someone makes a special effort to record these stories, they become lost to future generations.

Each of the historical societies in Union County, Oregon has begun to make that effort. Tape recordings exist in several locations, some of them transcribed in written form, others not. A more ambitious and thorough effort seemed necessary so that more of the oral history of Union County could be captured and preserved.

The Union County, Oregon History Project, begun in 2002, is making that more ambitious effort. One of its principal purposes is to collect as many oral histories of older Union County residents as possible and to make them available in both taped and written form. This edited transcript is part of the series of oral histories to be produced by that project.

About the Interviews and This Edited Version

Two interviews with Gertie Hibbert took place at her kitchen table in her modest farm home. The house and a few outbuildings are located in the Grande Ronde Valley, a few miles north of Island City. At age 89, Gertie appeared to be remarkably healthy, mentally and physically, and to be almost entirely self-sufficient.

The first interviewer was Vanessa Clemens, a volunteer with the Union County, Oregon History Project. She completed a one-hour interview on May 28, 2002. Eugene Smith was the second interviewer on June 13, 2002.

Heather Pilling's full transcription (available for research purposes) presents the literal contents of both interviews. The edited version presented here differs from the literal transcription in the following characteristics;

- reorganization of content

- deletion of some extraneous comments

- omission of false sentence starts and other normal speech fillers that detract from readability

- normalization of pronunciation and grammar in conformity with standards of written English.

GH designates Gertie Hibbert's words, *I* the interviewer's.

CONTENTS

Lifetime Union County Resident

GH: My full name is Gertie Nebeker Hibbert. I was born on the 8th of February, 1913, so I'm 89 years old this year [2002].

I: What was your mother's maiden name?

GH: My mother's name was Annie Helen Lindsay.

I: Were you born here?

GH: I was born eight miles up Indian Creek.

I: Have you been a Union County resident all your life?

GH: Yes.

I: Did your family remain pretty much in the same location?

GH: My husband [Eugene] came from Arizona when he was ten years old. He lived in this place until he passed away. His grandparents lived here when they came from Arizona. After they died, his dad took over this place and ran it until he couldn't do it anymore. Then Eugene and I took over.

I: How many years do you think this has been a Hibbert ranch?

GH: There have been five generations on it. I was a Nebeker, and I lived about a mile from here with my mother. Mother and the rest of the family moved out to Mt. Glen when my brother Vern was a baby, and I was just about two years old when they moved out on that farm. My dad died when I was just seven.

Early Childhood

I: What are some of your recollections as a child?

GH: I was a really outgoing girl. I was healthy and strong. My dad liked horses and I liked horses. I used to follow him around as long as I could get around and walk. I've come to the conclusion that my dad must have been a patient, kind man. When little children followed him around and asked him questions, he always answered them. When he'd go to harness the horse, I would always say, "What's that strap for?" And he would tell me. Then, when he hooked them up, I'd always try to help. I would go out to the field and follow him around all morning so I could drive the horses when he came in for dinner. So I really knew my dad maybe more than some of the older ones because I asked him questions. When he passed away I knew how to harness a horse--although I couldn't--and I knew how to hitch them up.

Mother had the baby, and I remember putting the harness and the two hames* on my arm. Vern would get on the other side of the horse, and I'd come up and throw it and he'd grab that strap. Then he'd pull them up. He'd catch one hame and I'd get the other, and we'd put them up on the collar.

I: How old were you then?

GH: I was seven. My oldest brother, Alex, turned fourteen, and he was doing the

*Hames are curved metal projections attached to the collar of a draft horse and to which traces (i.e., harness straps) are attached.

farm work, but he had a job to work with George Chadwick at his dairy--just down in the glen. Mama said to him, "If you do that, who's going to do the plowing?" He said, "If I open up on a piece, I know Gertie can do it." So I plowed our ground. I could sit on the seat, but I had to put my foot out on a lever to hold myself on. I knew how to do that because my dad had told me. I've often wondered if he had any inkling or premonition of what he was teaching or knew that what he was teaching might happen in the future.

I used to drive the horses all the time. I tried to beg my mother to let me not go to school--to stay home and work. She wouldn't do it. I've seen her out on the plow. Mother held my brother Wiley on her lap, and she had a quilt. She'd wrap it around him to hold him on, and she'd plow. I would hurry home from school so I could take the horses. I would plow, and I enjoyed that.

I: What kind of horses were they?

GH: They were work horses--Percherons, most of them.

I: Weren't you afraid of them?

GH: Oh, heck, no. I wasn't afraid of anything at that time. I knew how to hitch them up.

It went for years and years. Even after I graduated from high school, I stayed home. I graduated in 1931 and I got married in '36. I helped Mother all the time. Finally, Mother and I were the only two there. Wiley was there for a long time, but he worked at the mill. We'd go out and work, and then we'd come in. That's when I learned I liked squash. We'd come in and fix a few potatoes, Mother would cook some squash, and we'd fry them. That would be our dinner. I learned to like squash and I still do. You can fry squash and it cooks in a hurry.

Mother liked horses, too. She came from New Zealand, where she had a little pony called Pet. She said that was the best horse she ever rode. When we would get through with the hay or whatever work we had, we'd take a couple horses and ride up on the hill to go huckleberrying. Gosh, we picked huckleberries and huckleberries.

I: Were they any more plentiful then than they are now?

GH: In places up on this side hill they've logged so much up there that I think they've ruined a lot of the patches.

A lot of times I would be working, and Mother would get on a horse and ride up over the ridges up there. Whenever she went, she'd take two- or three-gallon containers and some dish towels. She'd always come home, if she found berries, with all of them full. She'd tie the dish towels around the buckets so that the lid wouldn't come off. When she got home, she called me and told me she needed some help to get off the horse. I saw that she had the buckets all full and that she had a gallon tied in a towel, sitting on her lap. So I took them, and I've often wondered how she got on the horse with those berries tied in just a flour sack.

