

continued from previous page

Drake's Opera House is where farmers met to plan to contract fairer shipping prices for their grain, candidates and politicians gathered to stump for office, and community meetings took place. It's also where local plays were presented and traveling entertainers performed.

At the time of an April 2, 1882 fire, 31-year-old Harry M. Deal, the proprietor of a confectionery shop, was a tenant in the building's storefront. An after-fire report lists Deal's losses at "\$300, [for] notions."

Four months later, a Lewiston newspaper reported that Drake's Opera House and many other fire-destroyed buildings had been replaced with structures "of the most substantial kind," several of brick. On June 24, 1897, Drake's Opera House again went up in flames and was soon rebuilt—this time, part of it in brick.

In 1903, Jacob Weinhard purchased Drake's Opera House and had Spokane architect John Nash transform it. When the Weinhard Theatre opened in 1904, the brick and stone building included a balcony, sloped floor, carpeting, orchestra pit, a state-of-the-art stage, fine opera chairs for 650, and over 300 electric lights. The theater hosted national entertainment, community events, and local performances—and introduced silent films. Financially, however, it struggled. In 1917, the theatre burned. It never was rebuilt.

For the next 30 years, weeds and the burned-out brick shell of a formerly grand building sat at 164 East Main.

In October 1945, Troy and Rachel Criss opened a furniture store in the Wooten Building on the adjoining lot. As commerce picked up following World War II, Troy and Rachel purchased the vacant ground next door from the Weinhard estate in 1946.

By 1947 Criss Furniture—a streamlined concrete building with a stucco finish, a suspended metal canopy, slightly angled aluminum display windows, and vertical neon signage—stood at 164 East Main.

Troy Criss died in 1986. Rachel and son Troy, Jr. carried on the business for several more years. By the late 1990s, Criss Furniture had closed. A fitness center now occupies the structure.

In April of 1999, the Criss Furniture building—an example of post-World War II architecture—was accepted into the National Registry of Historic Places. A small plaque on the front of the structure notes this distinction.

In the future, perhaps a plaque honoring Jacob Weinhard's efforts to uplift the fledgling town of Dayton with quality entertainment from distant places will be in the offering.

Until then, the sidewalk imprint offers a humble measure of recognition.

PO Box 163  
Dayton, WA 99328

Blue Mountain Heritage Society  
Dedicated to preserving the diverse history of southeastern Washington

Summer • 2022  
Newsletter

# Social Gatherings & Entertainment

### 2022 BMHS Officers

**President:**  
Paula Moisio

**Vice-President:**  
Roslyn Edwards

**Secretary:**  
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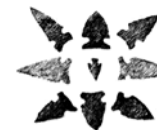
**Treasurer:**  
Dallas Dickinson

**Directors:**  
Barbara Carlton • Duane Dunlap  
Rose Engelbrite • Monte Fulbright  
John Hutchens • Randy James  
Karen Thronson

Newsletter Team - Diane Longanecker,  
Paula Moisio, Dallas Dickinson,  
and Roslyn Edwards

## The Palus Museum

Summer Hours:  
Saturdays 2 - 4 pm



426 East Main Street  
Dayton, Washington

### Smith Hollow Country Schoolhouse

Summer Hours:  
Saturdays Noon - 2 pm



113 North Front Street  
Dayton, Washington

### Blue Mountain Heritage Society

— Board Meets Monthly —  
2nd Wednesday - 4:00 pm

Delany Building  
111 South Third Street  
Dayton, Washington

Everyone is  
Welcome!



The Dayton High School Orchestra - 1920  
The group often provided music for balls, dances, and community events.

### President's Note

By mid-April this year, the percent of Washington State's acute care beds occupied by Covid-19 patients had dropped to 3.45%—down from the mid-January pandemic high of 31.64%. In response, after two years of restrictions, mandates limiting travel and social gatherings were relaxed. This means we have entered a new stage of pandemic life: coexisting with Covid-19.

The path ahead is unclear—with new Covid variants spreading and hospitalizations again on the rise (10.91% as of June 30). Yet for now, most of our community activities and events have returned. And people are once again able to more fully enjoy life.

In celebration, we take a look at a few

of the social and entertainment activities that have helped form our community's traditions. Much like with Covid quarantines, early residents (due to distance) were commonly isolated. When folks did get together, they made the most of their time with families, friends, and neighbors. Such gatherings are the focus of this edition of our newsletter.

