

Seneca at 75: Celebrating a proud past

Event marks 75th anniversary of school, town

By Tina Cook
Blue Mountain Eagle

SENECA — Once a booming logging town, Seneca has shrunk considerably since its heyday, but there was no population shortage in town last weekend.

On July 21, nearly 400 people came to Seneca to reminisce about the 'good old days' at the Seneca School and City 75th Reunion.

The family of Boyd and Millie Griffith had a multitude of memories to share. They moved to Seneca in 1949. Ten of their 14 children and three of their grandchildren attended Seneca School.

Toddy Griffith Stovall was 13 when they moved from Wisconsin.

Now a John Day resident, she remembers when the town had a large grocery store, a swimming pool and a movie theatre. She has many fond memories of growing up in Seneca.

"I remember the closeness of the people. Everybody was just one big family," Stovall said.

The town is small now, compared to the days of her childhood.

"It's smaller now because we were here in the height of the logging industry," she said.

Her little brother, Bobby Griffith of Mt. Vernon, also remembers the town in its glory days.

"There are not as many children as there used to be," he said. "It's not the family town it was when I went to school and there used to be more work here."

It may not be as full of people and commerce, but Bobby Griffith saw one improvement.



The Eagle/Tina Cook
Nine of the 13 Griffiths who attended Seneca School were at the 75th reunion. Left to right: Toddy, Bud, Kathy, Karen, David, Bobby, Randy, Tommy and John.

SENECA: School, community share memories, embrace history

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“They have a golf course now,” he said, with appreciation.

Karen Griffith Lunders, of

Irrigon, noticed changes in the school. The back building (computer room) is new and the basketball court used to be a field with playground equip-

ment on it, she said.

“Classrooms were in different places, but the library is still in the exact same place,” she said.

Seneca’s much smaller now, but the school and community still embrace the town’s history. This was readily apparent to those who toured the school during the event. From the murals, museum and pictures on display, there was plenty of Seneca’s history to see.

In one classroom, a floor model of the town during its prosperous days was set up (right photo). Garrett Carniglia and Lacey Elliott, current students, were on hand to answer tourist questions.

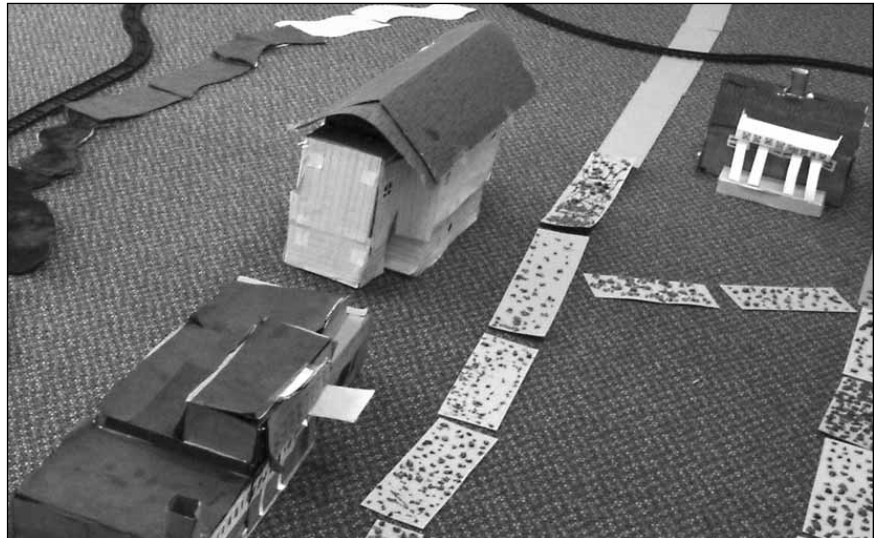
Always on display, the 60-panel mural of Bear Valley history in the form of a timeline from prehistory to present. This display features the Silvies River running through it. The

project was created by students in all grade levels.

Student Ambassadors Christopher Gibson and Elle Rawlins answered questions about the Oral History Project, the timeline, historical murals and museum.

In 2006, the efforts of students and staff was awarded. The school received a “Excellence in Curriculum” award from the Oregon School Board Association for the history project.

The reunion was sponsored by the Seneca School Foundation.



Bring in your quilt tops and we will finish them on our long arm quilting machine.

MATERIAL - PATTERNS - NOTIONS - QUILTING KITS - GIFT IDEAS

Seneca's Heartfelt Quilttime

What's your favorite memory of living in Seneca?



"I remember sitting on the front porch with the kids watching a thunderstorm, when lightning struck the reservoir hill. It caught on fire and alarm bells went off and everybody scurried to put it out."

***Carol Schatz,
Hood River***



"Hiking up to Big Tree and hanging out with my friends."
***Julie (Woodall) Ellison, left,
John Day***

"Being held captive with the other girls in the teepee behind LeRoy and Jeanne Smith's house by Brad and Kerry John Smith, Darren Pettyjohn, David Griffith and Mark Moulton. They wouldn't let us go and we'd get in trouble for being late."

***Renee (Woodall) Thunell, middle,
Pendleton***

"Building forts in the willow trees down by the river."
***Rhonda (Farrell) Vaught, right,
Portland***



"Playing cops and robbers and kick the can in the alley until the street lights came on and we had to go home."

***Tonia Seebart,
John Day***



"Crossing the barbed-wire fence because that's where the woods started and that was our playground."

***Tommy Skeins,
John Day***
