

# From the beginning

Two centuries ago, many communities in the United States had newspapers, but none were in the Pacific Northwest territories of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. One century ago the number of newspapers in the region might easily have topped 750. Today, depending on how you count, the number is somewhere south of a third as many.

As in most industries, the less stable publications didn't last long, or merged with stronger competitors. Most newspapers that ever have published in the Northwest lasted only a few years – no more than five. A relative handful still publish.

Still, the talk about newspapers in the new millennium has become notably dire. As we mention working on this book to people in the business, a common refrain has been: “You're not saying, let's do this before the newspapers are all gone ... are you?”

Well, no. That would be a long wait. Some newspapers in fact are in tough shape, but by no means all. Some have remained quite stable. Some even have expanded. Little noted but true: The Northwest has in this new century seen the launching of some new titles.

Change really has been the constant.

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## Early history – launching

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The very first lasting and stable settlement in the Northwest, at what is now Astoria (founded in 1811), didn't quickly generate a newspaper. The economy wouldn't support it, since for decades after its founding Astoria was a one-shop stop, a single-company operation (under first American, then British, then American control again). Its first post office (a prerequisite for newspapering) was set up in 1847, but it was a couple more decades before a newspaper appeared there.

By then, newspapers had opened at other new settlements to the west, near Oregon City, the first permanent settlement by Euro-Americans inland in the Northwest (reaching back to 1829), and the first city west of the Rocky Mountains to be incorporated (in 1844). Four

## 14 New Editions

became known as Scripps-Ifft Newspapers, which also bought several small papers in Montana, Oregon, and Minnesota.

In 1954 Scripps returned to Idaho, this time to buy a paper outright: The Nampa *Idaho Free Press*. That was followed by the purchase of the Caldwell *News-Tribune* two years later. (Those two papers later merged.) In 1963, Scripps League bought the *Klamath Falls Herald and News*. These papers, and eventually Pocatello's, were among those in the group spun off by Scripps into Seattle-based Pioneer Newspapers, still mainly run by Scripps interests, and one of the major newspaper organizations in the Northwest.

The Scripps activities were no doubt noticed by the industry observers, but the regional thunderclap came in December 1950 when the S.I. Newhouse group bought the Portland *Oregonian* for \$5.6 million, reported as the largest purchase price up to then for a single newspaper. It also would buy the *Oregonian's* Portland rival, the *Oregon Journal*, in 1961, and later merge the papers.

The University of Oregon's newspaper history web page (by Richard Heinzkill) recounts that, "The sale of the *Oregonian* (Portland) to S.I. Newhouse in 1950 was a significant event in American journalism. Up until that time the Newhouse Group had concentrated on acquiring newspapers on the East Coast and several in the Midwest. The jump to the West Coast launched the Newhouse Group on a series of acquisitions throughout the country, until today they are one of the largest media owners in the United States."

Sales to national companies continued and accelerated in the 1960s. The Boise *Idaho Statesman*, owned by the local Cobb family for most of a century, was sold to the small Federated Newspapers organization of Michigan in 1963. Federated quickly developed an appetite for the Northwest, buying the *Bellingham Herald* and the *Olympian* at Olympia in 1967. Federated in turn was swallowed by Gannett Company in 1971.

Lee Newspapers, which later would own many of the Scripps papers, bought the *Corvallis Gazette Times* in 1969 and the neighboring *Albany Democrat Herald* soon after.

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## The wires

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In the newsroom of any daily newspaper one of the obvious centerpieces of daily effort is the wire.

The first newspaper wire service in the United States was the New York Associated Press, started during the Mexican War by five New York newspapers wanting to share the cost of war coverage. Other regional wire services developed over time, and the modern AP got its real start

## In the region

**Idaho** is home to 47 paid-distribution, general-circulation newspapers, plus a free-distribution alternative paper included because of its reach and influence – *Boise Weekly*. The mix includes 11 dailies, 35 weeklies, one twice-weekly and one tri-weekly.

Six of the dailies publish seven days a week, the rest six. Twenty of the weeklies publish Wednesday, 14 Thursday and one Monday.

Six papers, all weeklies, maintain no web presence. The other 42 are split evenly between paid and unpaid sites. The paid group includes five dailies and 16 weeklies, the unpaid group six dailies and 15 weeklies.

**Oregon** boasts 82 paid-distribution, general-circulation newspapers, plus two major free-distribution counterparts – the *Portland Tribune* and *Willamette Week*. The roster features 16 dailies, 56 weeklies, 10 twice-weeklies and two tri-weeklies.

Seven of the dailies publish seven days a week and the rest are split between five and six. Thirty-five of the weeklies publish Wednesday, 16 Thursday and five Friday.

Eleven papers, all weeklies, lack any online presence. The other 73 run 33 paid and 40 unpaid. The paid group features 12 dailies and 21 weeklies, the unpaid group four dailies and 36 weeklies.