Paula Moisio, President  
bluemountainheritage@gmail.com  
Blue Mountain Heritage Society  
https://bluemountainheritage.org



1913 - Young Adult  
Sunday School Class  
Dayton, Washington  
Mrs. Lark H. James, photo

## Smith Hollow Schoolmarm

Presented by Miss Edwards, our special-occasion schoolmarm at Smith Hollow Country Schoolhouse

May 1905

Friday afternoons this spring, the rural schools have been playing each other in baseball games. We have all been competing for the chance to be one of the top two teams to compete on the last day of school at the Columbia School Field Day.

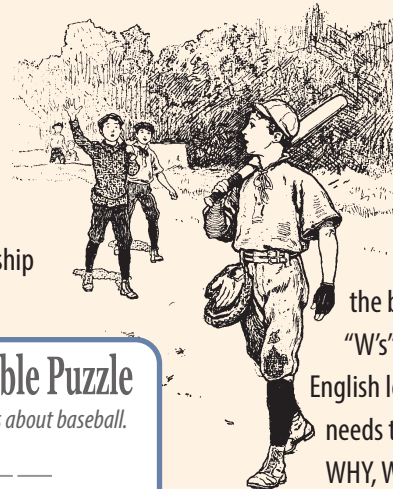
The winning field day team gets to play District 13, Marengo, during their 4th of July Celebration!

This year, that celebration will be at the Tum-A-Lum Campground at the foot of the Hartsock Grade. There will be horse races, picnics, swimming, music, dancing, and baseball.

I have some news. I recently received word that our school, District 24, will be one of the two teams playing at the Columbia School Field Day. Our opponents will be District 22, Pine Grove.

There's a good chance we can make it to the July 4th tournament in Marengo. At the field day game, we need a big crowd to cheer us on!

That's where today's penmanship assignment comes in.



You will write a letter inviting your parents to the field day game.

I'll raise this roll-up map so you can see the one I've written on the blackboard. It has the "W's" we decided in an earlier

English lesson that an invitation needs to include: WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE, WHEN.

Once I have approved your letter, fold it into thirds and write your parents' names on the front. Deliver your letter to them after school today.

When your assignment is complete, you may do the word puzzle about baseball I created for you! I even added some of my artwork for you to color.

### Baseball Word Scramble Puzzle

Unscramble the letters to form words about baseball.

1. TEKSRI - \_\_\_\_\_
2. AMTE - \_\_\_\_\_
3. DNOIDAM - \_\_\_\_\_
4. ERCOS - \_\_\_\_\_
5. IHRECP - \_\_\_\_\_
6. LLAB - \_\_\_\_\_
7. RTBATE - \_\_\_\_\_
8. NRU - \_\_\_\_\_



# Community Activities

Churches, Special Events, Societies, Schools, Sports

Before the arrival of European settlers, the Dayton vicinity was a common hunting ground and summer meeting place for nomadic bands of Walla Walla, Cayuse, and Palouse (Palus) Indians and to a lesser extent, the Nez Perce and Umatilla tribes. Trails coming from four directions crossed here at the Touchet River, near the city's present railroad bridge. Where Indian horse races once took place is now Dayton's Main Street.

The town was platted in 1871 by Jessie Day. In 1877, Dayton's assessor records showed there were 106 families with a total population of 526 people. The 1880 City Directory lists five churches, three lodges, a debating club, and two weekly newspapers: the *Columbia Chronicle* and the *Dayton News*.

Occasions to gather together were treasured by area residents.

## Churches

By 1892, the population had grown to 1,200 residents, and the churches continued to serve the active social lives of the area. Weather permitting, congregations often held weekly socials. It was a popular way for neighbors and

friends to gather.

In preparation for Sunday sermons, families had their once-a-week bath event on Saturday night. After supper, the wash boiler was put on the stove to heat water drawn from the well. Towels were warmed by the fire, the Castile soap



was handy, and the scrubbing began! Many households were frugal with their supplies. Several family members shared the same bath water. Pity the poor soul who was last in the chain!

Sunday morning brought a flurry of activity as family members dressed in their best outfits. Attending church was a way to socialize with neighbors as well as practice one's faith. Families



would often bring food to share with the congregation after the service.

