

# La Grande Evening Observer

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## Palmer Mill Yards Swept Out By Fire

### ENORMOUS LOSS AND GREAT DANGER TO MILL CAUSED BY THE BLAZE

#### BEGINNING IS STRANGE

WITNESSES OF ARSON CURRENT BUT VAGUE.

Loss Unofficially Estimated at Over \$400,000.

Palmer mill to the value of about \$400,000, according to unofficial estimates, was completely destroyed last night by a fire of unknown origin, when the George Palmer Lumber company yards were completely leveled to an ash heap. The sawmill, drysheds and planing mill were saved with the greatest difficulty and with the aid of a fortunate turn of the wind, for the very wind that swept the blaze over the yard in three different directions from the starting place, turned when the mill seemed doomed, and helped the fire departments fight back the waves of fire. There is some insurance.

The fire was discovered about 9:00 o'clock and in less than an hour the vast field of high lumber piles was a searing furnace and the planing mill and sawmill put in great danger. The million dollar plant was in extreme danger for hours. The fire started from some reason unknown, but having many earmarks of arson, in the southwestern corner of the yard, far remote from electric wires or sparks from the boilers. It is reported that the watchman was shot at when he went to investigate what appeared to be a smoldering fire, but it is also said that employees in the slaughter house nearby had seen the fire and were giving an alarm. In any event some shots were fired and the watchman believes they were aimed at him. There is no tangible clue to the origin, if natural, or to the arsonists, if incendiarism was at the bottom of it. In any event there is scarcely lumber enough left to build a fair sized house today, and the fire is still burning hot, with the mill protected.

When the flames had worked northward toward the planing mill it appeared that department was doomed if it were, then the main office could go and furniture and records were hastily removed from the office to box cars but many papers were scattered and lost and most of the furniture ruined. The most valuable papers were in the fireproof safe superintendent Bollons, of the O.-W. took personal charge of the assistance at the switch engine crew could save.

Thousands of people were banked in secure places to watch the spread of the fire. Huge sparks were carried over the planing mill to some Chinese quarters on the Hanley place and barn was burned up there. The blaze was halted in its progress when the planing mill was being set fire in numerous places and firemen were playing water on the entire roof, a great inconvenience, but no sooner than that had been done the main mill was put in the path of the conflagration by a change in the direction of the wind, and there the fire

#### FIRE "SPOUTS" CARRY TORCHES

VAST CONCOURSE OF PEOPLE AWED BY PHENOMENA.

Baker Sees Reflection of Fire—Hills Lighted Up for Miles.

Fire spouts caused by the atmospheric conditions similar to those that establish whirlwinds were frequent occurrences last night while the Palmer mill yard fire was at its height. The furnace heat in the piles of lumber created air suction and pockets that formed perfect shaped cylinders of fire that shot perpendicularly into the air for fully a hundred feet, time and time again. So fierce was this upward spiral that planks and portions of lumber piles were lifted up straight by the suction and when hoisted high, would be caught by a cross current of air. It was this peculiar phenomenon that helped spread the fire with such great rapidity. While standing straight up out of the sea of fire for an instant, the cylinder of fire would be broken by the draft of cross current and separated into sections that sailed—remaining perpendicular—with the wind only to soon drop on a fresh pile of lumber instantly igniting the new territory. The thousands of people who saw the queer freaks of fire that appear only in the great conflagrations, marveled at the phenomena but the firemen cursed them. They were the great danger scourges. These pillars of fire would shoot up at frequent intervals and at first awed the fighters, to many of them the peculiar traits of the fire were novel and entirely new.

#### Surrounding Hills Aflame.

Aside from the tragic feature, there were many side issues for the crowds to marvel at. The mountains were lighted up as bright as glaring sunlight by the fire—lighted up far back in the dark recesses and miles away grotesque shadows were caused to play. At Baker the illumination was plainly visible. In the valley the great mass of fire was watched from many towns and such families in La Grande proper as did not go to the scene of the fire watched it until midnight, in many instances, from their homes.

Several auto parties went up river and scaled low prominences from where to better watch the quarter-mile square of white heat.

#### FIREMEN IN DANGER ZONE

HOT COFFEE AND SANDWICHES RECOUP LOST STRENGTH.

Few Men Hurt But All Fighters Suffer Great Hardships.

Volunteer and paid firemen flirted with death, risked their lives and fought the terrific heat until exhausted. Shortly after midnight the water-soaked, face burned and back-scorch firefighters were served with coffee and sandwiches under the personal direction of George Palmer and M. B. Donohue. With Palmer mill employees sent to the posts of the firemen to do relief duty, the worn-out toilers gathered in the main company office, where a few hours before had been order and decorum and where then raged chaos. The hot coffee was gulped down and more coffee and sandwiches brought from the boarding house and for two hours Mr Palmer and Mr. Donohue fed the hungry and exhausted men. Throughout the struggle the men suffered much pain and discomfort from heat and smoke, but at two particular occasions the men were face to face with serious danger.

When the fire had leaped northward at great rapidity the firemen made their stand in a cross alley running east and west through the yard. The heat was awful but the men stood at their posts, non-department men dropping out one by one when about to give under, until the handful was left to do the fighting. They fought a hopeless fight for the flames shot over their heads and drove them away. Once across the lane, the swath down the center of the yard rapidly extended from end to end, and much hose, principally owned by the Palmer people, but some city material, had been left in the lanes, where the firemen were forced to run for their lives.

