

It Really Rained in the Good old Days

To verify stories of old timers who contend that the weather is changing possibly a review of what actually did happen will back up some of their stories.

Several years ago I was talking with the late Fred Moore, who was probably the first white child born in Curry County, and he was telling me of helping Murtha Doyle hay on an eighty acre field which lay up and down the Rogue from Hunt Rock. The present bridge across the river, between Gold Beach and Wedderburn is anchored, on the north end to Hunts Rock. J. M. Hunt had a big garden, just below the rock, and possibly made more than most of the gold miners did, the latter swapping what dust

they had to Jim for fresh vegetables.

Mr. Moore told me the field went out and the main Rogue channel shifted from its course right under where the Sunset Inn now stands, clear across to the opposite shore, sweeping out Murtha's hay field in one night. During the high water a scow came adrift, upstream, floated down and caught on the rock just above the south end of the present bridge, tilted by the freshet, and so powerfully held all ecorats failed to dislodge it.

Mr. Moore was volunteer weather measurer for the government and had preserved the reports of that storm. The figures quoted are from these reports for

the month of January and the first three days of February, 1890.

Rain for the first month measured 31.94 inches. During the latter part of this period, while rain was falling at Gold Beach there was a great deal of snow which may be more in this story.

On the first of February, 6.18 inches fell; on the 2nd, 6.12 inches, and on the 3rd, the storm slackened off and only 4.25 inches fell, a total of 16.55 inches in the three days.

To get an idea how much water fell, just in Curry county, which has an area of a little more than 1600 square miles; if all this water was piled up on one square mile, the column would be over 1600 feet high and if the base of the pile covered just an acre, the pile would reach upward 20 miles, or more.

Fred told me that along in the afternoon of the second of February a regular chinook wind set in, melting the deep snow, and then the real trouble began.

Walter Sutton came out in the February 7, 1890, issue of his Gold Beach Gazette, with a detailed story of what happened in his neighborhood. Mr. Sutton says the first part of the storm was accompanied by very cold gales—real gales, and the old timers re-

marked that if such conditions continued there would be worse floods than there were in '62. Ellensburg (Gold Beach), Sutton says, was saved from being wiped off the map by the shifting of the river channel and the widening of the Rogue's mouth by the tremendous amount of water flowing plus the beating of a very high sea and tide.

The stream was literally covered with enormous quantities of drift, tens of thousands of cords, hundreds of thousands of cords of wood, wrecks of houses, mills, barns, and things of every description.

But the saddest of all is the certainty that behind this flood there runs another—a flood of tears, wrung from ruined houses and broken hearts. Ellensburg was completely cut off from all communications so Sutton could not report on anything but events which took place in the immediate neighborhood and old timers said the freshet was much higher than the that of '62, a great deal of damage was feared. Sutton reported seeing the desks from the Jerrys Flat school float past, on the 4th, and about every building in that area was warped and boosted off its underpinning.

Hume very nearly lost his camera—it was the sitting near the mouth of Indian Creek, the water coming up six inches on the floors and drift logs constantly nudging it and breaking through. Hume's store, which stood on piling, was benefitted because, when the waters went down, the piling was all silted in Sutton's print shop, and the post office were banged and butted, and the occupants imprisoned. The storm swapped the editor's woodpile for some valuable real-estate in the form of hip deep mud which Sutton optimistically believed was an improvement of no little concern.

Hunter Creek residents were disappointed by the storm which did not take out their new bridge, despite their being sure it would go seaward with the first little raise.

Pistol River bridge, the most costly in the county, made an early march to the sea, according to a report from Asa Crook. Hume's net rack, coal pile, and the Indian Creek bridge "departed early in the fray".

Six houses were seen passing down the Rogue and several expected to have gone past in the night. G. W. Clarno (Ferry Ranch) lost his barns and all his grain and hay and the Jerrys Flat school lot, "which was about a hundred yards from the river", disappeared, with the school house.

S. D. Merriman's forty acre fine farm, one of the best on Jerrys Flat, "is now an ugly gravel bar." Incidentally, Mr. Merriman was (May 2, 1881) the first master of the Rogue River Grange. J. F. Wakeman, who had a splendid ranch on the north bank of the stream, near the present Canfield Riffle, "is left without farm, garden, or roof of any kind," Sutton thought George Miller's ranch, about where the Lobster Creek Road takes off from 101, must have been taken out but that Tom Smith's place, up by Libby Creek, escaped with slight damage.

Will Huntley lost his bottom land, up by Lobster Creek but thought he had saved much of his sawmill.

Plummer Emory and his wife were both sick in bed in their home (about where Garland Moore has his auto camp "but were able to escape from the house which, though badly damaged did not float off.

It is believed his beautiful little farm is ruined.

Steve Gardner lost 60 tons of hay, 1000 bushels of oats and two yearling colts. (I have no record of where he lived but believe north of where Mr. and Mrs. Poff have their home.) Euchre Creek bridge was reported to have held.

Sutton's "snapper" to his account quotes an old resident: "The month of January has been the wettest and most galeish ever known—and the Oldest Inhabitant nearly collapsed.

Going now to the diaries kept by the late R. D. Hume. Jan. 21st, "the mail carriers reported three and one half feet of snow at Scott's (Delmar Colgrove's) and J. H. Coy reported 15 feet in the mountains (guessing from the tops of trees above the snow, in country with which Coy was familiar).

Jan 31st, "Will Guerin crossed river and brought news of wreck of schooner Roslind, north of

CAPITAL PARADE

Groundwork for a predicted "swift and hot" legislative session was laid during the first five working days which ended Friday, January 14th.

Oldtimers here at the Capitol are saying that they can tell by their ulcers that this session will be a big show, to exceed the all time record session of 1953 in length, number of bills and fireworks.

Big issue and pressure group battle lines were supposed to be veiled by a chummy Gasto-Alphonse act the opening days of the session.

Meanwhile the fix was being nailed down and logrolling patterned for party fortifications. On roll calls during the period party lines were split raggedly on all but unanimous issues—like the bill providing \$500,000 for the first down payment on the cost of the session—including salaries of members.

A taxation school set up for members will hold up tax legislation for three or more weeks but is expected to bring time-saving results on the length of the session.

Red Ink
The \$63,000,000, which the state budget shows is needed to run the state for the next two years, must be produced largely by new tax revenues or by trimming budget estimates.

After all the hard work of the of the budgeters the budget is only an estimate of what probably will be needed. Department heads and institution superintendents have never been

Otter Point (Bailey Range) wrecked, Jan 28th.

Somewhere in my rats nest I have excerpts from Del Norte county notes relative to the snows laying in the mountains to the eastward of Smith River. As I remember these reports, possibly they are best not included, estimated depths being so great it could not yet be all melted. As I remember, it was more than two weeks before the mails got through from Crescent City—Smith River—Jacksonville and thence.

M. S. Brainard.

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