## Dayton Days

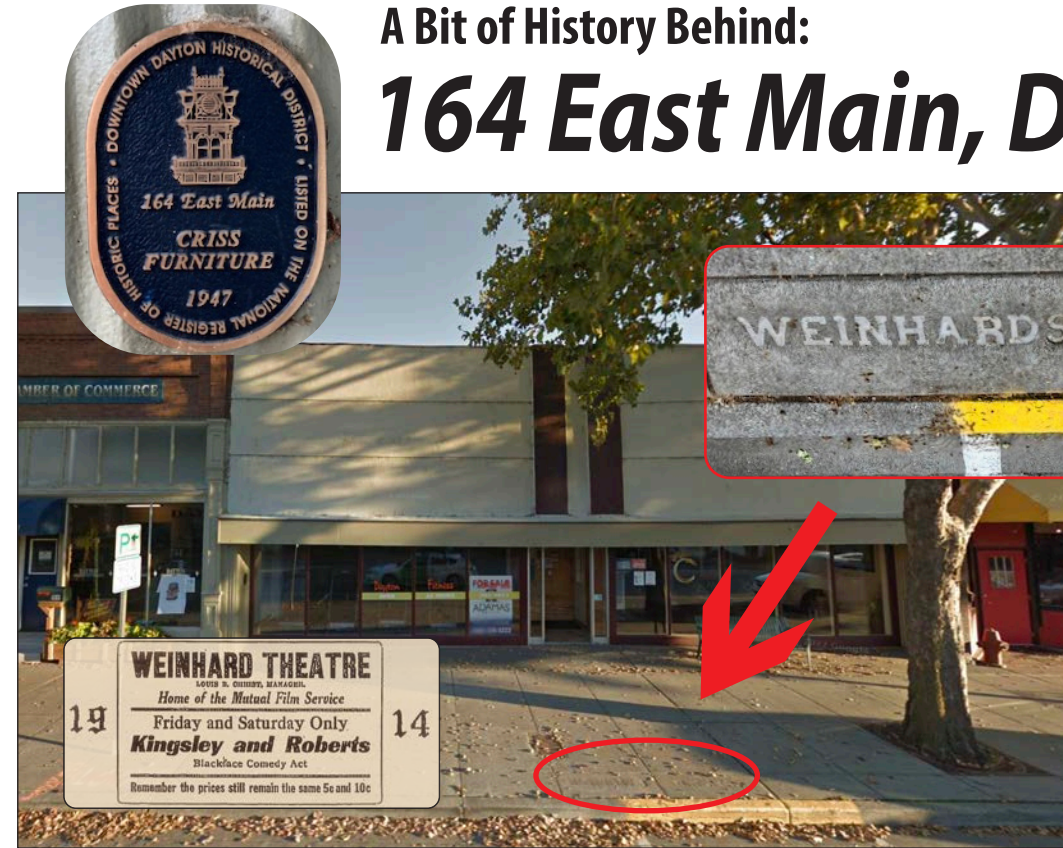
The Columbia County Fairgrounds in Dayton was the site of the annual race meet—complete with parimutuel betting—known far and wide as “Dayton Days.” The event celebrated the city's founding and took place over two days. Initial events included a parade down Main Street followed by horse races and auto races at the fairgrounds.

By the 1920s, Dayton Days had added (for most years) a Royalty Court and Parade Marshals. Later, rodeo events, live music, and a community dance were included. The 50th anniversary of the community celebration was observed in 1968. Dayton Days are now held on Memorial Day weekend. However, due to increased costs of hosting a meet and added state requirements, horse racing is no longer included.



## A Bit of History Behind:

# 164 East Main, Dayton, WA



respectability, thus hopefully attracting more westward settlers to the developing community. In reality, opera houses had little or nothing to do with opera. Instead, they served as a community hub, a place for meetings, community dances, and other events.

Drake's Opera House was a basic, 40-foot by 120-foot wood-frame structure. It had a flat floor with a raised stage at one end. Wooden benches provided movable seating that was set aside to accommodate other activities, such as dancing and even roller skating.

continued on next page

As you stroll near 164 East Main in Dayton, step to the curb where the sidewalk meets the street and look down. You'll see a bit of history.