#### Few Men Hurt.

Aside from the scorched arms blood-shot eyes and stiffness from an all-night fight, only a few were hurt. Dan Tanner was struck in the eye by a spark early in the evening and it was not until friends discovered his suffering that he would give in and be taken to the city for treatment. Councilman F. D. Haisten, chairman of the fire and police committee took Mr

(Continued on Page Eight.)

## SULLEN TONE RUNS THROUGH STRIKING MINING DISTRICTS

Calumet, July 28.—With the miners sullen over the desperate attempts of the operators to re-open the mines, the strike situation here is little improved. The leaders apparently are determined to conduct the strike peacefully, but it is feared that they will not be able to control the foreigners. James Waddell, a professional

strikebreaker, says that he has 50 non-union miners working at Hancock and could rush 3000 here in two days.

The militiamen caught three men approaching the Isle Royal power house. They were arrested after

(Continued on Page Eight.)

#### President Wilson Snapped at The Summer White House



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PRESIDENT WILSON is here seen as he appeared when snapped at the summer White House near Cornish, N. H. He took a week off after his visit to Gettysburg and forgot all about his troubles at Washington while he played golf and motored about the Berkshire hills. His family had preceded him to Harlakenden, which Winston Churchill, the novelist leased to the president for the summer. The president was seated on the new step of the front porch of the mansion when this picture was taken. The rest did him good, and he planned to spend week ends with his family, realizing that Congress would likely stay in session all summer.

#### INTERVENTION STILL REMOTE

SOBER VIEW OF MEXICO STATUS GIVEN.

Staff Correspondent Outlines What Is Real Situation.

By JOHN E. NEVIN. (Staff correspondent for the United Press.)

Washington, July 28.—There is no more necessity for Mexican intervention today than there was a month ago. The situation is serious but not critical.

It is stated from official sources that the president believes that much of the present agitation is due to newspaper manipulation that certain newspapers and persons who have relatives in Mexico.

It can be stated authoritatively that the president intends to continue the Mexican investigations in a "big brotherly" fashion, which has not yet considered the "force of arms."

It is understood that the president is not pessimistic as to the result. At executive offices it is reported that the president is considering a dual

(Continued on Page Eight.)

#### WILSON THINKS COAST IS CLEAR

HAS NO FAULT TO FIND WITH CURRENCY BILL.

Mulhall Will Conclude Direct Testimony This Afternoon.

Washington, July 28.—The belief that the administration currency bill will be reported by the house banking committee practically as framed, is held by the president. He made it clear to callers today the measure would not be materially altered and that all differences in the committee will be reconciliated.

Mulhall has recovered from his Friday's breakdown and it is expected he will conclude direct examination this afternoon. Attorneys for the manufacturers are expected to start an examination tomorrow through written questions.

The house held a three-minute session today.

American Wins Davis Cup. Wimbledon, July 28.—Maurice McLoughlin, the American tennis star took three straight sets in the tennis singles against C. P. Dixon of England today by winning the Davis

#### HOLLISTER, LOCAL ENTRY, WINS CONTEST

STEADY PLUGGING AND NO MACHINE TROUBLE WAS HIS CHIEF ASSET.

#### IMMENSE CROWD ATTENDS

Afternoon of Sport All That Was Promised—Racers in Several Instances Meet With Trouble But on the Whole Race a Great Success and Free From Serious Accidents to the Men.

Flashing by Walker, of Pendleton, on the outskirts of La Grande after having been second in place for miles, Tracey Hollister of La Grande, last evening dashed across the finish line on a 6 horse power Flying Merkel a winning by two minutes in the motorcycle endurance race yesterday from La Grande to Baker yesterday afternoon. It was a sensational race and brought the immense audience in the grandstand to its feet with shouts of joy for the Pendleton entry had maintained a tenacious lead into Hot Lake and was expected to win. Both men, who were leaders after leaving Union on the going trip, were materially delayed between Hot Lake and La Grande and Walker's delay was so serious that he was forced down to third best running time, Olson of Ontario, making a marvelous race of it and pulling in second. Sieg of Baker, missed third best time by a fraction of a minute and made the fourth racer to finish with six minutes of each other in so long a race. Hollister's wonderful performance was made all the greater by reason of the fact that he was riding the smallest powered machine in the batch of eleven starters. Several men were bruised up but no serious injury incurred, and several machines are in the hospital for expensive repairs, one machine especially, that ridden by Howard Geddes, of La Grande, being badly done up. J. M. Kohl entered but didn't ride. It was an immense afternoon. The crowd in La Grande was the largest that has gathered at the fair grounds

(Continued on Page Six.)

#### 'FRISCO LABOR STATUS SILENT

FIVE THOUSAND TRAINMEN ARE THREATENING STRIKE

Pending Conference Withheld, and the Situation Is Merkey.

San Francisco, July 28.—The pending conferences with the officials of the Southern Pacific, as a result of 5000 employes agreeing on a strike, is being withheld. It is said that the meeting will be held in about three days. The strike vote followed a disagreement regarding the status of the employes on the electrified lines, who ask the same wages as those paid the steam road employes.