**Washington** hosts 97 paid-distribution, general circulation newspapers, plus three major free-distribution alternatives – *Seattle Weekly*, *The Stranger* (Seattle) and *Tacoma Weekly*. The complement consists of 19 dailies, 77 weeklies, three twice-weeklies and one tri-weekly.

Thirteen of the dailies publish all seven days, the rest five or six. Forty-one of the weeklies publish Wednesday, 24 Thursday, eight Friday, three Tuesday and one Monday.

Seven papers, all weeklies, have no web presence. The other 93 run 21 paid to 72 unpaid – a much more lopsided split than either Oregon or Idaho.

The paid component consists of seven dailies and 14 weeklies, the unpaid component 12 dailies and 60 weeklies. The number of weeklies

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out of bankruptcy and merge it with Dow Jones Local Media under the New Media banner.

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### Eagle Newspapers

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**Headquarters:** Salem, Oregon

**Ownership:** Denny and Deanna Smith

**Phone:** 503-393-1774

**URL:** [www.eaglenewspapers.com](http://www.eaglenewspapers.com)

**Idaho holdings:** *Idaho County Free Press*, Grangeville

**Oregon holdings:** *Polk County Itemizer-Observer*, Dallas; *News*, Hood River; *Chronicle*, The Dalles

**Washington holdings:** *Camas-Washougal Post-Record*, Camas; *Daily Sun News*, Sunnyside; *Okanogan County Chronicle*, Omak; *The Enterprise*, White Salmon

Early in 2013, Eagle sold six Oregon weeklies – the *Canby Herald*, *Madras Pioneer*, *Molalla Pioneer*, *Newberg Graphic*, *Wilsonville Spokesman*, and *Woodburn Independent* – to the Portland-based Pamplin Media Group. It followed up mid-year by selling the twice-weekly *Prineville Central Oregonian* to Pamplin as well.

However, Eagle still owns two dailies, four weeklies, a twice-weekly, nine specialty publications, four printing plants and a mailing service serving all three Northwest states. And thanks to its printing capacity, it prints a wide array of newspapers for other Northwest publishers.

Eagle continues to print all seven of the papers it sold to Pamplin, as well as Pamplin's flagship *Portland Tribune*, at a plant in Salem.

Eagle got off to an unusually humble start two generations back, in 1933, when future Oregon governor Elmo Smith and his wife, Dorothy, borrowed \$25 to start a mimeographed weekly in Ontario.

Smith later sold his Ontario operation, moved to John Day and bought the *Blue Mountain Eagle*. Then he teamed up with a partner to buy the *Madras Pioneer* and found the Blue Mountain Eagle chain. The company shortened its name to Eagle some years later, after selling its namesake paper.

Under the leadership of son Denny, who served five terms in Congress (representing Oregon's second congressional district) before opting to devote his full attention to the family firm, the company went on to amass a stable of 25 publications in the Northwest and develop a major commercial printing operation in Salem.

Eagle has become a major contract printer for private businesses and public agencies in the Northwest, offering a wide variety of web offset printing services.




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**Idaho County Free Press**
**Grangeville**


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**Owner:** Eagle Newspapers

**Address:** 900 W. Main St., Grangeville, ID 83530

**Phone:** 208-983-1070

**URL:** [www.idahocountyfreepress.com](http://www.idahocountyfreepress.com) (unrestricted)

**Established:** 1886

**Published:** Wednesday

**Market:** Idaho County

**Circulation:** 3,684

**Publisher:** Andy McNab, [amcnab@idahocountyfreepress.com](mailto:amcnab@idahocountyfreepress.com)

**Editor:** David Rauzi, [drauzi@idahocountyfreepress.com](mailto:drauzi@idahocountyfreepress.com) or  
[freepressnews@idahocountyfreepress.com](mailto:freepressnews@idahocountyfreepress.com)

The *Idaho County Free Press* has been the main weekly newspaper at Grangeville, making it the largest newspaper (though not the only one) in the state's largest county, consistently since its founding in 1886.

Grangeville was only then beginning to coalesce, but the paper's founding turned out to be a considerable event.

In his book *Idaho for the Curious*, Cort Conley recounted: "Aaron Parker arrived in Grangeville in 1886, packing a hand press to begin publication of the *Idaho County Free Press*. Parker was a native of England and had been a sailor for six years before he jumped ship in San Francisco and swallowed the anchor in Idaho. The first copy of the paper was auctioned for \$50, and the rest of the copies of the first issue brought \$5 each as collector's items. Before long, A.F. Parker had established himself as Idaho's only active volcano. In addition, he was one of the signers of the state constitution and among the first regents of the University of Idaho."

After the turn of the century, growth in Grangeville drew a tribe of other papers – the *Globe*, the *Daily Reminder*, the *News*, the *Standard*, the *Standard-News* and others. But none lasted more than a year or two.



