

Eugene City numbered 600. The discovery of gold in California had helped bring prosperity into the Willamette Valley and according to one account, Eugene City held within its boundaries "nine drygood stores, two book stores, one drug store, one bakery, one restaurant, two hotels, two billiard saloons, two printing offices, three cabinet shops, four blacksmith shops, two tinshops, two paint shops, one planing machine shop, two meat markets, two livery stables, one flour mill, one sawmill, one barber shop, one college, one district schoolhouse, a courthouse, a jail, one church, a Masonic lodge, three physicians, four lawyers, four clergymen and one newspaper."

The effort to establish Eugene City as a major riverport continued despite the fact the upper Willamette River had major navigational obstacles, namely boulders, sand bars and tree branches. In 1861, optimism

reigned when the steamer, "Relief," chugged as far as Springfield.

The steamer was undoubtedly aided by the high waters which inundated the Willamette Valley that year. Two months of rain flooded Eugene City and carried away buildings, fences and stock.

Eugene City was officially incorporated October 17, 1862 as the seventh city in Oregon, following Oregon City (1844), Portland (1851), Waterloo (1851), Corvallis (1857), Salem (1857) and Jacksonville (1860).

But Eugene City wasn't without dissension. Soon after incorporation, a dispute arose over what path the town should take. One group of residents preferred "hogs and grog shops on Willamette Street;" the other wanted to ban such nuisances and initiate taxes in order to build the city.

Although the later group succeeded in getting a hog-leash ordinance passed, it made nary

a difference. Hogs and cattle continued to roam the streets, at home in a sea of mud many inches deep.

In 1864, the town became known as the City of Eugene, a name that would stick until 1889 when it finally became known as Eugene.

The telegraph reached the city in February of that year. The occasion was conducted by Joseph A. Gray, president of the City Council, who sent a dispatch to Portland Mayor David Logan.

Smallpox appeared in 1869 and during the following decade. No one knew what to do prevent the spread of the disease so the Eugene City Council opened a pest-house five miles from the city limits. Inflicted people were sent there until the 1880s when vaccination first came into use.

Although surveys had been undertaken for various railroads, it wasn't until 1871 that the Oregon-California Railway rolled into the City of Eugene, thanks to the efforts of railroad tycoon, Ben Holladay. The coming of the tracks spelled doom for the stagecoach, of course, but it boosted the logging industry in the area, which had previously depended on high water to float logs downstream.

Street improvements were slow in coming. It wasn't until 1871 that Willamette Street was graded and gas lights from the Maxim Gas Company of San Francisco were erected. But the streets remained muddy and during the summer months, dusty. In 1875, the Roseburg Review unleashed a stinging criticism of the City of Eugene's streets:

"The mud is as thick as board-



Courtesy of Lane County Historical Museum

In this turn-of-the-century photo, C.C. Matlock (left) and Bob Veltum pose outside of Matlock's bicycle repair and hardware store on Willamette Street.

ing house custard and about the same color. In the middle of winter, horses on main street are not driven faster than a walk in order to prevent stores from being splattered," the newspaper wrote.

While the city grappled with street conditions, schools also were in need of help. The number of pupils had grown beyond the expectations of officials, necessitating the use of an old private high-school building at Eighth Avenue and Pearl Street in 1875. It became affectionately known as the Red Top Annex.

A few years later, the Central School opened at 11th Avenue and Olive Street. A one-story building, it cost the city \$4,000 to build. For the 3,306 residents, it was obviously money well spent. By 1884, more than 400 students attend-

ed the school, an overwhelming number for the seven teachers in charge.

1881-82 also saw another flood hit. A pioneer by the name of Ed Fronk reminisced years later that it was "the highest flood I ever saw in this part of the valley... the river overflowed and came up on Willamette Street. We lived where the Armory is now and water got up on our porch but didn't get into the house. I rode a skiff at Ninth and Willamette streets."

As the city benefited from the coming of the railroad, hotels were constructed to take advantage of the many visitors who stopped off. The present-day Smeede Hotel, built in 1885 and originally known as the Baker Hotel, catered to the upper-class. Luxurious Sunday dinners cost as much 85 cents and a room as much as \$2 a night.

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