

Redmond history



Spokesman file photo

Downtown parade for Redmond High School “kickoff day” to celebrate the first game of the season, in mid 1960s.

Irrigation and iron rails brought settlers to the Redmond area in the early years of the 20th century — first as speculators that water and the railroad would arrive, and later as farmers and entrepreneurs drawn by their existence.

One family enticed by the prospects was Frank and Josephine Redmond, two North Dakota schoolteachers who, with their daughter Lucile, moved to Central Oregon in 1904.

At the suggestion of then Deschutes Irrigation and Power Co. officials, the family pitched their tent next to the right of way for the company’s under-construction irrigation canal and near a projected rail line, on land just northeast of today’s downtown.

A couple of years later, water began flowing through the canal, a town site was platted and Col. W.A. Belcher began selling real estate from what is now the heart of downtown

— SW Sixth Street and Evergreen Avenue.

By July 6, 1910, the little community boasted 216 residents and became an incorporated city. The much-anticipated railroad came through town in 1911, assuring the town’s commercial viability.

Equipped with the basics for development — irrigation water, the railroad and the dirt roads that later would become U.S. Highways 97 and 126 — the High Desert community grew in fits and starts over the decades.

In its history, Redmond has been a potato production and shipping center, a hub for turkey raising and home to several wood product mills. Today, resorts in the area draw tourists and an abundance of industrial land has lured a variety of businesses, big and small. Foresight by early residents made Redmond home to Central Oregon’s regional airport and the Deschutes County Fair, as well as a modern fair and exposition center.