I: She must have been a pretty fast picker.

GH: Oh, she was. I finally got so I could pick a half gallon by the time she had picked a gallon. And she hadn't picked that patch out. She said, "Gertie, I want you to go up with me tomorrow." So we went up and filled our containers. The next day we called Aunt Mildred from Union and asked her if she'd like to go. We called Gene and asked him if he'd like to go. We all went up there and finally picked the patch out. We later found out that we had picked twenty-seven gallons of huckleberries out of that one patch.

I: I bet you made jam.

GH: Mother canned a lot and she made a lot of jam. I still see those pies. She'd make huckleberry pies with whipped cream on top.

I: Real whipped cream, of course.

GH: Real whipped cream.

So I have, in a way, been farming ever since I was knee high to a grasshopper. I figured that it was probably one of my missions--to help Mother.

When we come here to the farm, Gene still had another job, so I practically ran this farm. I figured I had that mission, too--to help him. Of course, I was raised in those terrible '30s, when there wasn't any work or any job that paid much. All they could pay to keep this place was the interest. When jobs started to open up a little bit, D. Leo, my father-in-law, asked me--our daughter Karen was a baby then --if I would come out and help him run the farm so he could go to work. I said, "Yes, I'll do that if Grandma will tend the baby." Our other children were in school, so, when I got them off to school, I'd come out and leave the baby here at the house. Then I'd go catch the horses and work the summer fallow or whatever else needed to be done.

Health Care

I: What do you remember about health care in your family when you were a child?

GH: If anybody got sick, they called Mom. At that time, when women had babies, they stayed in bed for ten days. Mother would go out there and stay and help them. She'd call home and tell us what to do, and we did it.

I: Stay alone for ten days!

GH: A lot of times some of them would come to her place and stay, and she'd be their help for the baby. When the flu was so bad, there were about fifteen families around here--just like it is now--and none of them had electricity. It wasn't out here yet. They did have a phone, hanging on the wall. They all got sick but my dad. That was the year 1919, I guess, because it was a year before he passed away, and he passed away in 1920. He went around doing our chores and then went around to all the others in the glen and did their chores.

The next year the Parley Feiks went over the mountain, down towards Fiddler's Hill, huckleberrying or something. Parley had his little horse, but he must have wandered off, got lost, and didn't come back. So everybody went out to hunt him. Of course, Dad was one of

those that went out. It was kind of stormy; that was what really got him, I guess. Shortly after that, a young girl who worked for my uncle--who lived way back up in the mountains, near La Grande--was tending the cows. When the time came to bring the cows in, she was gone. It was a stormy night. Every body went back up there, and my dad was looking for her. Later on, we came to find out that she and another girl had run off. They found her in Washington. Dad got pneumonia, and he never did get out of bed after that, so he died.

We never had any fancy foods. We never went hungry, but we didn't have luxuries, that was for sure. Mother always did a lot of canning. We had fruits and vegetables. She would always buy a barrel of flour--maybe two barrels of flour --and make our bread. She always made the bread. She had pigs. She'd generally butcher one pig, and we killed one calf and that was all the meat for the year. We had some chickens. We'd kill them once in a while. If we ever got sick, Mother would kill a chicken and make us chicken soup.

I tell you, her patriarchal blessing said that she would have the power over sickness and disease. Whenever she went into sick people's rooms, they got better. She just seemed like she knew what to do when she went in.

I: A wonderful gift. Did you have the flu?

GH: I don't remember. We had three cases of scarlet fever. I know we were quarantined two or three different times so that we couldn't go to school.

I: Tell me more about being quarantined at that time.

GH: We had to stay home. We couldn't go out to do anything.

I: Did you have to stay in your own bedroom?

GH: No. In our house. One time, when I think Miss Bertha Stocks was teaching, we were quarantined three weeks to a month for scarlet fever. It was so catching that we couldn't go out.

I: Did somebody tack a sign on your door that said "quarantined"?

GH: No, not a sign but a red flag on a post outside. We just were obedient. It was on a Friday that we had been released from quarantine, and the teacher, who was still scared, went up the lane to Beswick's. He must have been on the school board, and they came back and closed the school. I do remember she got scared because we came.

I: Were you allowed to do any schoolwork while you were quarantined at home?

GH: Not that I remember. We were just quarantined.

I: What did you do while you were quarantined?

GH: If we were sick, we were in bed. Mother took care of us.

I: You said that your mother was kind of a visiting nurse. She seemed to know how to take care of people.

GH: She had that ability. She walked in a room and seemed like she knew what to do, and they got better.

I: Had she been to any kind of a school or training program for that?

GH: No, she came from New Zealand after she had just passed into the third grade. So she taught herself. She read pretty well.

I: Was she using home remedies--various kinds of liniments and things that she could make?

GH: Mustard plasters. They made you get pretty red and sometimes they burnt. She used a lot of that stuff that she rubbed on you. She'd always kill a chicken and make us chicken-noodle soup.

I: At that time was there such a thing as Vicks ointment?

GH: There probably was later, it seems like.

I: That's one of the preparations you could buy at the store at that time. Would she have bought some things such as that?

GH: Yes, but at that time we didn't have money to buy hardly anything. A little later, during the hard times in the '30s, we survived on what we raised and what we canned. Mother would go out and buy clothes at a rummage sale and make them over to fit us.

I: What did your mother give for a cough?

GH: I know she did an awful lot on our throats. Maybe she had a kind of liniment that she'd give us.

I: Did she try to give you anything when you had scarlet fever, or just tell you to wait it out?

GH: I don't think there was much she could have done. Some of us got it pretty hard and peeled all over; for others it wasn't really so hard.

I: Did you have measles, too?

GH: Yes. Measles and scarlet fever.

I: Chicken pox?

