

# Land Rush of 40 Years Ago Brought to Central Oregon People From Distant States

First trains rolled into Bend in early October, 1911, and in a short time one of the west's greatest land rushes reached its peak.

From all parts of America land seekers flocked to interior Oregon, to file on homesteads in the region now known as the "high desert." The area in those days was referred to as a prairie, similar to the great stretches of farm land in the middle west, or in eastern Washington. The rush for land reached its height in the late fall of 1911, when the size of homesteads was increased from 160 to 320 acres.

Earlier in the century, there had been a rush of settlers for lands in Central Oregon, especially in the Fort Rock basin, but it did not compare with that following the coming of the railroads, and the predictions that a new agriculture empire was being opened up in the region between Bend and Burns—an area some 150 miles in width and about 70 miles "deep."

**Homes Take Shape**  
Within a period of two years, homesteaders' residences and farm buildings took shape from the Bear creek hills south past the Christmas lake valley.

From one spot near Rolyat, about half way between Bend and Burns, 34 different groups of farm buildings were counted. Towns and postoffices now vanished from the map, such as Imperial, Stauffer and Rolyat, like some on the "high desert." There was talk of extension of the Oregon Trunk east from Bend, with the town of "Hampton Butte" to be a division point.

The vanguard of the home seekers was generally the heads of families, who, with locators as their guides, moved into the plateau to make a choice of lands. Then, from points as distant as Boston, Mass., moved families and household equipment.

**Goods Shipped Here**  
In one week, early in November, 1911, 51 carloads of household goods arrived here by train from distant places. Most of the home seekers were still without stock, and they hired freighters to move their goods to their new homes, generally cabin-like structures.

The town of Hampton experienced a boom. In 1910, there were only two houses in the town. Two years later, 24 buildings, most of them residences, were counted. Fences appeared on the high plateau. Sagebrush was removed, and crops were planted. New arrivals had been cautioned by old timers that for a safe crop for their animals they should plant rye. The new arrivals were also told to plant maize. Even field peas were recommended. Rye planted in September, 1911, was up before the first snow of November came.

New arrivals faced rather stark conditions that fall. It was a dry fall, following a damp September. The settlers soon found the need of water. It was presumed that water would be found a short distance under the surface, but in most areas it was not located until deep wells had been drilled, some of them around 300 feet. From Tulsa, Okla., came the Murphy Bros., professional drillers, and they said they liked the area.

**Factors Reviewed**  
The rush to the high plateau was due to several factors—principally the attention directed to Central Oregon by the arrival of the railroads, and predictions that the area would develop into a second prairie wheat bowl. There was also a period of heavy precipitation, and lush vegetation.

Then came difficult times for the hundreds who planned to carve their homes from the high desert wilderness. As early as 1911, Alvin Thompson, for instance, found it difficult to raise potatoes in the highlands. Three times that spring he planted potatoes. Twice they froze. His third crop matured, but the potatoes were only the size of eggs.

Agriculturists, state college men, railroad agents and others joined in an effort to recommend crops that might flourish on the high desert, but a period of aridity offset all these efforts. Soon, the homesteaders started leaving, and by the early twenties, only a handful was left. In this year of 1953, only a few leaning cabins remain to mark one of the most ill-fated adventures in the history of Oregon agriculture.

In recent decades, the land has been put to grazing use, and native grass, much of which was uprooted by the early-day homesteaders, is coming back. Stock seasonally grazes in the lands where ambitious home seekers once set aside for wheat acreage, gardens and, in a few cases, even orchards.

**Hardships Recalled**  
In Bend at present are many families who recall the hardships on the high desert. They or their parents were the homesteaders of 1911-1917.

A fast, modern highway, U. S. 20, now paved over its entire distance from Bend to the Idaho line, and beyond, now slashes through the region where once marked the boundaries of homesteads. Few of the motorists who drive that surfaced highway of 1953 know the story of the pioneers who attempted to establish a new agriculture frontier—and lost.

## Bend's Growth

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dictions were made that the population would level off around 8,000. But prophets failed to see developments of the ensuing 20 years. They were developments of importance equal to the coming of the big pine mills and the arrival of trains from the north.

