



# Growing up with Josephine County

The Daily Courier celebrates 125 years by holding up a mirror to the people and their times

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Section E

## The times: 1901-1939

■ **1901:** Josephine County had just over 7,500 population.  
■ **1905:** The Golden Rule department store opens in Grants Pass in April.



■ **1906:** This was a peak year for gold mining in Josephine County. Gold was rediscovered in Galice Creek, about 50 years after it was first discovered.  
■ **1907:** In December, the first movie theater opens on Front Street in Grants Pass.

■ **1909:** The Rogue River Courier office moves to Sixth Street, between I and J streets in Grants Pass.  
■ **1910:** The Rogue River Courier becomes a daily newspaper.

■ **1914:** A city and county library opens to borrowers in January on the second floor of City Hall.  
■ **1917:** On April 6, U.S. declares war on Germany and enters World War I. A week later, hundreds of people were at the Grants Pass train depot to bid farewell to the first 16 young men who had joined the Army.



■ **1917:** The center section of the current Josephine County Courthouse is built, replacing the county's first courthouse, which was built in 1886.



■ **1919:** The newspaper changes its name to the Grants Pass Daily Courier when the city of Woodville changes its name to Rogue River.

■ **1919:** "Invisible" knights of the Ku Klux Klan materialize in Josephine County.  
■ **1920:** Work begins on Savage Rapids Dam.  
■ **1922:** Beloved as they are impish, the Oregon Cavemen emerge in full Stone Age regalia.



■ **1925:** Earle Elliott Voorhies joins the Courier as news editor.  
■ **1927:** The first Safeway store opens in Grants Pass.



■ **1929:** The Great Depression starts. Locals join the battle for jobs.  
■ **1933:** Oregon State Police Trooper Milo Baucom is shot dead, the first local peace officer murdered in the line of duty.

■ **1934:** The new six-story Chateau is completed at the Oregon Caves at a cost of about \$50,000.  
■ **1935:** The Daily Courier installs the only photo engraving plant in an Oregon daily newspaper outside of Portland.

■ **1935:** Josephine County's population is about 15,000, and the city of Grants Pass has about 6,000 residents.  
■ **1939:** Grants Pass gets its first radio broadcast station, KUIN, a 250-watt station broadcasting at 1340 on the AM dial. It was owned by the Courier Publishing Co., with A.E. Voorhies as its president.

## A four-week look at who we were, 1848 to present

Welcome to the Daily Courier's 125th anniversary edition. The first edition came out April 3, 1885.

To celebrate, the Daily Courier is

publishing stories about and photos from the histories of both Josephine County and the Daily Courier, since they've been so intertwined over the many years. The newspaper has been "Growing Up With Josephine County" for most of the county's existence. Their stories are being told in four

special sections that will appear on Thursdays from March 11 through April 1. The sections will appear chronologically, with the earliest events in the first one. Reporters were split into two-person teams to cover four different eras and turned loose. They were excited as they uncovered tidbits, such as

the sacred rock of local Indians, and wrote about interesting happenings, such as the county's most sensational murders.

We hope readers enjoy the sections and savor the tidbits on this stroll through history.

— Dennis Roler, editor

## Stories from the Great Depression

Locals who lived through dark period share their tales

By Howard Huntington  
of the Daily Courier

All of a sudden, it was so hot. I just felt like I was burning up. All of a sudden, I just felt like I had stepped into a refrigerator — just like that. Cool? I felt almost cold. I said, 'I feel awful funny,' and I collapsed right there in the dirt." Grace Graham was a girl of 15 or so.



GRAHAM

That was Graham's last day picking hops, one of the few jobs around here after the Great Depression hit in 1929.

"You had a great big basket sitting here out in the hot sun. You would strip these hops off of these lines that they kind of grew on. You picked it all by hand and got so much a pound. What was it — 10 cents or something like that? My brother was too young, but Dad and I would go out there.

"I've always been a tough old nut," says Graham, now 95 and still living in Grants Pass with many other survivors of that era.

Her family had moved to Sunny Valley from Milton-Free-water after the Depression wiped out her father's secondhand store and half-interest in a grocery. "He went down to the bank, and it was closed," she says. "There was no way of getting a cent out of the thing."

"I never want to go through it again, and I wouldn't want anybody else to live through it," says Ray Iversen, who also was 15 and living in Nebraska when the Depression started. "There was nothing. You had nothing."

The family farm also had to endure the Dust Bowl, but Iversen swears he never went without a meal. Now and then, he even had a little silver in his pocket. "If we had money left after buying groceries, we'd get, maybe, a quarter at most. We'd buy some candy and stuff. They were few and far between — quarters."

"I had sunstroke. The next thing I knew, they had dragged me over in the shade and they were trying to get water down me and patting my face with water."



Jesse Calvert, who grew up in Grants Pass during the Great Depression, remembers seeing this portable cannery, built by the Oregon State College Extension Service and Josephine County Granges.

"It was a way of life," adds Iversen, now 96.

"Everybody blamed that old president, (Franklin) Roosevelt. It is nobody's blame," says Jewel Brewer, who came out here in 1936 from another Dust Bowl state, Oklahoma.