GH: Chicken pox and whooping cough. I didn't get whooping cough.

I: Most kids did get all those communicable diseases, didn't they?

GH: Oh, yes. My kids, I think, got everything there was in school to get. I told my husband, "My gosh, if we just had interest in the drug stores ..."

I: Was your mother also a midwife?

GH: They didn't call her that, but she went every time someone was having a baby. She was either over there with them or they came to our place.

I: Did she actually assist in the delivery?

GH: She helped the doctor.

I: At that time, in the 1910 to '20 period, were most births at home?

GH: Yes. Most of them. A lot of them were out here.

I: Including yours?

GH: I had two of them at home. Dr. Branner came. He was a good doctor. Some of the doctors weren't as faithful as he was. I had two girls and Mother was in there every time.

I: Did she talk to you about what she actually did at a birthing?

GH: She was right there if the doctor needed any help and assisted in anything that he wanted.

I: Do you think she would cut the umbilical cord?

GH: I don't think she did.

I: Clean up the baby?

GH: Oh, yes. She'd always clean up the baby.

I: Got the blankets ready to wrap it in?

GH: Yes. Hot water and warm blankets.

I: There wasn't any anesthetic, was there, for mothers then?

GH: No.

I: Do you remember a lot of screaming?

GH: I wasn't there. I don't know. I had an older sister, and she had her children in our home. I was there, but I walked in the room and then I was out. I never did hear her making a sound.

I: What would have happened in those times out here if a baby was stillborn or died shortly after birth? What would people do next?

GH: A family came from Texas. She was a good seamstress, and he was a carpenter. They had a little baby who died. The mother sewed the cutest little outfit for it, and the father made a little coffin. Some of us in the glen here went up on that hill, and the undertaker, I think, was there, too. They dug a little grave, and then we sang a song or two. Years later, I went out there to see if I could find it because I knew just about where it should be, but there was no sign.

I know my sister had a miscarriage--a little boy. They lived close to the hill, and her husband dug a grave under a bush and buried it.

Cemeteries

I: Did your family use the cemetery in La Grande?

GW: Hillcrest Cemetery, yes, before they fixed the whole thing up. My dad was buried there, and it was just weeds and everything around our plot. They called that the LDS [Latter-Day Saints] section. Later on, my brother and his wife lost a child, and she wouldn't bury it there. She got a plot where it was already fixed up. But now that cemetery is fixed up and looks nice.

I: It's my understanding that the cemetery across the street from Hillcrest was originally a place only for Catholics.

GH: I don't know. I just figured it was.

I: Were you aware at that time that cemeteries were pretty much segregated by religion?

GH: I knew that theirs was.

I: But you spoke of the LDS part of Hillcrest.

GH: Yes, but we didn't own it, and then they passed a law or rule that they had to fix it all up.

I: Why do you think people would have wanted that kind of separation?

GH: I really don't know. As far as I'm concerned, I don't care what religion you have. I want to make friends with all of them. So I don't know.

Shopping in La Grande

GH.: Once a week we'd go to town, driving our horse and buggy. There was this little store right about where the Sacajawea Annex is now. During wintertime, we'd tie our horse in an alleyway. Then we'd put our bricks on a stove in the store and get our shopping done. After that, we'd take those bricks and put them on the buggy floor to keep our feet warm as we went back home.

I: What kinds of things were you buying?

GH: It was a few groceries.

I: Like vegetables or fruits or canned things?

GH: I don't think we bought many cans. Mother canned a lot. We bought flour, but generally she harvested what little wheat we had. She'd buy two barrels of flour. I don't suppose that people know what a barrel of flour is. They'd last us about all winter.

I: Did you buy things at the store that you couldn't make for yourself?

GH: We had to buy pencils and paper and maybe stockings or something like that. We'd go to a rummage sale--they were generally on Saturday--and she'd buy some things there. You could get a lot of nice clothes for little or nothing. She was a good sewer, and she'd make them over for us.

I: Did you think those trips were fun?

GH: Yes, I didn't mind them at all. I went quite often with Mother. We only had one seat and one horse.

I: Did she always drive?

GH: She did when the snow was in drifts; other times I drove.

I: When you were a teenager, would you ride a horse into La Grande?

GH: Oh, yes. We'd ride the horses on solid ground and we never had saddles, but we would see what we could do on those horses.

I: What else did you get to do while you were in town?

GH: I remember once that we went to a restaurant on Depot Street, I think it was. We had soup with those little, round crackers. That was choice.

I: A treat?

GH: It sure was. I remember that the horses went up and down Adams Avenue. There was a man that went along with a little

cart and a scoop shovel to clean up the street. I thought, "What would happen when they have cars and the stuff would get on cars?" The streets weren't paved. There were board sidewalks--two, as I remember, going across from one street to the other.

I: Were there gas street lamps then or some other fuel, or were they electric?

GH: There weren't any, as I remember.

I: No street lights at all?

GH: I don't think so.

Visits to Other Union County Towns

I: What other towns in the valley did you visit frequently when you were young?

GH: After we got to be teenagers, quite often we'd go over to Imbler and Elgin and visit some of the kids our age. I had an uncle that lived out of Union--up Catherine Creek. I know we went over there; he invited us over for dinner one time. He invited the Feiks, too, and they had a car. So they took Mother and some of the kids, but Alex and some of us other kids went in the horse and buggy, drove to Union for dinner, and then had to drive back.

I: How long did it take to get from your house to Union?

GH: I think quite a while. I don't remember.

I: Three or four hours?

GH: Oh, no. It probably took an hour at least. We always trotted the horses. They trotted and we kind of cut through the valley. They were this side of Union. I think we could make it over there and back in a day and have dinner.

I: Even with trips like this, did you feel isolated out here?

GH: No. This was our home.

Attending a One-room School

I: What early school experiences do you recall?