Some 118 years ago, lettering spelling out *Weinhard's Theatre* was pressed into the freshly poured concrete. The imprint notes what building stood at this address at that time.

Recording the location of a landmark building by stamping its name on the adjoining sidewalk was often required by city ordinance. Should fire destroy that portion of the town, this imprint provided a point of reference to aid during recovery.

At 164 East Main on July 4, 1904, the Weinhard Theatre opened. On January 1, 1917, a fire destroyed it. But this was nothing new. Fires had a history of visiting this address.



Written in pencil on the back of this photo, it states: "Deal's Confectionery. Front of Drake's Opera House, Main St (Dayton, Wash.) Ben Atkinson stands in front with foot on little wagon. Mr Deal stands next to Atkinson. This place burned down years ago. I write this Feb 2, 1925." Note: The 1880 U.S. Federal Census lists Ben Atkinson as being a "Liquor Dealer."



### The Kennedy Playhouse

– Repurposed –

by Lina (Brown) Cunningham

The spring of 1943, Dad went back to work again for the Blue Mt. Cannery in peas. The only place Dad could find to rent for the size of his family (nine children) was the Kennedy Playhouse, as it was called then. Later it was to be Lewis Machine Shop and K-Wood Mills [then Columbia Cut Stock, currently Phoenix Pulp and Polymer].

We packed our stuff into this building with the expectation of experiencing something different. This big building had a stage at the far end, and we made good use of it. The girls would put on shows, usually

a hula kind of an entertainment. For a short time, our brothers would put up with our play acting, but soon they would become bored. They would find something to do to torment us, like pulling down the makeshift curtains. Most of our efforts would end by chasing our brothers and wanting to de-brain them. We made many new friends to play with. There was a boy named George Oliver, who had a donkey which soon became the center of interest. This donkey was usually smarter than we were and hated trains. When we were riding the donkey, if



he heard the sound of the approaching train before we did, we usually went flying through the air as the donkey departed down the road.

We became good friends of the Epperson family who lived on a small farm close by. Our brothers were noted to have pig riding races on the Eppersons' pigs. With these new friends, my brothers' and sisters' favorite sport, other than pig riding, was emptying a bucket of soapy water on the stage and using it to have a sliding party.

The pea season was soon over and off went the sad-eyed little Brown gypsies to another adventure.

Source: *The Dieringer Newsletters*, June 27, 1997

## Let's Go to the Weinhard Hall – There's a Dance!

From *Dayton's Main Street and More Newsletter*  
by Nadine Dieringer - December 22, 1997

First, to put the Weinhard Hall in perspective, this large room was upstairs to the back of the building where the Weinhard Hotel is now.

When I was very, very young (1930s), Dad's band played in the Weinhard for many dances. Mother would attend the dances and take me along. When it was time for me to go to sleep, she would take me into the Lodge Room (just off from the Hall), and I would climb up on the table where I slept until I was awakened after the dance.

I might add, that in most cases, I was not alone. There would be other children sleeping on a table or on the floor or on a bench. Families came to the dances early and filled up the chairs placed around the Hall. As the chairs filled up, the men offered their chairs to the ladies and small children.

The men then gathered at the east end of the Hall (the band was at the west end) and carried on conversations until the dance started.

During those early years of my life, my Grandfather Johnson taught me how to dance at the Weinhard Hall.

As a little "tyke," I danced those square dances along with all those "tall bodies." My parents loved to twirl "that little girl" around the floor. Grandfather "called" the square dances. I also learned the Schottisch, Tuxedo, Waltz, and Foxtrot during those years.

From 1939 until around 1956, I played drums, marimba, and accordion in my dad's band. We played for many dances in the Weinhard Hall. All I have to do is mention "JC's" Christmas dances, and that will bring back memories for many who went to

those dances in the Weinhard.

Some 55 years later, a change. The Weinhard Hall is gone, and the Weinhard Hotel comes onto the scene. There is music in the Weinhard building but now downstairs in the Weinhard Hotel lobby, for those

who wish to listen. I once again find myself a part of the music scene in the Weinhard, only now I am not behind the drums, my husband Jack is, and Dad is not at the piano, I am.

For a year now, Jack and I have been playing in the lobby most every Friday and Saturday night 6:00 to 7:00 pm for a complimentary social hour, hosted by the Weinhard Hotel. What marvelous memories to have, and they all happened in Dayton.