*East Oregonian Building in Pendleton, circa 1930. (photo/Washington State Historical Society)*

## **East Oregonian**

## **Pendleton**

**Owner:** EO Media Group

**Address:** 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801

**Phone:** 541-276-2211

**URL:** [www.eastoregonian.com](http://www.eastoregonian.com) (subscription required for full access)

**Established:** 1875

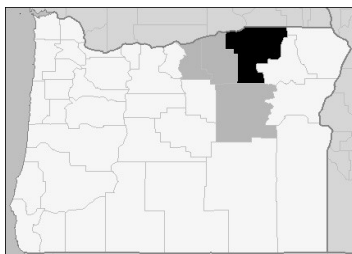
**Published:** Tuesday through Sunday AM

**Market:** Umatilla and Morrow counties

**Circulation:** 7,343 (SO)

**Publisher:** Kathryn B. Brown, [kbbrown@eastoregonian.com](mailto:kbbrown@eastoregonian.com) (joint with Hermiston)

**Managing Editor:** Daniel Wattenburger, [dwattenburger@eastoregonian.com](mailto:dwattenburger@eastoregonian.com)



Umatilla County, named for the Umatilla River, was partitioned off from Wasco County in 1862. It is heavily agricultural, with onions, melons, cattle, and wheat predominating. The county seat is Pendleton, which became one of Oregon's earlier substantial settlements, thanks to its strategic location along the Oregon Trail, early mining activity in the area, and Columbia River frontage. At one point, it claimed to be the state's fourth largest city – and probably was.

It remains one of the most important hubs of commerce in the eight counties of arid eastern Oregon. However, it has been surpassed in its home county in recent years by Hermiston, to its west. Both are

The paper was founded in 1892 as the *Skamania County Pioneer* and has published continuously under that name since. The lack of competitors, mergers or changes in frequency, cycle or name is unique in Northwest journalism. It is particularly remarkable for a paper past the century mark.

The paper is owned by DeVaul Publishing of Chehalis. It is headed by Frank DeVaul Jr., a native of Eugene, Oregon, but long-time resident of Chehalis.

The 25-year-old company, held in partnership with his wife, Judy, also owns the *East County Journal* in Morton, *Independent* in Tenino and *Sun News* in Rochester.

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## **Daily Sun News**

## **Sunnyside**

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**Owner:** Eagle Newspapers

**Address:** 600 S. Sixth St., Sunnyside, WA 98944

**Phone:** 509-837-4500

**URL:** [www.dailysunnews.com](http://www.dailysunnews.com) (unrestricted)

**Established:** 1901

**Published:** Monday through Friday AM

**Market:** Eastern Yakima and western Benton counties

**Circulation:** 3,887

**Publisher:** Tim Graff, [tgraff@eaglenewspapers.com](mailto:tgraff@eaglenewspapers.com)

Lying midway between Yakima and the Tri-Cities on Interstate 82, Sunnyside seems an unlikely home for a daily newspaper, particularly given its relatively modest population of 15,000. Sunnyside falls within the overlapping circulation and coverage areas of the well-established dailies serving those larger population centers, to the point where both of them maintain full-fledged bureau operations there.

But Sunnyside has its own distinct character.

Minnesota entrepreneur Walter Granger founded the community in 1893 in conjunction with the Yakima Land and Canal Company's Sunnyside Canal Project, designed to bring in irrigation water from the Yakima River and ensure prosperity for all. Then the Panic of 1893 sapped all the momentum of both town and canal development and Granger's canal company went into foreclosure. Sunnyside appeared headed toward the 300-resident threshold required for incorporation earlier in the year. By year's end, it was back down to a mere handful of families.

Around that time, a group of German Baptist Progressive Brethren known as the Dunkards were on the move from South Dakota. Looking for a likely site for a Christian Cooperative Colony, they bought the townsite around 1900 and began moving in. They immediately took

The only newspaper ever to serve Yelm, it has published continuously ever since. The paper circulates across a broad expanse of eastern Thursday County, reaching the communities of Rainier, Roy McKenna and Tenino, along with rural areas in between. In addition to serving about 4,300 paid subscribers, the paper mails a Wednesday shopper to another 23,500 households.

The *News* was founded by Elmer Fristoe with the help of a partner he bought out the following year. After passing through a series of hands over the ensuing decades, it was acquired by Centralia-based Lafromboise Communications on January 1, 1994.

The Lafromboise family got its start with newspapers in Bellevue and Enumclaw. It went on to acquire papers in Ellensburg, Aberdeen, Centralia and Redding, Calif. Richard Lafromboise, a member of the second generation, ran the company until his premature death in 1968. Then his wife, Jeraldine “Jeri” Loomis Lafromboise, took over. Jeri Lafromboise sold all of the dailies except the *Centralia Chronicle*. She also sold the weeklies over time, but acquired two others – the *Battle Ground Reflector* and the *Nisqually Valley News*.

She retired in 2011 and died the following year at the age of 79. The company is now being headed by a daughter, Jenifer Lafromboise Falcon, who was born shortly after her father’s death.