

Santiam Elementary School



Mrs. Smith's First and Second Grade class, Santiam School, 1947-48. Hopefully some member of that class will be able to identify these young students (now in their 60's), and the suited-up gentleman on the left. (NLH)

Santiam School Population Boom in Lebanon Makes New School Necessary

*by Samantha Moody
From A Piece of the Past*



Lebanon experienced a period of great prosperity in the 1940's. These prosperous times brought new, modern educational facilities to Lebanon's elementary students.

The timber industry began expanding in the early forties, with at least twenty mills opening in or around Lebanon. One of these was Lebanon's paper mill. It was producing a special cartridge grade of paper that was used for explosives, and in addition to that, butcher paper and merchandise wrap was produced. A large plywood mill, Evans Products Company, opened. Logging and other related activities were

experiencing a boom period, partially due to new housing projects being built in and around Lebanon. More than 150 men and women were being employed in this industry, with a payroll in excess of \$30,000 being distributed in Lebanon every thirty days. A large portion of the products being manufactured in Lebanon were used to support the war effort of the American allies.

New workers moved to Lebanon every day, finding employment cutting timber to make lumber, shingles, plywood, and make paper. They built homes and managed small farms, with dreams of making those farms larger. The population soared. In 1940 the population was 2,800 people, but by 1942 it had grown to 4,428 people. A housing project to accommodate the new families, was located near Century Park, not far from the eventual location of Santiam School.

However, the increasing population was taking its toll on the schools. The elementary school had an increase of eighty-eight students in one year; Due to overcrowding, students first through fifth grade were being quartered in church basements and classrooms at the high school. It became obvious a new school building was needed. The building was located on the districts property, just north of the athletic field across the street from the high school, which is now Lebanon Middle School. The name Santiam Grade School was given to the new school, carrying on the traditional name of the Santiam Academy.

Santiam School's design was different from any other school in the valley. It was to be a new, state of the art school, modern in every way. It featured six individual classrooms, with two exits, and long wide, covered porches for the children to play under in rainy weather. The first grade room was made very home-like to ease the transition from home to school for the students. The room was light and airy with a fireplace and a private toilet. The second, third, fourth and fifth grade rooms were very similar except for slight design changes. Each room was roomy, but smaller than the first grade room, and each had its own lockers and cupboard space. The sixth grade room was the smallest, but still well-lighted, and resembled a modern classroom.

Two hundred and six students were enrolled at Santiam School when it firsts opened in January 1945, with four classrooms, an office and a restroom. Two more classrooms were added later that year. Students were put into classrooms as soon as they were completed.

Later additions included a multi-purpose room added in 1952, and a land addition of 100ft. by 120ft. in 1953, four classrooms and a restroom were added in 1953, a library media center was remodeled in 1976-77, and a gym was built in 1978.

In June of 1982 the doors of Santiam grade School closed. The population had begun to decline due to a recession in the timber industry, and it was no longer economical to keep Santiam School open. The building is currently being used by the community daycare and preschool organizations. The gym is rented occasionally to the Lebanon Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts and other organizations.

So even though the building is no longer a new, modern facility, it is still able to provide space for Lebanon's children to learn and grow.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samantha Moody is a student at Lebanon Union High School and will graduate in June 1994. She was born in Lebanon and has a family history here. Her great-grandparents, grandparents, father and his brothers, all lived here part of their lives. All of these relatives were in some way involved in the Lebanon area timber industry. Her mother has been a teacher in the Lebanon School district for many years.



Santiam School during the 1968-69 school year, about midway through its life. The school was closed in 1982 and it was torn down in 2002. The Volkswagen van (far right) belonged to 6th grade teacher Larry Morgan.