[Nadine and Jack went on providing entertainment in the hotel lobby "most every Friday and Saturday night" for several more years.]



Nadine Dieringer entertaining guests at the Weinhard Hotel – August 12, 2005

Photo by Diane Lonsinger

### Dayton's Band & Horse Show

*Up-To-The-Times Magazine*, June 1910

The Dayton Military Band has been organized under the leadership of Prof. J. L. Dittmore and now has 20 pieces. Rehearsals of the band are being held every night until it gets into good working order [then] they will be decreased. The band made its appearance at the Columbia County Horse Show last month [May 1910] and did entire credit to itself and the city which supports it.



Annual Horse Show - Dayton, Washington



Dayton's Brass Band

### Annual Balls

Each year, area lodges hosted elaborate balls. One attendee recalled how the ball would start around 8 p.m., with an hour-long break at midnight to enjoy a meal. After the replenishment, the ball would go on, often until 4:00 a.m. For the festive evening, lodge members wore their official uniforms; ladies wore their best dresses.

### Fourth of July

In Dayton, Fourth of July celebrations were popular events. People from around the area arrived on horseback, by wagon, hacks, buggies, and on foot.

Red, white, and blue flags and bunting draped businesses along Main Street. Crowds claimed the best spots to watch the parade, which started with the band playing "The Star-Spangled Banner." After the parade, the games began, followed by a picnic lunch. The festivities went well into the night, with a dance and firecrackers capping the exciting day.

For rural folks, around July 4th, it was common for a family or a distant  
continued on page 4

One of the most successful events of the kind ever held in Dayton was the Twenty-fifth Annual Horse Show. Six thousand people attended the event, which consisted of the parade and display of horses in the morning and the racing matinee in the afternoon.

There was perfect order among the equines exhibited, and the fine class of horses shown was a credit to the community. Many prizes were given in the various classes of contestants, and the purses hung up for the race were liberal and warmly contested.

### Dayton's Movie Theater Dreamland to Liberty

Located at the theater's present-day spot, the Dreamland opened in 1910. It was the project of Dayton businessman, John Brining.

During the country's patriotic spirit of World War One, in 1917 the Dreamland changed its name to the Liberty. Two years later, it was destroyed by fire. Rebuilt, the theater reopened in 1921. During the 1930s, the Liberty brought "talkies" to Dayton. The Liberty closed in 1965. It sat for 30 years, only used for storage or as a Halloween haunted house.

Through volunteer fundraising and grants, the Liberty was completely remodeled. In November

of 2001, its doors were again opened with the live performance of community members in *The Music Man*. The Liberty is now Columbia County's center for culture and the performing arts. Items from the past:

*Columbia Chronicle - April 11, 1917*

On April 18, 1917 a patriotic entertainment will be given at the Dreamland Theatre conducted by the Patriotic Instructor of the W.R.C. [Woman's Relief Corp], Lizzie Wick, consisting of old-time war songs, recitations, drills, and patriotic moving pictures. The High School Band will furnish the music. The proceeds will go towards buying a flag for the city.

*Columbia Chronicle - April 25, 1917*

The high school PRESENTS THEIR LARGEST AND BEST PLAY: *Wild Oats*, a mirth provoking farce with three

acts and thirteen characters will be staged by the pupils of the high school at the Dreamland theatre Friday evening, April 27.

The task of putting on a large amateur production is not an easy one, and requires much work and time, so therefore the citizens of Dayton should do their part by affording the school their liberal patronage.

Students participating in the play are Callie Norris, Harold Hopkins, Homer Wood, Emile Lindley, John Burkhart, Harry Garret, Eva Smith, Agnes Haile, Josephine Ward, Percy Harper, James Callender, Dariel McHargue, Lester Eaton. There will be music furnished between acts by the Dayton High School orchestra.



continued from page 3

neighbor to bring a wagon to town and stay a few days.

From 1905-1915, July 4th celebrations were held at the Tum-a-lum Camp Ground on the Tucannon River near the mouth of the Hartsock Grade. Everyone from the area's communities was welcome, and people made the most of the outing.

They arrived by wagon with provisions to last a week. There were concession stands, music, dances, wrestling matches, quart bottles of beer, some distinguished guests (that gave long informative speeches), and fireworks. Children played games and swam.



