

Early volunteers build up city's fire department

Around 1895, before Coquille had water mains to support fireplugs, men of Coquille were concerned about fire protection for the growing city. Several volunteer groups were organized and the city bought chemical carts as a first step.

A chemical cart was a tank with about 40 gallons of water mixed with soda. Also inside the tank was a glass bottle of acid which, when broken, would react with the water-soda solution to create pressure to force the water out.

The first cart was stationed near the courthouse, another was placed on Spurgeon Hill (W. 4th Street), and the third located in the north end of town. Small buildings were built at a cost of \$37.50 each to house these carts.

Shortly after the turn of the century, Coquille began to acquire "modern" fire equipment. In December 1901, bids for a steam fire engine brought an astounding price of \$4,490 which was promptly rejected. On July 10, 1910, two chemical trucks were purchased for \$573.50 apiece.

Another pressing need, a home for the fire apparatus, got off to an early start in 1904 when a bid of \$270 was accepted by the city council to construct a building for the then-in-use hose cart and other assorted items. This building, which also housed the council chambers, was located on the riverbank where Church Pontiac's was later situated.

In May of 1904, for the sum of \$75, a hose tower was built on the west side for the new building. The tower featured a fire alarm bell on top of the structure; the bell was also used to announce curfew. The bell was later housed in the Coquille Fire Department Building after falling from its perch on the current Coquille City Hall during a storm in January of 1976.

On November 10, 1910, a 40-foot-high bell tower was erected behind the then Casey Jones pool hall, which was located on Main Street.

This was a handy location for anyone to ring the alarm by day and convenient to a fire marshal by night. For many years, Coquille had a red light in the middle of several downtown intersections, which were turned on by a telephone operator when a fire marshal was needed.

By May of 1919, three large telephone bells were installed around the city and they could be activated by the telephone operator in case of a fire. Someone, usually a person from Walker's Standard Station, would then run to the City Hall and ring the fire bell at that location.

By the 1920's, dams on Dutch John Creek at the east end of First Street and holding tanks on Knowlton Heights fed from a dam on upper Rink Creek provided water through pipes to several fire plugs in the city.

The present City Hall was the first real home for the Coquille Fire Department. Constructed in 1912 at a cost of \$11,292, the City Hall housed the fire hall and, over it, the Coquille library. The library was moved around 1942 when the state law required sleepers at all fire halls. The present fire hall wasn't built until 1963.

An important addition to the fire department was the appointment on Dec. 6, 1905, of three fire inspectors to make sure people kept all moss off their roofs and maintained a ladder on their buildings for easy access to the roof.

Coquille's first fire chief, J. E. Perott, was named to that position in June, 1908.

The first Coquille firemen to receive any pay for their services included this group of old-timers who were granted 50 cents per drill and one dollar per fire: Owen Knowlton, Paul Skeels, Perly Lund, J.P. Michaels, E. E. Cook, Ed Brenner, C. W. Gardner, O. M. Nosler, W. H. Lyons, Ray Jeub, Harry Tozier and Fred True. W. C. Chase was fire chief at the time.

Early Coquille fire fighters faced three major conflagrations. On March

17, 1918, many of the homes and businesses on Second Street were destroyed in a wind-swept blaze. Just four years later, on October 22, 1922,

the Baxter Hotel suffered heavy damage. And the original Community Building was completely destroyed by flames on June 1, 1952.

The following advertisement ran in the Coquille City Herald on Dec. 29, 1896.

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A strictly high-grade Sewing Machine, finished throughout in the best possible manner. It possesses all modern improvements, and its mechanical construction is such that in it are combined simplicity with great strength, thus insuring ease of running, durability, and making it impossible for the machine to be put out of order. It sews fast and makes a perfect stitch with all kinds of thread and all classes of material. Always ready for use and unrivalled for speed, durability and quality of work. Notice the following points of superiority:

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The Head of the "Arlington" swings on patent socket hinges, firmly held down by a thumb screw. Strong, substantial, neat and handsome in design, and beautifully ornamented in gold. Bed plate has rounded corners and is inlaid or countersunk, making it flush with top of table. Highest Arm—Space under the arm is 5 1/2 inches high and 9 inches long. This will admit the largest skirts, and even quilts. It is Self-Threading—Absolutely no holes to put thread through except eye of needle. Shuttle is cylinder, open on end, entirely self-threading, easy to put in or take out; bobbin holds a large amount of thread. Stitch Regulator is on the bed of the machine, beneath the bobbin winder, and has a scale showing the number of stitches to the inch, and can be changed from 8 to 32 stitches to the inch. Feed is double and extends on both sides of needle; never fails to take goods through; never stops at seams; movement is positive; no springs to break and get out of order; can be raised and lowered at will. Automatic Bobbin Winder—For filling the bobbin automatically and perfectly smooth without holding the thread. Machine does not run while winding bobbin. Light Running—Machine is easy to run, does not fatigue the operator, makes little noise and sews rapidly. Stitch is a double lock stitch, the same on both sides, will not ravel, and can be changed without stopping the machine. Tension is a flat spring tension, and will admit thread from 8 to 150 spool cotton without changing. Never gets out of order. The Needle is a straight, self-setting needle, flat on one side, and cannot be put in wrong. Needle Bar is round, made of case-hardened steel, with oil cup at the bottom to prevent oil from getting on the goods. Adjustable Bearings—All bearings are case-hardened steel and easily adjusted with a screw driver. All lost motion can be taken up, and the machine will last a lifetime. Attachments—Each machine is furnished with necessary tools and accessories, and in addition we furnish an extra set of attachments in a velvet lined metal box, free of charge, as follows: One ruffler and gatherer, one binder, one shirring plate, one set of four hemmers, different widths up to 7/8 of an inch, one tucker, one under braider, one short or attachment/foot, and one thread cutter. Woodwork of finest quality oak or walnut, gothic cover and drawers, nickel-plated rings to drawers, dress guards to wheel, and device for replacing belt.

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