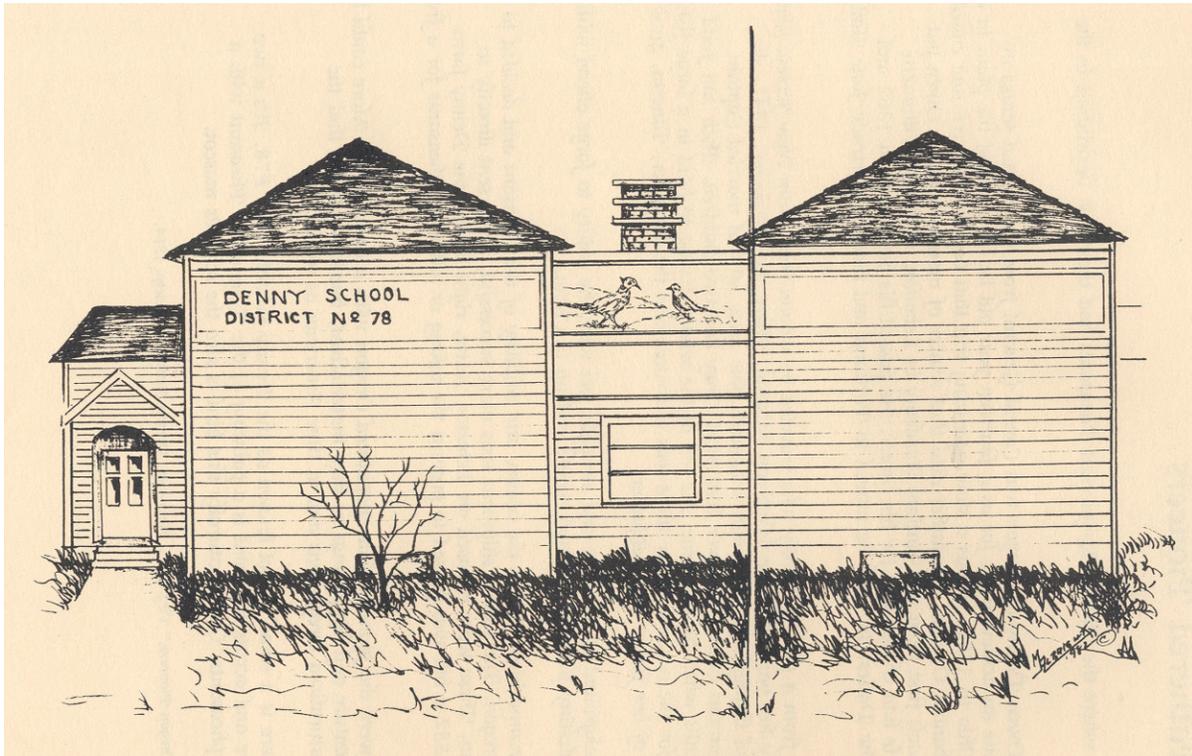


Denny School



Denny School
Oregon's Feathered Pioneers
 from *When the Bells Rang*

Oregon is the state where the Chinese Ringnecked Pheasants had their first beginnings in the United States.

In the year 1880, Owen Denny of Oregon was Consul General from the United States in China. This was quite an achievement, for as a fourteen year old he had crossed the plain in a wagon train from Ohio in 1852. It was a slow agonizing trip that began in March and ended in September at Lebanon, Oregon. His father died that winter of mountain fever. Owen put himself through school; first from the Santiam Academy in Lebanon, then the Willamette College in Salem. He had chosen law for his career. He passed his bar exams in 1862 and began practice in The Dalles. In 1868 he moved to Portland and married Gertrude Jane Hall, a divorcee.

Gertrude also came from a pioneer family who traveled by wagon train from New Jersey. She was brought west by her parents to the Whitman Mission. There, in November, 1847, she experienced and lived through the Whitman Massacre. She grew up and married Captain Leonard White, a famous Columbia River boat pilot. They had two children. Their son Judd drowned at Celilo Falls when he was nine. He fell off the wharf, trying to haul in a large fish, and was no match for the current. Later there was a divorce and the daughter, Tonetta, grew up sharing the love of her father and stepfather.

With a common background of hardship and struggle, yet with the ability to forge ahead with courage, it seemed destiny that the Denny's would end up in China.

It was there they became interested in the beauty and edibility of the pheasant and

decided to start to breed (them) in Oregon. The second shipment was more successful, being sent directly to Owen's brother, John. These were released on Peterson Butte, right behind the Denny farm near Lebanon. In 1882 a bill was passed to prevent the taking or killing of pheasants for a five year period.

It seems that these were the pioneers that "populated Oregon with a game bird." More could be written about this venture and happenings as they materialized, but let's assume that the pheasants became naturalized Oregonians and in time American as well.

Close to Lebanon there is a small school known as the Denny School, Dist. #78. It's a two room frame structure and across the front is a painting of the Ringnecked Pheasant with a short resume of the pheasants. Quite naturally this bird is also the school's mascot.

Ref: "Chinese Pheasant, Oregon Pioneers," Virginia G. Holmgren, Oregon Historical Society, 1964.

Drawn on location, 1982.