**Highways Important**  
One of the major developments of more recent years was the establishment of major highways that gave Bend one of the most important spots on the Oregon map. From the north to the south through Bend reaches U. S. 97, an arterial route now being modernized into one of the west's most important highways. East and west through Bend extends U. S. 20, eastern terminus of which is in Boston and western end of which is on the Oregon coast. Nearby are other radiating highways, including several that span the Oregon Cascades and extend over the Ochoco.

Railroad steel ended at Bend for many years, after the Hill and Harman giants rested following their \$25,000,000 battle in the Deschutes gorge. Then in the 'twenties, the steel rapidly moved south, into the Klamath country and on south to a junction with the Western Pacific at Bieber, California.

**Three Railroads Come**  
Visionaries of 50 years ago predicted a railroad for Bend. None dared predict that three different lines, the Union Pacific, Oregon Trunk and Great Northern, would serve the area.

Nor did the prophets of 1903 predict that within two decades the era of long-line skimmers would pass, and that freight would roll through the interior region not only on trains, but on fleets of trucks. Irrigation also stopped for several decades, after Deschutes water spread out over Tumalo lands, reached east into the rich Powell Butte land, swirled north through big canals to the Redmond country and moved through laterals to once-isolated basins. Then came the development that resulted in

## Freighters Once Ruled Mid-Oregon Roads



Freight wagons, including such eight-horse outfits as these, were common on the frontier roads of Central Oregon in early days. This picture was taken at Paulina prairie in 1907. It is the outfit of the late Frank Bogus, who is shown astride one of the wheel horses, whose names were "Cuffey" and "Johnnie." Proudly bearing the bells of the leaders are "Dick" and "Fred."

## A Familiar Bend Corner



Here is a building well remembered by old-timers—the Laidlaw building at the corner of Wall and Oregon. It was razed years ago to make way for the J. C. Penney Co. building. There was a hall on the second floor of this building that was used extensively for public meetings in pioneer days. The picture was taken in 1910.

the reclamation of 50,000 acres of land in the Madras country at a cost of some \$12,000,000. Hundreds of new homes took shape in the Culver and Metolius basins, and on the Agency plains and north in the sheltered Mud springs region.

**Ochoco Pine Harvested**  
Even the once quiet rangeland town of Prineville felt the stir of the times as big mills moved into the area, to harvest Ochoco pines, and the year 1953 finds the Crook county city busy and bustling as the population increases from month to month.

Like Bend, Redmond has also felt the stimulus of the phenomenal growth of the interior country as the community generally known as the tri-county area welded its efforts and joined in a three-county chamber of commerce to further the interests of the region.

**Tourist Crop Important**  
Not foreseen by the pioneers is a "crop" that now ranks second to timber and agriculture in the tri-county area and brings in an estimated \$9,000,000 annually. This is the tourist crop, a by-product of modern highways in a scenic region. Included in this crop are not only the tourists from distant states, but Oregonians who seek recreation in an area far-famed for its fishing and hunting.

Some rosy predictions about the Central Oregon country were made in pioneer days, but none approached the achievements attained at the end of the half century.

Bandsaw blades used by lumber mills are capable of speeds of nearly 125 miles an hour, or 11,000 feet a second.

## Laidlaw Backed By Pioneer Paper

The name Laidlaw cannot be found on the 1953 map of Oregon, but once upon a time it vied with the village of Bend to grow into the area's metropolis.

It was just short of half a century ago that Laidlaw made its bid for fame through a weekly paper, the Laidlaw Chronicle. In the March 23, 1906, issue of that pioneer paper appeared the following advertisement in bold letters covering nearly one-fourth of a page:

"Opportunity, business, progress: Buy lots in town of Laidlaw, the coming metropolis of the vast irrigated district in Crook county, Oregon." The advertisement added:

**Town Described**  
"The town of Laidlaw is located on the west bank of the Deschutes river and is very near the geographical center of some 300,000 acres of Oregon's choicest irrigated lands. Laidlaw is also located at the intersection of the Corvallis & Eastern Railway's survey and the Deschutes river which will add to the prosperity of the town. It is also the headquarters of the Columbia Southern Irrigation Company. Come to Laidlaw and enjoy life, health and prosperity."

Pioneer Laidlaw now appears on the Oregon map as Tumalo, a name that was transferred from a temporary village, center of Tumalo project construction. The town was named in 1904 for A. W. Laidlaw, one of the promoters of the early-day town.

