

Remembrances of Meda School

typed by Dean Bones in 2022 with the first 3 paragraphs added in 2025

I was born April 24, 1915 at Meda, Oregon.

I started school September 1921 at Oretown because we lived at the dock on the west side of the Little Nestucca River bridge on the north end of Meda Loop Road. There was the Nestucca Lumber Company on the (east of the bridge) north side of the road that is now Hwy 101. There were 32 students in all 8 grades. Our teacher was Harry Stuart. The older students helped us with phonics and numbers. I attended Oretown for 3 years. The last 2 years we had 2 rooms and 2 teachers. I remember one teacher was Cordelia Oatfield. I had a very good foundation for the rest of my schooling in those 3 years.

September 1924 found me entering the 4th grade at Meda School. It was a 1 room school, and I can't remember the names of the 4th and 5th grade teachers. I have a mental picture of 1 who later married and lived in Tillamook. It seemed those 2 teachers were very young and very much in love. They seemed to wait for the mail and the letters each day.

Meda Grade School was located on about 1 acre of land on the Little Nestucca River Road just east of the junction with Meda Loop Road. The land was donated by my great-grandfather, John Dunn, and with the help of his neighbors and family he built a one-room school. My aunts and uncles on the Dunn side all attended Meda as well as my brothers and sister and the Cravens who are cousins.

Clem Hurliman's house is built on the road side of the old school house. After the school's consolidated into the Cloverdale School District, Clem obtained the old school house and yard. He and Liz lived in the schoolhouse many years before building their big home.

The school I attended was larger than the original. It was L shaped with a storage area in the attic. Blackboards were across the end of the classroom towards the road, and windows were down both sides.

The classroom itself was probably 20' X 30". There was about 6' of raised platform across the front by the blackboards where the teacher's desk was located. In the early grades we had double desks with bench seats. Roby and I shared a desk.

There were pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, a globe of the world, and a big dictionary that I became fascinated with at about the third grade. I still love reading a dictionary. A few shelves by the door contained our meager library.

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I had read all the books before I finished the 7th grade and also many books ordered from Salem State Library.

Except for my third grade we had marvelous teachers, and school was great fun especially in the sixth grade. Until I graduated I was "teacher's helper". I loved tutoring Leo and Joe Ducham, Pete and Leo Hurliman and Billy, Johnny and Elsie Buckbee.

An entry hall included a wooden sink with cold running water, pegs for coats and shelves for lunch boxes. The second room was combination playroom and woodshed. There was a large pot-bellied wood stove in the back. The playroom grew in the spring after most of the wood had been used. Toilets were two-holers located in the back yard.

When I was in the third grade the toilet pits were full, and the toilets were moved to the front yard so the teacher could "monitor" them. The windows on the back wall were closed over to make additional blackboard space and library shelves.

Our only hot lunches consisted of a big kettle of soup atop the heater stove when the weather was very cold and snowy. Large old-growth fir trees and underbrush covered about 1/2 of the school yard. There was a very large fallen log that was fun to climb and play on. We never lacked for a place to hide while playing Hide and Seek.

Hurliman's barnyard was just across the school yard and provided us with first-hand sex education which, looking back, sounds really funny. Even though we watched the whole cycle from breeding to birth, we still weren't quite sure where human babies came out - it just seemed so impossible!

Aside from card parties and dances at the Oretown Grange Hall the school was the center of activities. We had programs for every holiday with skits, poems and songs and lots of memory work. Every student had a part in every program.

Basket socials were the big Halloween event. Weeks of secret planning and work went into decorating and filling the baskets. They were always beautiful and original - usually made from shoe boxes or hat boxes to look like houses, chapels, ships, covered wagons, barns, bouquets or whatever the lady could dream up. They were filled with delicious sandwiches and desserts. The high bidder shared the lunch with the owner. It was so much fun and climaxed an evening of the school program and community singing.

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Apple bobbing, a fishpond and a spooky house were usually set up in the play room. Oil lamps and lanterns really helped convey the Halloween feeling.

We had no trick or treating, but always there were toilets tipped over and windows soaped. Actual vandalism was very rare.