GH: I went to Mt. Glen School--to eight grades down there in that little house now across from where Ivan [Gertie's son] and Lee Flower live [at intersection of Mt. Glen Road and Igo Lane]. The school had a small front room; that's where we hung our hats and coats and overshoes. We played games like tag in that room, too.

We walked a mile to school. When the snow was deep, all five of us would climb on our little horse, Topsy, and we'd ride down to the Mt. Glen School. Then we'd get off, turn her loose, and she'd go back home.

I: When you entered into first grade, how did you feel?

GH: I think I was scared. I think Mother must have gone with me the first day.

I: Why were you scared?

GH: I'd never been to school before. [shows labeled photos of teachers and classes; see pp. 10-11] There's a picture of the schoolhouse. This teacher is Mrs. Betts.

I: Do you think these pictures were taken by this teacher?

GH: I think so because she went to all the trouble of fixing them. I thought she got a really good picture of the schoolhouse.

I: When you went in, after you got over being afraid of going into school, what were the first things you did in the morning?

GH: Before we came in, we saluted the flag. There was a flagpole outside. They took it down if it started raining. The flag went up early in the morning. We stood on the walk and saluted the flag. Then, when we got in, quite often we sat down, got up, and stood in the aisles; we exercised up and down--up on our toes and reaching up and down.

I: Did you have the kind of desks that are mounted together in a row?

GH: Yes, one behind the other. Some of the big boys who sat behind me were usually pulling hair or doing something. I remember once that one of the girls got mad at the teacher. She took up her ink bottle and threw it at her. We had a lot of fun.

I: Did you have to buy your own books?

GH: Maybe and maybe not. I know when Mother would sell our wheat, I'd go out with her. She would go in the horse and buggy, get the check, make out her tithing, and then she'd make out what she had to pay on the farm. What was left over would go to school. We had paper and pencils. I don't remember whether we had to buy books or not. I kind of think the books were furnished.

I: You went to school, probably from 9:00 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon. Is that right?

GH: I think the younger kids got out a little earlier.

I: Did the teacher usually assign homework?

GH: The little ones didn't have homework, but the bigger ones did.

I: What would that homework be? More arithmetic problems or reading a chapter from a book?

GH: Spelling--learning how to spell well. When I started first grade, they didn't have phonics. A little later, when my younger sister started, they had phonics. They learned to read quicker than I did. Even today I can spell a word better than sounding words out.

I: You spoke about the girl who got angry at the teacher and threw an inkwell. Generally, how was discipline in the classroom?

GH: They had pretty good discipline, considering how many kids were there. Sometimes the boys got to teasing the girls or annoying them by pulling their hair. The teachers were pretty strict in making them behave.

There were so many grades there that some of the older children helped the

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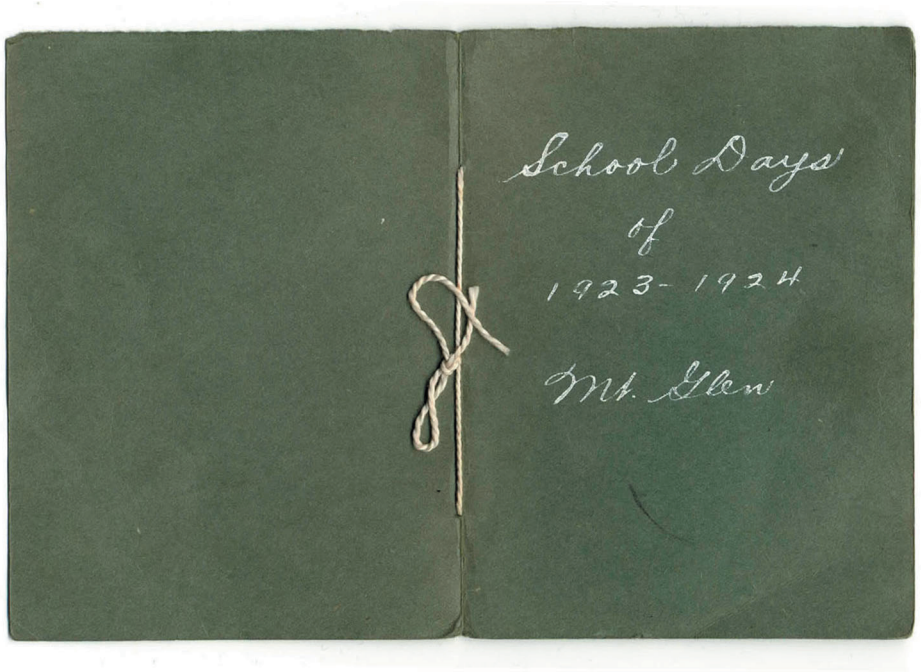
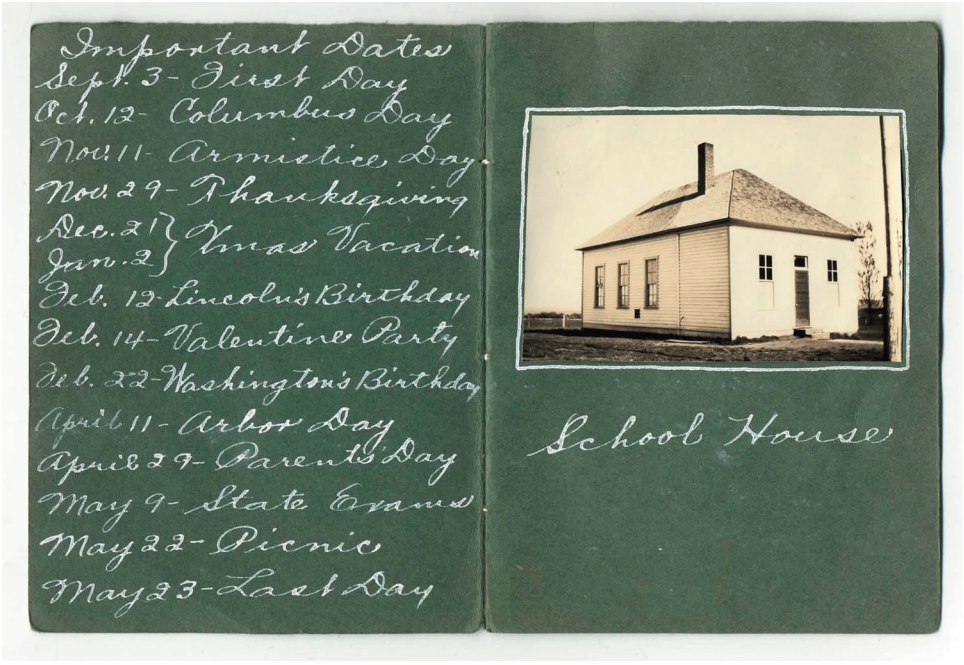
Booklet made by teacher at Mt. Glen School in 1923-24 (Gertie's 4th grade year)

