

# DID YOU KNOW?

Historical notes from Big Butte Historical Society  
Abstracted by Charleen Brown

Previous articles have described how Butte Falls developed from a tent city into a thriving tourist destination and then an early logging town. During the early logging era, Butte Falls began to develop into a 'company' town as the company provided housing for both single and married workers. In his book *Medford Corporation: a History of an Oregon Logging and Lumber Company*, Jeff LaLande wrote, "Camp One was a collection of canvas-wall tents and frame shacks located at the present site of a cinder quarry on the Butte Falls-Fish Lake Highway. Bob Coffman, [long time Butte Falls resident] who began working in the woods for Owen-Oregon in 1924 and stayed on to run one of the MacGiffert loaders for nearly thirty years, remembers staying at Camp One that first season." He remembered, "I'd just gotten married and my wife and I lived in a tent right at the camp...there were several families up there. The Company sent us up some lumber for tent frames and up they went...we would come into town [Butte Falls] on the weekends."

Zelda Edmondson, wife of Bill Edmondson, in an oral interview for *Recollections: People and the Forest*, in 1990 described how families lived in the camps. "We lived in the one up at the sand pit [Camp One] about a year and a half, I guess, and then they... Well, the camp before that had been out toward Big Butte Springs and it had burned, actually devastated the whole camp... And they moved the camp out by the sand pit, which was where we first lived and it was out in the open. Because of the fire they wanted to have it where they wouldn't get a fire again. So we had very little timber around us, just bits of brush. But we kids liked it. It was different from the city life... There were ten or fifteen families or something of the sort. I don't know for sure. Well, then there were bachelor quarters too. Camp had a cookhouse, they had a man and his wife who did the cooking and put up the lunches for the bachelors and that sort of thing. There must have been a dozen different cabins."

She continued, "When they moved the camp it was rather interesting. Every family had built an "eyebrow" [an add on room] on the house, you know, for a kitchen or a bedroom or whatever. And when they moved the houses, the camp houses were on skids. The skids were two, underneath the house the length of the house, and they came in with a "jammer" [large, steam-powered log loader] and picked the house up. The "jammer" picked up the house and put it on a railroad car, supposedly put it on carefully so the jar didn't break any of the dishes or any of the things that were packed in boxes. And then they'd take the houses to the new location and put it off just like they picked it up... Then everybody went to work and built an "eyebrow" on, here and there, to accommodate the family." These early cabins were one room, ten feet wide and thirty feet long, just the size of a railroad flat car.

Many pictures documenting the logging era are on display locally in the Butte Falls City Hall, the Butte Falls Café, and the Big Butte Historical Society Museums. The Ernest Smith collection of pictures documenting the development of Butte Falls is available at the Southern Oregon Historical Society Research Library in Medford.

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