



The Coos County's Teacher's Institute at Tupper Rock in Bandon ca 1890s. In the 1890s the federal government blasted large chunks of rock from Tupper Rock to use in building the South Jetty at the mouth of the Coquille River. Hamilton Bunch, Coos County School Superintendent at the time, can be seen up front in light jacket and bow tie.
Photo courtesy of Bill Wells

COOS COUNTY'S TEACHER'S INSTITUTE

As Coos County grew in population and the demand for qualified teachers increased, it was a common practice for the county school superintendent to gather all of the teachers together for a conference to share ideas and pass down new instructional materials from the State Board of Education. It was also a time when men and women teachers could don their best Sunday clothes.

I WANT TO BE A TEACHER

The following are first hand accounts of what life was like as a teacher in these early rural schools.

While the Agness School District is not within the confines of Coos County and technically outside the focus of this book, the following account by Thelma Long Chandler (nineteen years of age) gives some important insight into the challenges many of these small rural elementary school teachers encountered. It was entitled "Isolated":

"... In September of 1927, I went to Agness to teach my first school for the sum of \$90 per month. Agness was then an isolated district in Curry County, 32 miles

up the Rogue River from Gold Beach and accessible only by boat or horseback. My parents took me and my belongings to Gold Beach where we spent the night. Early the next morning, my mother, baby sister, brother and fiancé boarded the boat for Agness. The boat was small and powered with a car motor. In September the river was so low that in places the boat scraped the bottom. Our baggage had to be unloaded on a sand bar to be picked up the next day for the final run to Agness. When we arrived, I perceived several people peering from behind bushes to see the new addition to their little community. We had dinner and spent the night at the Lucas Lodge.

Since the pupils consisted of three brothers and their cousin, all of whom lived at Oak Flat, three miles from Agness, up the Illinois River, the school had been moved there and housed in a former CCC [Civilian Conservation Corp] log building. That year my pupils were Richard, James and Kenneth Fry, Freddie Smith and Leo Long.

I had made arrangements to live in a cabin on an old homestead called Madrona Hill. There was a spring near the door and wood for the cutting. My young brother was to stay with me. We had to carry all our possessions and supplies the three miles from Agness. I was lucky that there was a small stove in the cabin.