Original courtesy of Gertie Hibbbert; photos by Eugene Smith





Mrs. Betts

Pupils

Enrollment

First Grade

Verda Nebeker
Anna Mae Whiting
Joseph Deik
Elden Waite

Second Grade

Lagrand Allen
Freddie Mc. Coy

Third Grade

Marell Waite
Gerald Waite
Edna Williams
Henry Williams

Fourth Grade

Gertie Nebeker
Vern Nebeker
Luther Deik

Fifth Grade

Maurice Leak
Lindis Harrison

Sixth Grade

Dern Mc. Coy

Seventh Grade

Marie Kent
Augusta Mc. Coy
Ida Nebeker
Vernon Waite

Mt. Glen School as it appeared in early 20th c.
Photo courtesy of Pearl Westenskow & G & D Fleshman Collection

Softball game at Mt. Glen School, early 20th c.
Photo courtesy of Pearl Westenskow & G & D Fleshman Collection

Mt. Glen School in early 2002, before owner's remodeling,
which ruined its historic status
Photo by Eugene Smith

View of Mt. Glen School classroom in 2002, as seen through rear window frame
(no glass in windows; roof in disrepair; floors in poor condition.)
Photo by Eugene Smith

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younger ones with their spelling and their arithmetic and other work. I remember one year there were thirty children in the school and all eight grades. The teacher would give us ten minutes when we'd go up with our class and sit on a bench by her. She'd ask us questions or talk to us.

I: Was she giving you a test?

GH: I think so, to see if we had studied.

I: Were you nervous when you did that?

GH: I was because I didn't like reading. It was hard for me to read. There were just two of us, I think it was, in the third grade. She would hold me on her lap, and she'd have Morris read the stories to me. That didn't help me with reading. That year, she passed me into the fourth grade if I would learn to read during the summer. From the time school was out until the end of summer, I never looked in a book. She put me back in the third grade with my brother. That bothered me, but I think it kind of woke me up.

There was a big potbellied stove with a piece of metal around it.

I: Sort of a guard or protector?

GH: Yes. When we were playing out in the snow, we had clothes that we'd hang over that to warm and dry. And there was a vent that came out of the stove. I think it was for furnace air. It was a place you could hear things from if you were standing outside. Some of the parents would come to see the teacher, and we'd get close to there. If you listened, you could hear what they were talking about.

I: What did you do about lunch?

GH: We all took a sandwich or something from home.

I: Did you eat it outside usually?

GH: I think we might or at our desks.

I: Somebody told me that the only source of water was in a trough over next to the barn--where Lee Flower's barn is now. Do you remember that?

GH: No, there was a house right across the street where Ivan's barn is. Fred Leak lived there, and on the back porch he had a pump and a bucket. The boys went over there and got the water in the bucket. That's where we got the water while I was there.

I: Did you have outhouses?

GH: There were woodsheds down along the fence between Lee's and the place down in the school yard; the boys' outhouse was next to the woodshed. The girls would go around the other side.

I: Who do you think cleaned the room?

GH: I think Mrs. Leona Allen cleaned some.

I: Was she a janitor, not a teacher?

GH: No, she wasn't a teacher. Lots of times the Allens boarded the school teacher. Then there were the Bezwicks that lived down Igo Lane aways; they took care of the teacher once in a while. But Leona

Allen and her husband kept the teachers--other than those that had their own homes.

I: What sorts of games did you play around school?

GH: We played baseball a lot by using the backside of the house. We'd line up on the sidewalk, and we'd have a place where we had to try and get across to get a "poison rag" that they had out there. We called the game Poison Rag. If you could get back with the rag, you were safe. But if you got caught, you had to go to the other side. Some of the boys got to pole vaulting a little bit--with just a stick. We'd play kick the can and hide and seek because we had those big trees.

I: When it was time to come into school after recess, did she ring a bell?

GH: She had a big, old bell.

I: Did your teachers usually stay more than a year?

GH: Generally not. I think Imagene Orton stayed a couple of years. Don Smith and Mrs. Betts were there one year. Vada Briggs was my third grade techer, and Henry Maxfield taught when I was in fifth grade. Miss Bertha Stocks was an older woman; I can remember her white hair. Then Mr. Ferguson was my eighth grade teacher. A lot of times Henry Maxfield's wife substituted for him.

I: Did school seem different when you had a male teacher?

GH: No, it didn't seem to bother me. At first, I think I was a little more shy of men.

I: Before you could graduate from eighth grade, did you have to take state tests and pass them?

GH: We had to take exams in every one of our subjects, like history, arithmetic, and agriculture. They came from Salem [Oregon State Department of Education], where they wrote out the questions. We had to answer them.

We got a sheet for each subject that had questions we had to answer in a certain length of time. We couldn't take all day or take them home.

I: When did you take the tests?

GH: Mt. Glen School got out the last of April.

