

Answering Student Questions about Living in South Tillamook County and about Hebo School

by Howard Brassfield - May 10, 2000

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Who are you?

I'm Howard Brassfield, and I live on the old Farmer homestead between Hebo and Beaver and have lived there since 1946, 54 years.

When were you born?

I was born in 1935.

Where did you live before you came here?

Out in Salem on South River Road. I started grade school at Riverdale School in Salem.

Why did you move to South Tillamook County?

My folks decided to go into dairying full-time, and they wanted to dairy in Tillamook County.

What did Tillamook County look like then?

It looked about the same as it looks now. It really did . . . green with lots of trees.

How has South Tillamook County changed in your lifetime?

It changed from basically dairying and logging to a lot more tourists and fewer but larger dairies. Logging has slowed a lot, and there are a lot more people who are NOT employed in agriculture unlike what it used to be like.

What are your favorite things about living here?

Probably the people. There are a lot of really good people around, really good kids, and this is a good place to bring up kids.

What would you suggest to make South Tillamook County better for the future?

Raise good kids! Raise your kids like they ought to be.

Are you aware of any homestead sites in the area?

Oh, yeah, I'm aware of a lot of them. We live on one of them, and part of our property includes another homestead that I really don't know much about except where it is. I think there are a lot of old homesteads back in the hills that have just been abandoned. You can still find traces of the old sites.

Where would they be?

There are several up Bunn Creek Road north out of Beaver and a couple up on Farmer Creek. They are just kind of scattered around. You kind of have to go and look for them anymore.

What families have lived here that you know of?

I don't know any of the old names. Most of these were homesteaded back in the 1880s - 1890s, in that area. A lot of the names have disappeared. At the same time, a lot of the names have been given to the various small streams that run into the Nestucca. George Creek was the George family who lived east off of Evergreen Drive. And the Severn Creek,

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a little creek that comes out of the mountains south of Beaver. Farmer Creek, of course . . . Farmer was one of the old homesteaders.

How did people support themselves?

Very meagerly. It was a tough show. There wasn't much cash available back in the late 1800s. It was mostly through farming and logging and a little bit of anything else that you could come up with. Farming, of course, was the main thing. There was dairying once you got enough land cleared to raise a few cows. You could make a little extra money even on 10 or 15 cows. They could haul a few cans of milk to the local cheese factories. There wasn't much tourist business then.

What kinds of crops were grown?

Well, basically forage for the animals. Grass for summer, and they put up enough hay to sustain themselves through the winter. There were some odd crops grown all after the 1900s. Daffodils, oddly enough, were grown in Tillamook County for 20 - 30 years before WWII. There are still some fields around Tillamook that have a lot of volunteer daffodils in them. At one time, there were some root crops like mangolds which you probably don't know what they are. They are similar to a sugar beet. They were kind of a cattle-type sugar beet, and they were grown because they would keep well all winter. Those were ground up all winter and given to the cows along with the local hay.

What did people do for entertainment?

Well, the Saturday night dance was always big. Usually a horse and wagon or saddle horse would get you close enough to get to a dance somewhere usually within 4 - 6 miles. Later on as automobiles came on you could travel farther.

Do you have any family stories about homesteading in this area?

Not really. My folks came into the area about 1946, so it was after homesteading. But I had a great uncle who homesteaded in the Siletz area. He lived down there for many years, and that homestead was only recently sold to a timber company.

What school did you go to locally?

I went to the Hebo Grade School that's now abandoned.

What stands out in your mind about the school?

Probably one of the most exciting times was on a New Year's Eve when the Hebo Grade School gym burned down. That would have been about 1948. A school bus was parked beside that gym at night, and some of the local kids were draining some gasoline out of the bus and accidentally set it on fire. One of the grade school kids who was living in the motel next door to the school called in the fire to the fire department, and they wouldn't believe him. By the time there were 2 or 3 reports it was too late to save the gymnasium. The whole thing went down. After that they built a whole new gymnasium that's still standing behind the school building now although the building has been abandoned as a school.

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When did the school year start and end?

About the same as now.

About what time each day did school begin and end?

Well, it started at around 9:00 and went to about 3:00.

How did you get to school and home from school?

I rode a school bus the same as the kids do now. It was a little older bus.

Was it wooden?

No, it wasn't wooden (laughter). I think it was about a 1948 or '49 International.

What were the courses of study?

I don't remember that.

Do you remember having much homework?

NO, not much homework. We had plenty of work at home but not much school homework. There was a little bit, but we had so much work to do at home when we got home that the folks insisted that we get our schoolwork done at school.

If a student got into trouble, what might be a typical punishment?

All of these schools had pretty good woodsheds at that time. Keep that in mind, guys.

Tell about some of the things students would do at recess including some of the games that would be played.

They were probably a lot of the ones you have now, and we played Red Rover.

Did you play marbles?

Yeah, we played marbles. That was probably one of the best ones. Then we would play mumblypeg. That's what you had your pocket knife for. Can't bring those to school nowadays, but everybody had a pocket knife at that time. If you didn't have a pocket knife, forget it. Pocket knives were used for what pocket knives were supposed to be used for . . . whittling wood and playing mumbly-peg.

How do you play that?

Well, you flip the knife up in the air, and it's supposed to land on its point. And you get so many points for landing on its point or so many points for landing on its side.

Did you have tops?

Well there were a few tops around. They weren't very popular. I've made a few at times.

Thank you for coming in to talk with us!