

Brookings Became Ghost Town After Mill's Shutdown

Bill Ward Saw Value Of Area As Center For Recreation

In early 1915, James Owens, heading a group of wealthy Wisconsin lumbermen, bought out the Brookings Timber and Lumber Company, with all its holdings, and re-organized the mill, naming it the California and Oregon Lumber Company. However, under the new company, Robert Brookings continued to hold stock and Bill Ward remained as chief engineer for the new company.

The new California and Oregon mill continued to cut and mill fir from the holdings they had purchased from the Brookings company, up until 1922.

The C. & O., as it was known, went on shipping out lumber by water, and in 1917, built a wharf off Chetco Point, portion of which may still be seen. The wharf, one of the most ambitious projects of its kind at that time, extended 1,000 feet off-shore. For the first 600 feet it carried two rail lines, and the last 400 feet had four rail lines.

Switching of railroad cars was done on the outer end, where the ocean-going ships tied up. The tracks ran from the mill, so that lumber, as it came out, could be loaded onto the railroad cars and hauled directly out to the end of the wharf, where the lumber could be loaded directly on board ship. Vern Cross was the chief engineer for the railroad, and was in charge of all switching and railroad operations on the wharf.

Those composing the new C. & O. Lumber Co., had large holding of redwood below the state line, and in June 1921, an agreement was drawn up for the construction of a railroad from the millsite to Rowdy Creek, at Smith River, Calif. The rail line was completed later in 1922, with 14 miles of main line.

In the meantime, the C. & O. converted from fir to redwood, and started logging and sawing redwood timber with the completion of the railroad. At that time the mill had 25 to 30 million feet of redwood for sawing.

The C. & O. Co., in the purchase from the original Brookings Co. also bought the townsite holdings, and in 1918, sold 19 automobiles, and in 1925, sold 15 through their store.

In 1924, the wharf on Chetco Point came into the national spotlight when the first around-the-world flight stopped here because one of the planes developed engine trouble. The amphibious plane tied up to the wharf until a new engine was shipped here, and installed with the aid of the C. & O. cranes. Although it was not definitely known who was the pilot of the plane forced to stay here, among the pilots were the present head of the United States Army Air Force, General H. H. Arnold, and General Spaatz, head of the Army Air Corps in Europe during the late war.

In 1922, Frank D. Stout, of Little Rock, Arkansas, bought Robert Brookings' share of stock in the C. & O., and hired W. E. Ribbeneck as general manager. The mill continued its operations, shipping out over the wharf, about a million and a half feet of lumber a week.

The mill was apparently doing well, when about 10 o'clock on the morning of June 18, 1925, the whistle blew, and the men were told the mill was no longer running. With the announcement, the workers stopped what they

were doing, and walked off the job.

There was a log on the carriage with two sides cut when the work stopped and it was left, half on the carriage and half on the skids, in the process of being turned. Tools were laid aside, and machinery left standing.

With this sudden turn in events, people who had no strong tie in the community began moving out, and within five to six months, Brookings presented the typical picture of a ghost town. The people who stayed and helped remove the machinery were given free rent and utilities.

However, in the six months following the close-down five to six hundred worked left. Houses they had occupied were boarded up, and left to the elements, making Brookings look forlorn, deserted and forsaken, according to those now living here, who saw Brookings' end as a great lumber mill town.

The process of disbanding, tearing down and removing the costly machinery in itself took a long time, and it wasn't until 1933 that a permit was issued for the supervised burning of the mill buildings that were still standing. Permission was granted because of the accident hazard presented by the rapidly deterioration of the structures.

It is to be emphasized that the mill buildings were burned with the permission and approval of the fire commissioner, and it was not destroyed by an arsonist, as many rumors contend.

In 1931, Bill Ward, who saw the mill grow out of the wilderness into one of the greatest mills of the northwest, saw a potential resort center in this area, and took over the holdings of the original Brookings Land and Townsite Co.