Scientists who collect butterflies and moths are entomologists who specialize in lepidoptera.

## AIR SERVICE

HOUSTON, Tex. (AP)—An enterprising service station operator here is adding a service he believes will draw customers during the summer. He has a mobile, three-ton air-conditioning unit that he plans to wheel beside each customer's car. It will shoot cool air into the vehicle while his attendants service it.

## Speedy Ship Slowed for Tourists

ROCKLAND, Me. (AP)—Once the speedy pride of the Chesapeake fleet, the Lady Margaret is now the slowest sailing vessel in the Penobscot Bay vacation flotilla. The 90-foot ship once set a record of 14 days from Baltimore to Havana and back, carrying cargo both ways. Now her topmast has been discarded and 20 feet clipped from her main boom so she can navigate narrow harbor passages with a cargo of tourists.

At jet engine operating temperatures, ordinary steel burns like paper.



## WHO THREW THOSE SOUR GRAPES?

"Bend's future is behind it." Who said that . . . who threw those sour grapes?

Probably a person who thinks his own future actually is behind him. For as a man thinks in his own heart, so is he. And so is he prone to apply negative thinking to his surroundings.

The future of any city, any state, or even our entire United States is no better than the vision of its leaders, its merchants, its citizens.

Many years ago on the banks of a restless river, a restless pioneering spirit drove a group of people with vision to lay the foundation for a restless town . . . our town, now grown into Central Oregon's leading city.

Only through restless striving, through vision and positive thinking can dangerous complacency and stunting self satisfaction be combatted . . . and fortunate it is that this powerful antidotal combination prevails among the citizens and business leaders of Bend today. For this guarantees progress tomorrow.



## Portland Loan Co.

Serving Central Oregon Constructively for Nearly Twenty Years

85 Oregon Ave Bend Phone 173

## Half a Century of Progress

BEFORE our friendly city was even a town—before "Farewell Bend" was shortened to Bend—The Pilot Butte Inn was the hub of the bustling activity attending the early planning of the city. Floors of the Inn resounded to the bootheels of cattlemen, lumbermen, engineers, freighters, businessmen and travelers; her walls echo history making decisions and the happy laughter of eager and busy people.

Yes, the Inn has always played an important part in the life of the people of and the travelers to Bend. And it has always kept pace with growing needs of the community, adding to its size, its comforts and conveniences to maintain the highest standards of hospitality to travelers.

We are justly proud of the reputation Bend enjoys as a friendly city, as a vacation spot of unsurpassed beauty, as a pleasant place in which to make a week-end or overnight stop. Proud, too, that the Inn adds to, rather than detracts from, that enviable reputation.

With due appreciation for all that has gone on before, all the friendships we have enjoyed and all the effort that has gone into making Bend the loveable city it is today, we look forward to a beckoning future with confidence that the Inn will continue to do its part in keeping Bend known as the Friendly City.

It is our wish that the

## 50th Anniversary of Bend

mark only a beginning in its history of friendship and hospitality.

## PILOT BUTTE INN



## Welcome, Traveler

to the Pilot Butte Inn, one of Oregon's finest and most famous hostelrys.

"Who e'er has traveled life's dull round  
Where e'er his stages may have been  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome at an Inn."

OLDER THAN BEND herself, the Inn is steeped in the history of a growing city, yet offers its guests every modern appointment for comfort and gracious living . . . justly famed and pleasurable discussed wherever travelers meet to reminisce of pleasant stops.

TOURISTS love the Inn . . . many say they count their stay among the most pleasant of summer memories.

CONVENTIONS held in the Inn . . . and there are many . . . are always well attended, happily remembered.

BUSINESS TRAVELERS return again and again to the pleasant atmosphere of the Inn, often making long evening drives to reach its restful quiet.

CASUAL ONE-NIGHTERS express their keen appreciation of the Inn's service and appointments and often, with a glance at the majestic skyline, express regret at the brevity of their stay.

## Pride of Service

Yes, indeed, we are proud that our customers return again and again. It is because of the prompt, efficient and courteous service we give to every driver.

Why Don't You Come in and  
**GET ASSOCIATED  
TYDOL MOTOR OIL**

"It Cleans As it Lubricates"

## Park Service Station

On Hiway 97 North

Phone 1193