Attending High School in La Grande

I: How did you manage to go to high school?

GH: I had to work to go to high school. I stayed in La Grande with Dr. and Mrs. Ralston, tending their kids nights, and got up early in the morning to get breakfast started.

They were kind of social people and were gone a lot. Every other week she would give me fifty cents if I stayed in on Saturday and cleaned the house. Heavens, fifty cents!

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STATE OF OREGON

QUESTIONS FOR EIGHTH GRADE DIPLOMAS

JANUARY, 1915

TO THE APPLICANT: Select any ten of the following problems.
TO THE EXAMINER: Grade the first ten answers only.

ARITHMETIC

1. I own ¼ of a mill and sell 9-10 of my share for $450. At this rate, what is the value of the mill?

2. B can do a piece of work in 6⅔ days, and C can do it in 7½ days. What part of the work can they both do in 1 day? How many days will it take both to do the work?

3. A farmer exchanged 84.75 bushels of potatoes at $.45 a bushel for 450 pounds of sugar at $.06¼ a pound, and the balance in cash. How much cash did he receive?

4. How many times will a bicycle wheel 88 inches in circumference turn in going one mile?

5. A lot 120 ft. long and 80 ft. wide is surrounded by a sidewalk 8 ft. wide. What will be the cost of the sidewalk at $1.50 per square yard?

6. How much will it cost for the flooring for a floor 21 ft. by 16 ft. at $25 per M, allowing nothing for waste? (Flooring is supposed to be 6 in. in width.)

7. I paid ⅝ of my money for a watch and 62½% of the remainder for a chain, and then had $9 left. What was the cost of the watch? Of the chain?

8. Mr. H. H. Jones borrows $1200 June 5, and pays the debt October 23. What is the interest at 4½ per cent?

9. A farmer buys 24 head of cattle at $80 a head, and, after losing 6, sells the remainder at $105 a head. How much does he gain or lose per cent?

10. If a loaf of bread costs 4 cts. when flour is $6 a barrel, how much should it cost when flour is $7½ a barrel?

11. W. L. Spring bought of Green & Harris, Grocers, S. Toledo, Ohio, March 12, 1900, 4 tubs of butter (170 lb.), at $.31; 20 lb. Rio coffee, at $.35; 4 lb. Japan tea, at $.85. March 18, 8 doz. eggs, at 14 cts.; 25 lb. prunes, at 12 cts.; 8 bu. potatoes, at 55 cts.; 50 lb. granulated sugar, at 6 cts. April 2, 30 lb. dried applies, at 11 cts.; 8 lb. cheese, at 14 cts. Make out a receipted bill.

12. What price must be asked for goods that cost $240 in order that there may be a clear profit of 16⅔% after allowing a discount of 12½% from the list prices?

8th grade end-of-year exam in arithmetic from 1915, similar to exams Gertie took in the 1920s

Original courtesy of Verna Courtright

STATE OF OREGON

QUESTIONS FOR EIGHTH GRADE DIPLOMAS

JANUARY, 1915

TO THE APPLICANT: Select any ten of the following questions.
TO THE EXAMINER: Grade the first ten answers only.

HISTORY

1. What settlements were made by the London and Plymouth Companies?
2. Why did Penn found colonies in Pennsylvania and what liberal ideas did he put into his charter?
3. Briefly describe the colonial life of the people.
4. Give the chief cause of the Revolution.
5. What was the Treaty of Peace at the close of the Revolution?
6. How did Hamilton establish the national credit?
7. What country did the United States acquire through the Louisiana Purchase?
8. What is the Monroe Doctrine?
9. Give causes of the war for the Union.
10. Locate an important battle of the war for the Union and name opposing commanders.
11. What trouble has the United States recently had with Mexico?
12. What is a protective tariff?

8th grade end-of-year exam in history from 1915, similar to exams Gertie took in the 1920s

Original courtesy of Verna Courtright

Religious Influences

I: What part did religion play in your life, especially in the early years?

GH: That was our life. Mother was a convert in New Zealand. She knew the LDS faith was true as soon as she heard it. When the elders came, just she and the kids were there, but she knew. The Lindsays always invited them in and were very hospitable. So Mother invited the missionaries in to eat, and when she asked them what they wanted to drink--tea or coffee--they said, "Just some water."

Before Grandma Lindsay came home, they'd finished supper and were in by the fireplace, talking and explaining the Word of Wisdom to them. Mother said to Walter, one of their brothers, "Let's make a promise right now that we'll never touch tea and coffee again." On her dying bed, she said, "I don't know about Walter, but I've never touched it since then."

Gertie in 1930 at age seventeen
Photo courtesy of Gertie Hibbert

She really believed it. She didn't waver one way or the other.

I: Did she convert your dad?

GH: No, he was a member. They were all members in Payson and Salem, Utah. His dad finally moved up to Rigby.

She read Bible stories to us. We'd all sit around the potbellied stove, and she'd read out of the Book of Mormon or the Bible. Then she'd tell us stories of what she had done in New Zealand. She converted herself and taught herself to read. The key was that the person wanted to learn, and she was smart enough to learn.

Meeting the Man She Married

I: How old were you when you got married?

GH: I was twenty-four. Gene Hibbert and I went together almost seven years before we got married. The first date was to his senior play, when he invited me to go with him. He graduated in 1930--the year before I did.

I: What year did you get married?

GH: 1936.

I: Is he still with you?

GH: No. He passed away in 1977.

I: How many children did you have?

GH: Eight--five boys and three girls, just the opposite of Mother.

I: Do any of them live around here?

GH: Yes. Dallas lives just through the field from here, and Ivan lives over in the glen. Dixie's here with me now in the basement as a separate part of the house. One son, who is a dentist, lives in Pendleton; another son is a pediatrician in La Grande.