She and her husband, John, bought 160 logged-over acres in the Illinois Valley for \$1 an acre. They extracted more timber from it and also made some money picking strawberries for other people. "I knew what hard work was anyway," Brewer says. "I did it all my life — all my life. My mother had a nervous breakdown when I was 2 years old. I raised the family."

Fran Thompkins lived nearby in the Bridgeview area. "Most people in the valley were farmers or else they worked in sawmills and logging. I don't remember people having a really hard time. "You know what bartering is? One person might have a lot of one thing, and someone a lot of something else."

Dorothea Savage was living in Pocatello, Idaho, when the Depression struck. After her father lost his job in a hardware store, the family ended up in Central Point.

They turned a scratchy piece of ground into a dairy and an orchard plowed with the might of their backs. "I was Dad's boy," says Dorothea. "I milked cows all



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Ray Iversen

Living in Nebraska during Depression

the time, so I could outclench any of the boys in my class."

"I can remember my sister telling about when we lived in town," Virginia Pritchett says. "Someone had given her a dollar bill, and she said, 'I remember standing and crying because I had to take that dollar bill and buy groceries with it.'" It was supposed to be a birthday present.

"I lived a good life, I think. I never had a lot, but I always had my own clothes and all the supplies I needed. My dad was quite an outdoorsman and we always had fish and things," Pritchett says.

"Was I ever sad," Tillie Panula says. "Every morning, you could almost depend on it, someone would come up and knock on your back door, a young man or an old man, or maybe a couple of them. And everybody got the same thing around there at that time."

"My mother would always try to give them something. We didn't even have a refrigerator. We had an old ice thing. She would go out on the back porch and give them some milk and some coffee and a couple of pieces of bread, maybe a sandwich."

Eleanor Vannoy's family couldn't afford Christmas presents. "I can remember feeling disappointed. But one year, my mother got us some dolls and made doll clothes for the girls."

"Anytime we needed money for anything, we had to get out and earn it, even if it was a dime," Lillian Harris says. "Daddy always seemed to have money enough for" school supplies. "We were so poor, we didn't know we were poor."

"I had friends in town who had more, but it didn't bother me," she says. "We were taught to accept what we had, and be thankful we had that."

These workers at Eismann's hopyard in the Fort Vannoy area west of Grants Pass used stilts to tie vines up and then cut them down during the harvest. Many residents worked in the hopyards during the Depression.



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## In hard times, Bushnells learned the value of work

By Susan Goracke  
of the Daily Courier

Darrell Bushnell was born in 1933, the year after his parents, Charles and Bessie Bushnell, and six older siblings moved to Josephine County from near Redmond.

It was the Great Depression, and they had just lost their 600-acre spread in central Oregon. The family settled on Leonard Road, where they had a small dairy and large garden. Darrell's younger brother, William, came along in 1937, the last of eight children.

In 1935, Bob Bushnell — William and Darrell's cousin — moved from central Oregon with his parents Bob and Rhonda Bushnell. Young Bob was 5 years old and one of six children.

Despite tough economic times, these two large, close-knit families had plenty to eat off the land. They raised chickens, cows and pigs. They put up canned produce to last the winter. Deer and salmon augmented meat on the table.

The children walked to Jerome Prairie School, about two miles away. During the summer, they worked in the hopyards on the north side of the Rogue River.

"We waded the river to go there," said Bob, who thinks he earned three-fourths of a cent per pound of hops picked. "But I wouldn't swear to it."

"We went barefoot as soon as the



KEVIN LAUNIUS/Daily Courier

Brothers William Bushnell, left, and Darrell Bushnell, center, and their cousin Bob Bushnell grew up during the Depression on farms in the Redwood area of Grants Pass.

weather got warm enough," William added. "We had to watch out for star thistle. You would get there in the early morning when the dew was still on the hops weighed more then."

By noon, the children were through for the day and could pursue other pastimes,

such as hunting, fishing and swimming. Darrell and William's home bordered the Rogue River. Few cars disturbed their games of marbles or kick-the-can out on the unpaved Leonard Road.

During those years, both homes had ice boxes. Neither had indoor toilets.

"Just about everybody down there lived on a farm and was dirt poor, but we didn't know it," William said. "I remember going to grade school and one of the kids had a roll of Scotch tape. I thought, his parents must be rich. Life was very good, I thought."

Bob was the only one of the three to graduate from high school. He joined the Navy during the Korean War, then worked in a succession of local sawmills before becoming a driver and salesman for a couple of local bread companies.

Now retired, he lives about three miles from William, who owns his family's farm. William quit school after the eighth grade, helped out on the farm, then spent 42 years working in local lumber mills. Today he raises a couple of beef cattle, grows a large garden and walks ditches for the Apple Rogue Irrigation District.

Darrell quit high school during his sophomore year, after his father died. He worked on the farm, got married at 18, worked in a series of dairies and sawmills, then moved to the Klamath Falls area, where he worked on ranches and drove potato trucks. In September, he moved to the Illinois Valley to be near his son.

The three men agreed growing up during the Depression and helping their families to survive taught them the value of work.

"We didn't have anything, so we always wanted to give our kids everything," Bob said. "And it spoiled them. My folks and their folks had little houses that our kids wouldn't have lived in for anything."