1910s - Playground at Tate (Ring) School, Columbia County

**Public Place to Rest**

In the June 1910 issue of the *Up-To-The-Times Magazine*, this short piece appeared:

*At Dayton, plans are on foot, fathered by the city civic improvement league, an organization of Dayton society women, to ensure a public rest and reading room for farmers' wives and their families.*

This concept was at the root of what later became the "Delany Room" at the Dayton Memorial Library. Henry and Alice Delany, a Tucannon-area farming couple, willed a trust fund to pay for such a facility. Work on a two-story structure adjoining Dayton's library began in 1970. Named the Henry Delany Memorial Building, it was completed in 1974. Today, the upper-level meeting room opening directly off the library is known as the Delany Room.

**Fun and Games**

Childhood playtime opportunities, at school or anytime groups gathered,

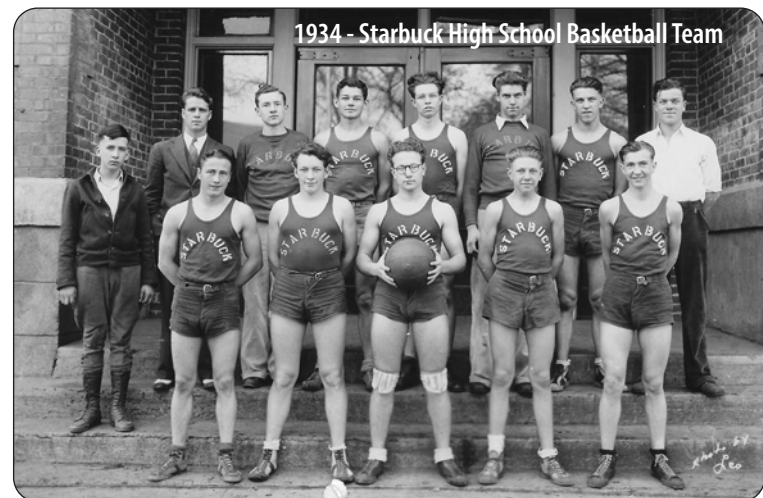
**For Croquet Players, Summer is Now Official**

*The Chronicle-Dispatch*, July 17, 1947

Summer, which invaded the community some time ago, became official last week when Claude Polly set up his croquet set.

Croquet, which was lost sight of as a pastime for many years after the advent of the automobile, has recently been regaining much of its past favor, and for the last several seasons a group of business men has nightly enjoyed this contest of skill.

Local players have worn out two or three of their most ardent enthusiasts, and are now looking for replacements.



1934 - Starbuck High School Basketball Team

**Top Row:** Coach (no name listed), Wyman Yenter, Norman Estes, Fred Deets, Jim Jackson, Fred Actor, Wayne Actor  
**Middle Row:** Stanley Nascimento  
**Bottom Row:** Ralph Lie, Jenion Kems, Alfred Cornish, Ben Dickinson, Roy Lie

**Roller Skating**

Saturday, December 1906  
*from Judilyn Jones collection of local [Dayton] newspaper clippings*

Something over twenty years ago [around 1886], the [roller] skating rink craze first struck Dayton. The rink was then in Drake's Opera House.

Everybody skated and it seemed that they could not get enough. The rage lasted about three weeks when it died out as suddenly as it arose.

A couple of weeks ago a rink was opened in the Weinhard [Hall] building and everybody is getting the habit. The room is too small to accommodate all who want to skate and it appears that there is going to be a revival of the old-time excitement.

The band boys have decided to turn their hall into a rink and to add to the enjoyment of the sport will furnish music while their patrons glide.

In 1906, prices were: 50¢, 75¢, \$1.00, and \$1.50

were eagerly welcomed. Games of Tag, Hide-n-Seek, Freeze Tag, Mother-May-I?, Cops and Robbers, and Red Rover required nothing extra. Adding a rubber ball, however, expanded the options. An example is Anti-Over, a game dating back in the United States and Canada to at least the mid-nineteenth century.

After dividing into two teams, each team gathered on opposite sides of the school building. The ball was tossed up and over the gabled schoolhouse roof. When it rolled down the other side, the person catching the ball ran around and threw it at an opponent to "tag" them. The tagged person then joins the other team. The team ending up with the most members wins.

