



Remembering when...

Story and photos
by Nan Phillips

When Ruth Crockett of Cloverdale retired in 1977 after 31 years of teaching—27 of them at Cloverdale Grade School—she presented a large scrapbook to the student body.

She had worked on the gift for two years. "I wanted this pictorial history to show young people how things were in the late 1800s and early 1900s in south Tillamook County," she says. She can trace her teaching career in the collection of pictures of old-time schools: Slab Creek, Neskowin, Oretown, Meda Loop, Union, Woods, Pacific City and Cloverdale.

Included are pictures of old south-county churches, early-day farm equipment operated by settlers, old-time stores, cheese factories, post offices—even the Meda Loop baseball team circa 1910, showing sober-faced players Fred Weiss, Lloyd Miller, Clarence Dunn, Frank Wilson, Lyle Craven, Henry Weiss, Ralph Dunn, Del Penter and John Weiss.

Ruth was born in Oretown in the Ole and Elma Redberg family farmhouse on Redberg Road, at that time the main thoroughfare of the area. Her brother Roy, who lives on the farm now, was five when she was born; brother Ralph was just past two. According to Ralph, Ruth never had any difficulty keeping up with either brother right from her first yell.

When she was five, her mother promised she could go to school in one more year. On her sixth birthday, she insisted that the promise be kept. With no state law to interfere, the teacher decided to admit her—even though only six weeks remained in the school year.

"That was a bad decision for Roy and me," Ralph says. "Mama said she always knew when school was out, because there was Ruth coming over the hill singing or hollering—and soon as she got through the kitchen door she would report on happenings that up to then Roy and I didn't think our parents

had to know about. We couldn't get away with anything with Ruth there. She always told on us."

Of course, the boys provided Ruth with some choice material. Once Ralph and a friend took a big tomato can down to the creek and filled it with full-grown swamp frogs, then hurried to the classroom, emptied all the frogs into the teacher's main desk drawer, slammed the drawer shut and rushed back to the playground before recess was over.

Ralph thinks the teacher was Vivian Grundale. When she opened the drawer, frogs leaped everywhere. Ralph confessed and took his whacks for punishment, but the "friend" wouldn't confess so he stood alone. The class caught all the frogs but one, which disappeared into the vent behind the teacher's chair. For weeks, recitations would be interrupted or applauded by a resounding croak from the vent pipe, always sending the class into spasms

Ruth Crockett with her Neskowin students in 1946 (opposite page) and remembering through old photos with brother Ralph Redberg (below).

of giggles and guffaws.

Ruth wishes that more Tillamook County residents would sort out their pictures and put them to use, as Lila Boge has encouraged them to do in her three books devoted to Tillamook memories. "Also, people should check with Wayne Jensen, Jr., director of the Pioneer Museum, to be sure there are copies on file there."

She flips open the scrapbook to pictures of Woods, with the *Della* tied up at the dock. "With no real roads yet, our supplies had to come in by water. Whenever the *Della* arrived, we all hurried to the dock. She brought us flour and sugar and almost everything we needed, then loaded on fish and cheese to sell for the farmers. Here's a picture of the big cannery—that's where the Chinese worked." She closes the book. "Of course, it's all gone now."

Ruth graduated from Cloverdale High School at 16 and received her teacher's certificate from Monmouth at 18. Her first assignment was a one-room school between Beaver and Blaine called Mountain Glen, on Boulder Creek near the Cecil Nims farm. She had three pupils, two girls and a boy. She walked 1½ miles each way to school and was paid \$70 plus \$5 a month for janitor work. Fortunately, several young men interested in the personable young teacher kept her supplied with freshly-chopped wood for the old stove.

She quit teaching to marry Kenneth Crockett, and became a farm wife helping with all the chores of a dairy operation. There were two children: Lois (Mrs. Arnold Holloway), who lives with her family in Hillsboro, and Elvin, also married and living in Lakeside, California. Ruth has seven grandchildren. Her husband died six years ago.

After World War II, she began teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in Neskowin, where she had 25 pupils and an exciting innovation—a cold water faucet right in the schoolhouse! Next, she taught at Pacific City School, then became the first first-grade teacher in Cloverdale School. In 1968 she began teaching third grade and continued until retirement. Parents of her students say of her teaching: "When our kids had Ruth, there was no fooling around. They LEARNED!"

Recently, Ruth was told that Curtis Benefiel, new Cloverdale school superintendent, found her scrapbook helpful in getting acquainted with the south-county area. Also, Marlene (Mrs. Jim) Trent had copies made of the covered bridge (now gone) and the 1920 open-

air school bus which her husband's father drove. Mrs. Trent is working on a project to do oil paintings of early-day south-county scenes.

Does Ruth miss teaching? "Definitely not!" she says firmly. "I enjoyed teaching. I looked forward to every day—but age catches up with a person, you know. Takes someone young to keep up with third graders. Nowadays, I enjoy my freedom to do WHAT I want WHEN I want. I don't sit around home doing nothing, you can be sure. I'm starting my third term as Master of Oretown Grange. I've joined the Nestucca Valley Garden Club. I'm financial secretary for the Rebekahs. I was helping with the Senior Citizen Advisory Board and Girl Scouts, but had to give them up when I was put on the Cloverdale water board. I still play the piano and make quilts for grandchildren, and crewel pillows for myself. And of course I garden a lot. Always something to do!"

She grins. "Want to know my New

Year's resolution? To organize our family pictures! Our dad started taking pictures of us when we were small, all five of us. I have a younger sister, Louisa (Mrs. Charles) Farley, and a brother Carl.

"Ralph has all his pictures organized. Good thing, too, because he lent me so many for the scrapbook. He swapped pictures a couple of years ago with Clyde Hudson: Clyde copied some of his that Ralph wanted, and Ralph lent Clyde some he didn't have. You know, Clyde Hudson is 93 now, but he still has a wonderful memory and probably the most complete record of early days here. There are a number of his pictures in my scrapbook.

"I wish we had space to list everyone who let me copy their pictures for the book. Maybe they will inspire others to share their pictures. I hope so. Tell them to make a New Year's resolution—dig all those old pictures out of shoeboxes and trunks and dresser drawers, and put them to work!"