Under direction and management of Ward, many of the homes built by the lumber company were repaired and put in shape for tourists who desired to spend their vacations on the coast.

Ward found the developing of the area a sizeable job, and in 1933, interested Elmer Bankus, a prominent and successful Portland real estate man, in coming here to aid in the project. Progress was made at the outset, but before long, the full force of the depression sweeping the country at that time was felt.

Despite the handicap of a nation-wide economic depression, Ward never lost hope for the community in the new role he was making for it. His every effort and energy was directed toward selling Brookings ideal climate, and beautiful scenery to the country.

In 1936 Bill Ward died, just as his labors were beginning to bear fruit, and Brookings was beginning to acquire a reputation as a vacation area. With the death of Bill Ward, Elmer Bankus took over Ward's holdings, and carried on with his plans.

Brookings had a brief revival as a lumber export town in 1936, when several million feet of fir was loaded on Japanese ships for export to Japan. The timber was cut from this immediate area, under what some residents here at the time, claimed to be Japanese supervision.

During the years immediately preceding the war, there was a gradual growth, and it looked as though the plans and hopes of Bill Ward would soon be realized, but the development was stopped abruptly with outbreak of World War 2.

However, with the outbreak of war with Japan, the importation of Easter lilies was stopped, creating a market at home to meet the demands formerly supplied from the far east.

In 1940, Sydney Croft, after being burned out in the fire at Gardon, Ore., moved into the

Harbor area, and there interested his neighbors in growing the new lily bulb he developed and which now bears his name. It has been through this new industry that the community has gained nation-wide attention and has developed into not only an acknowledged ideal resort area, but one of the great floral areas in the entire country.

Pilot Classified Ads Have Big Pulling Power In District

Volume Of Sales Can't Be Computed —But Run Very High

"We're newcomers, looking for articles of worth to put into our new home and on our acreage," the Pilot was told Friday evening, "and your page of market values certainly is worth much more than the price of the paper."

While this is but the eleventh issue of the Pilot, already a page is nearly filled weekly by these bargain values, so necessary at times when many things can't be purchased.

"Please discontinue my classified ad—sold everything within 12 hours after the paper reached the mails," another subscriber informed the Pilot Monday. He had paid for the advertising to run two weeks. "Keep the difference, I'm satisfied."

Bulb acreages, lots, farms, and timber lands have been sold by inexpensive advertisements, all reaching buyers who were "out looking."

One person, advertising sand and gravel, has about all the work he can do within hours he likes to work. Another man, advertising his carpenter work, is kept with his "nose to the grindstone" daily by jobs here and there over the community.

A lady lost a wrist watch not long ago, and rushed to the Pilot office where she placed a "lost" advertisement. The next day, a man, living in Harbor, came to the Pilot office with a watch, one which had been a beautiful time-

piece before it had been stepped on—but nevertheless the watch advertised by the lady who lost it.

These are but a few of the testimonials to the Pilot of the pulling power of classified advertising. Dozens never say anything, yet these same people have come again and again, so were advertising not paying, they may never appear at the Pilot office.

In The Mailbox:

Editor, Pilot: Just want to tell you that poem written by Willard A. Ellis pictures an outstanding young man. Please tell him for us we, who wish the world were full of such boys and girls—boys who want girls who are really ladies with common sense. May T. Stafford.

Editor, Pilot: Enclosed you will please find \$3.00 for which you please put me on your subscription list, and let the extra 50c pay for the free copies I have been receiving.

I like your paper, I like the name, I like your editorials. Your paper has all the earmarks of what this district and county needs.

I especially like your suggestions for the improvements needed here in education and recreational facilities for the younger generation.

My daughter, Irene, is a freshman in Brookings High. She likes the town and hospitality shown here there but is disappointed in the school.

She would like to go on through high school there if they make the needed improvements so she will be prepared to go on to col-

lege. Your truly, The Guy Pistol iver. Guy W. Johnston Pistol River, Ore.

W. H. Hibbard left on a business trip to San Francisco this week. It is expected that he will return the latter part of the week.

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