**News in the *Crimson "D"***

The Dayton High School student-run newspaper was called the *Crimson "D."* In early 1940s editions, items related to gatherings and entertainment included the Yule Festivals and the Spinster's Ball. Tryouts were underway for "Tune In,"

**A 'Fifties Neighborhood Playground**

Back in the 1950s, when Terry Steinhoff was five or six years old, he recalls his grandfather, Lonnie Hatfield building a playground. Located on the side yard of the 100 block of South Fifth Street in Dayton, the play area was for Hatfield's grandkids and the neighborhood children.

All of the equipment was built by carpenters employed at City Lumber & Coal Yard, as Terry's grandfather



owned the lumberyard. The playground included a merry-go-round with four horses on the deck; a four-seat circular swing mounted on an "A" pole; two teeter-totters, monkey bars, and an 8-foot by 10-foot playhouse, complete with door and windows.

In the backyard, Grandfather Hatfield created an outdoor fireplace and amphitheater seating. Here was a man who truly treasured his grandchildren, family, and friends.

a musical event coming up on January 31, 1940.

At a November 19, 1940 style show given by students in the Home Economics class, over seventy mothers were guests. The girls made garments and modeled them at the event. In December 1940, the Freshman Class performed a play called *Suitable for Charity*. Sophomores provided entertainment with their version of the play *Murder by Morning*.

Elementary students gave Christmas programs. The fourth and fifth-grade students presented short plays, poems, and songs. Third-grade students sang several songs and had a couple of poetry recitations.

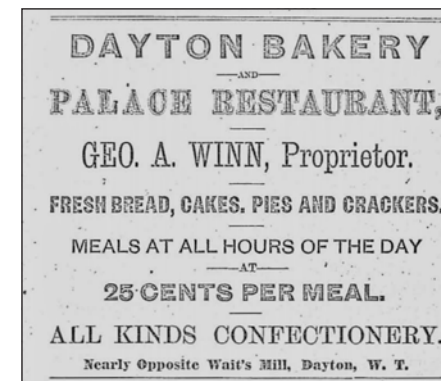
The *Crimson "D"* also covered school sports, a cornerstone for the entire community. Basketball, baseball, and football were mainstays. Both student participation and community support ranked high.

**Masquerade Ball**

On New Year's Eve, a masquerade ball was often held. An ad in the local December 6, 1890 newspaper states:

*"The Dayton Cornet Band will give their annual masquerade ball on New Year's Eve. Invitations are now in process and will be issued next week. All who are fond of dancing should prepare for the coming event, as it will be the grandest affair of the season. Music will be furnished by the Dayton Orchestra and every effort will be made to provide an enjoyable evening."*

Ad in Dayton's 1880 City Directory



1925-1928 - Dayton High School Football Team

**Columbia County Fair**

Its beginnings were humble: a three-day fair in October 1888 on land purchased from Jesse N. and Elizabeth Day by the newly organized Columbia County Agricultural Association. A racetrack apparently existed already, one of the best in the territory. It may have been the "Baby Show," or perhaps the horse racing, stock exhibits, agricultural products or maybe a combination, that drew 4,500 mostly local people to that first Touchet Valley Association Fair. It was a financial success, with receipts exceeding expenses by about \$600. From there, the event grew.

By 1909, there were 6,000 attendees. A few years later a girls' horse race (1/2 mile), pony racing, and a chariot race were added, followed by a carnival and rodeo.

In 1920 the City of Dayton and Columbia County purchased the fairgrounds. Recreational options then grew, with the addition of a 9-hole golf course and a baseball field. At fair time, the field was used for a game between Dayton and Pomeroy. Also that year, a dance platform was added and bucking contests were a new draw.

In 1925, family fun included a kids dog show, along with a carnival, games, and homegrown talent. Vaudeville was on the program, a side show (for men only), and a dance every night.

By the late 1920s, hot dog stands and other concessions appeared. In 1930, families enjoyed the addition of a community dinner. Fires, wars, and the Depression caused breaks in the fair schedules, but improvements to the facilities continued. Football grounds and an improved racetrack offered more options.

As in the past, volunteers continue to make possible opportunities for all ages to have some fun, learn more than a few things, and continue the traditions of the Columbia County Fair.

