

DID YOU KNOW?

Historical notes from Big Butte Historical Society
Compiled by Charleen Brown

A TOWN BEGINS...

In the fall of 1905, Mr. Harris platted a street grid for a town on the bluff west of the sawmill at the falls. The town covered fifty-five acres, and was laid out with a 300 foot plaza in the center. He patterned the town after Harvard, Illinois which was said to have been his hometown and also that of early resident, Lola Edmondson, the wife of "Gus" A.E. Edmondson. "Gus" later served as Mayor in 1939. The new town was named Butte Falls for the natural feature on Big Butte Creek. Starting as a tent city, Butte Falls soon became a thriving community. By 1906, the population had increased to 350 people.

On January 22, 1906 a dedication ceremony was held and papers were entered into Jackson County records. The first grocery store was built by George Richards on the north side of the town square. With lumber hauled from the Olsen mill, the Pine Belt Bank was built and chartered in 1907. In the book, *Land In Common*, Terrie Claflin writes as follows; Butte Falls may have started as a tent city but it soon boasted of everything from hardware and barber shops to Bull Pine's Mexican restaurant, Doubleday's Dew Drop Inn for drinking and gambling, the somewhat posh U.S. Hotel, a target shooting gallery, two billiard halls, the Athletic Club for sporting events, dinners and dances, an official city ball team, and even a telephone down at Claspill's grocery store."

Butte Falls School District #91 was established in 1906 and Ernest W. Smith described the early school in his history of Butte Falls as follows; "School was held in a one room building about where the new telephone building was being built. The first teacher was Miss Nancy Cadell. She was paid \$50.00 per month. The janitor got \$2.50 per month. The new schoolhouse was built in 1908." Mr. Harris was also instrumental in getting the new schoolhouse built. The two-story structure housed the elementary grades on the lower level and the high school on the top floor. The high school operated as a three year school until a fourth year was added in 1917. It remained upstairs until 1926 when the new high school was built at its present day location.