When we came here from La Grande, Gene still had a job, so I practically ran the farm. I figured I had that mission--to help him. When we got a tractor, I could almost live on that tractor. A lot of times when we'd be out there working together, he said, "Don't you think it's about time to go in and fix something to eat?" I said, "Why don't you go in and fix it, and I'll finish up out here?" He was good at that. When we'd go hunting or camping, I didn't have to worry about anything to eat. He always fixed it and cooked it. I would take care of the horses--stake them out or saddle them up. That's just what we did.

Gertie and her horse Dixie in 1934
Photo courtesy of Gertie Hibbert

Wild Animals & Hunting in Union County

I: Did you hunt?

GH: Yes. I learned to hunt. Gene's dad liked to hunt, so he would take his boys and us orphan kids, you might say, because Wiley and I didn't have a dad and the Waite boys didn't have a dad. He'd try and scrounge around and give us all guns; then he'd tell us how to hunt and we'd go hunting.

I: Have you killed deer?

GH: I've killed a lot of them.

I: Have you killed elk?

GH: Yes, a lot of them, too.

I: What other wild animals have you seen in Union County? Did you see cougars or bears?

GH: I never saw bear when I was young. I had a lot of coyotes around here; I hear them now. And I've seen owls, hawks, and pheasants.

I: Where did you usually go deer hunting?

GH: We went back of Mt. Emily. I was talking to somebody the other day. I said, "Gee, I'd sure like to be able to walk those ridges again." It's so pretty up there.

One thing we did as kids to entertain ourselves was to go up over those long ridges on top Mt. Emily to eat our lunch. We would run up those ridges to see who could get to the top first. There

was a big tower up there; we'd climb the tower.

I: Was that a tower for fire watching?

GH: Yes. A man lived up there and had to be up on that tower so many hours during the day to spot fires. We got a kick out of talking to him.

I: If you went hunting for deer up there, would you go with horses?

GH: Gene's dad had a pickup, or some of the boys had cars. My husband, before we were married, rode a horse from here clear back over the top and back further so that, in case they got something down in the canyon, they could haul it out. I would butcher them up.

I: When you brought the carcasses in, did you hang them up on ropes from trees?

GH: Yes. Sometimes we'd hog dress them if we were out.

I: What does *hog dress* mean?

GH: That means open them up and take the insides out.

Two-point deer shot at 25 steps by Gertie on Mt. Emily, October 5, 1959
Photo courtesy of Gertie Hibbert

I: Did you hang the animal up in a tree?

GH: We held the hind legs apart and put it around something to hold it up. Then we used a pulley to pull it up in the tree. I had one deer hung up by its head and horns and started to skin the neck, then tied a chain to the skin, fastened it to the car, and let the car pull the rest of the skin off. It worked swell. I wanted to take a picture of that scene.

We went up on Mt. Emily many times. Half the time Gene would get one. He would have to go back to work, and I'd have to clean the deer up.

I: What did you do with the heart, the liver, and other inner organs? Did you throw those away?

GH: We always kept the liver. I liked it, though some of my family didn't. There were a lot of people around who were glad to get it.

I: How did you cook the animals you killed?

GH: Mostly we cut a big roast, put it in the oven, and got it partially cooked. Then we would cut off pieces and put them in jars with a nice gravy. We would boil it and cold pack it. If it was sealed, it was safe to eat. We could come home from church, open a quart of that meat with gravy, and have a meal, with a few cut-up potatoes.

I didn't have an electric stove until we moved out here in 1964. I cooked and canned and everything on a wood stove.

I can truthfully say that our kids were

raised on deer meat. We never missed a year without getting our deer, and we'd generally get at least a half an elk. One year Gene thought he'd kill a beef and have the beef, and our kids wouldn't eat it.

I: Were you ever concerned about these wild animals' being diseased?

GH: I never once thought about running into one that might be diseased.

I: What other wild animals did you kill and eat?

GH: A lot of rabbit but mostly deer and elk.

I: Any wild turkeys?

GH: No. That's only been in the last few years. My grandson got a turkey, so his mother cooked it and invited me to come up and eat some. I was surprised that they don't look anything like the turkeys you buy. They have long legs and are kind of stringy to eat.

I: Was it possible to catch fish to eat without going very far away?

GH: There were suckers. I've eaten a lot of suckers.

I: Did you like them?

GH: The only thing I don't like about them is that they have so many little bones. You could cut the top part off. It wasn't so bad.

I: Are suckers easy to catch?

GH: I thought it was hard. The creek here used to run bigger than it does now and was pretty swift. The young boys would get right in there, catch them with their hands, and give them a throw.

One year, there were a lot of them here. People from town came out and got them. The trouble was they threw them out on the road. My husband told them that, if they wanted to catch them, they shouldn't throw them out on the road.

I: Did you see frogs?

GH: We'd play, trying to catch them, but we couldn't catch them to kill them. They said you could eat their legs, but we never did.

I: Did you gather and eat wild plants other than huckleberries?

GH: When I was a kid, we used to gather willow britches. They're kind of weed-like and grow like a dandelion, with a fuzzy leaf. We made cooked greens out of them.

I: Did you gather mushrooms?

GH: I like them. We picked brain mushrooms, but they were hard to clean.

Halloween Tricks & Thievery

I: What were some favorite Halloween activities?

GH: When we were growing up, on Halloween night the boys would get out and push outhouses over, and one time--I didn't see it--they said that they took somebody's wagon and managed to get it up on top of the owner's barn. One

night was clothesline night; they'd tear down the clotheslines.

I: How common were thefts?

GH: Not too many. The first time we noticed some of that was when we first took this place over. We didn't have a house here yet, but we had planted potatoes and a big garden. In fact, we had a bunch of chickens we'd come by and take care of --leghorns, roosters.

We noticed that someone had taken some of the squash and gotten into the corn. We had five rows of potatoes along the road and didn't think anyone would dig any potatoes while we were gone. But we came out one morning and saw that someone had dug the middle row.

