

DID YOU KNOW?

Historical notes from Big Butte Historical Society
Abstracted by Charleen Brown

Living in the forest among the big timber was not without its hazards. In late summer when it turned hot and dry, forest fires were a threat. These could become quite dangerous to the settlers who frequently faced the possibility of being burned out. Levi Mattox writes in 1890, "The roads from Parker's settlement down to the valley in the forest were blocked by fires... After dark we could see the fires. Sometimes a big tree would be burning from the base to the top. These trees usually were dead or so rotted at the base and would catch fire easily. I often heard large trees falling in the night. During the latter part of the summer, the Rogue River Valley was covered with a pall of smoke."

The summer of 1910 was particularly bad. It was very hot and dry and there were a great many fires burning in the woods. One of the largest was on the ridge known as Cat Hill. Cat Hill is located north of Mt. Pitt and got its name from sightings of cougars in that area by hunters and stockmen. There was much concern about the fires among the settlers. Rumors circulated that some of the fires had been intentionally set. The settlers were so fearful that many from outlying areas loaded their wagons and moved into town. Orders were given to "shoot on sight" any person seen setting fires.

Butte Falls was incorporated in 1911 after a court battle with the lumber company that had started the town. It seems the company was afraid that incorporation would cause their taxes to go up. Townspeople went to court and won after it was agreed to keep the mill outside the city limits. A recorder and six councilmen were selected and the first council meeting was held in the barber shop on August 11th. Recorded minutes from early council meetings are evidence that these councilmen wasted no time making critical decisions regarding the development of the Town. Streets, sidewalks and crosswalks were mapped out and the Street Committee was assigned the responsibility of dealing with people who wanted to cut wood from the trees growing in the streets.

Also in 1911, the Town filed for water rights on Ginger Creek, beating out the competition by only two hours. With the water rights to Ginger Creek granted, work began on a water system. A reservoir was built on "Red Hill" just below Ginger Springs. Wire wrapped wooden pipes soon carried pure spring water from the reservoir high on the hill. Gravity flow provided ample water pressure to the homes below.

The road to the valley was improved and soon there was a daily stage from Eagle Point. This allowed for daily mail delivery. On October 23rd, the Council granted permission for a telephone and telegraph line to be built. This line was completed from Eagle Point and the first phone was installed in Wheeler & Claspill's store.

By November 1911, with the help of Town attorney, Porter Neff, a Charter was presented to the voters. It passed 35 to 5. Of course, only men were allowed to vote as the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote had not yet been passed. Duties outlined in the Charter remain in effect to this day with only minor changes.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Send to: *BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY*
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