I: Did you feel safe from thefts all the time you were growing up?

GH: We never locked our house or car doors. We never even thought about it. Nothing was taken--not like today.

Substituting on Mail Routes

GH: Did I tell you anything about substituting at the post office mail room? I substituted for Le Verne Fullmer on Route 2 for quite a while and then he took Route 1.

I: That was the La Grande post office?

GH: Yes. Then I substituted for Harold Borine, and later they put on a third route to May Park and Island City, but it wasn't a full-fledged route. I took that one for about two years. As soon as it went into a full route, I wasn't eligible.

I: Why did you want to start delivering mail?

GH: I thought it was fun. Most of my kids were in school. Le Verne was here one day, and I said, "How's the chance of subbing?" He said I might be able to. One day he called me and said, "Gertie, do you want to sub?" So I did. I really enjoyed that. I met a lot of people--more than I'd ever seen. Most of them were really nice. At Christmas time lots of them gave candy or something in the mailbox. One time I got a big, frozen steak.

All the time I was on the mail route, I got stuck only twice. Once I had to shovel out, and once I got pulled out. I had only two flat tires, but I didn't have to wait long for someone to come by and change them for me.

I: Were you driving your own car or a post office car?

GH: I bought my own car. I had a little Toyota and later I had a Subaru with all-wheel drive.

Route 2, that I was substituting on, went clear out to Union. It was about eighty miles. Then they took off fourteen miles--all the Union district--so I wouldn't have to go out there.

Some days weren't the most pleasant. One time I had to have chains on day after day. Gene was working at the telephone company, where they had a big warehouse. I'd park my mail car in the warehouse and go home with Eugene. The next morning, I'd go with him when he went to work, and I'd go to the

post office in the mail car. This way I didn't have to take off the chains.

I: Why was the work mostly fun?

GH: I enjoyed it because I'd never been working away from the farm. I had always helped my mother when she needed it. Then, when the Depression was letting up and people started to be able to get work, Gene's dad was able to get on the railroad. He asked me if I would help with the farm so he could work on the railroad. I told him, sure, if his wife would tend my baby. I did that and then, when they passed away and we took over here, Gene was working, so I didn't have to work. It was a blessing and kind of what I was made to do. I've always been strong and healthy, and I love to work. I'd rather do that than sit in the house.

Quilting & Making Unusual Bandages

I: How do you occupy your time now?

GH: A lot of times I quilt. People have given me material, and I get some at the Salvation Army. When I went in there one day, they had a whole basketful of full yardage--not just scraps. I got a lot of that. Quilting passes my time, and I send quilts to people that need them.

Mother always did quite a bit of quilting. I started quilting when I was a teenager. I've done a lot here lately. In fact, since the middle of February [2002], I have pieced and quilted eight or ten quilts. [See three of them on p. 25]
I enjoy it.

I was trying to get rid of some of my scraps and doing pretty well at that. Then my sister, Viola, one day said the next door neighbor had to go to a rest home, and she had a lot of material she didn't know what to do with. She said she told her she would buy it. The woman said, "No, I'll just give it to you." Viola said, "I've got a sister that would use it." So she got me all that material, and I worked it up.

Then I was at the Salvation Army one day, and they had a big grocery cart full of quilt tops. As I was looking through that, a saleswoman brought me a grocery bag and said, "All you can cram in there you can have for five dollars." I filled that bag clear full. There was enough material there in sheeting that I got the lining for three quilts. When I took it to the counter, she charged me one dollar.

Heavens! I have made quilts and made quilts. I have nice quilting stands that I made. I have four tops that I'd like to get finished before I can no longer quilt.

I can't sit or stand too long, but I can quilt. In fact, I can quilt a pretty good-sized one in a couple of days. But I don't go around the block [i.e., stitching each side of a piece of cloth] like I used to. I can go through and do zigzag [i.e., stitching each piece of cloth diagonally]. I've come to the conclusion that they look just as nice that way and maybe better than if I go around each block, and I can do it in half the time.

Another thing I have done is to make bandages for the Relief Society. They

said they wanted leper bandages,* so I've made six of them. They are crocheted--three inches wide and seven feet long.

I: Seven feet?

GH: Yes.

I: What are they used for?

GH: They are put in kits and sent to where they are needed by the Relief Society. My son who is a doctor said, when I was crocheting one one day, "What do you do with that?" I tried to explain it to him, but it was hard. Then one day he came here and said, "I've seen what those bandages do." So he had seen one. All I can figure out is that, if a person had to have an arm or a leg bandaged, they could use a long one because they stretch, and you can put them on tightly.

Work on Genealogy

I: [looking at a sheaf of papers Gertie brought to the table] I see you have some handwritten papers there. What are they?

GH: I like to fix my genealogy. Ever since I was a young girl, I must have had genealogy in my system. I made genealogies of the cows and the horses. In fact, right now my son has a horse that's the eighth generation from the first horse I had. Here is my horse and how many colts she had.

I've been doing quite a bit of genealogy work. I finally got a computer, and that has been a wonderful help. It has what they call the Paf program; I can put names on there, and then I can print them off and send them in to the temple [LDS]. I've finally run out of names. My son is the genealogist. He's been on a mission; he said, "Mom, I've been looking through one of these microfilms, and I found more names on the Lindsay side. I'll tell you all about it when I come." I'm interested, and he helps a lot. I've rented films from different localities and have taken out the names that were on my line. I'm waiting to hear from him to find out if they're relatives.

I: Was using a computer difficult for you?

GH: I was surprised I could learn that program, but that's about all I do on the computer.

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*According to Heather Pilling, transcriptionist, leper bandages are large enough to cover leprosy wounds that may involve a person's entire body.

Three Quilts Made by Gertie in 2002

Photos by Eugene Smith

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