

Water Reaches Ione About 10 o'clock, Damage There Is Minor

Water Would Have Been Welcome Here--



NOT ONLY FLOOD, BUT FIRE too, has played its part in Heppner's history. This spectacular blaze was one of the most recent, and one of the most destructive to hit the town. On the afternoon of July 18, 1949 the elevators of the Morrow County Grain Growers, and one owned by Interior Warehouse, located on the railroad in the west end of town caught fire. Shown above is what Heppner firemen, aided by equipment from Lexington, Ione, Arlington, Ordance, McNary and elsewhere had to face on that hot summer day. High winds scattered the flaming embers and for several hours threatened to wipe out a big section of the town before being brought under control. Loss was estimated at over \$600,000, but no lives were sacrificed. Much of downtown Heppner was burned in a big fire in 1918, but no pictures of this catastrophe could be located.

THE RASMUS STORY

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After we had pushed in the door and got the pruning shears, I grabbed a horse along with Bruce Kelley and Matlock and helped cut the wire on the first fence above West May street. "The horse I grabbed turned out to be a skittish colt and I came down over the hill where Len Gillin now lives. When I reached Slocum's Lumber yard in the area where the Catholic church now stands, I spotted Mrs. Oscar Minor, her daughter Leah and the hired girl in the Minor house, which had floated down from the Court street and lodged there. The Water was receding by then and when I rode up to the house, the hired girl jumped out on the back of my colt. It reared and almost threw both of us before I got her out. Seeing how we fared, the Minor women decided to remain in the house, which was safe enough by that time. "The rest of the night we patrolled the town and the following days I was among the searchers who combed the creek and broke up the drifts of mud and debris looking for bodies. Even after a week, some of the hall was still intact in the drifts. "We brought back the bodies,

stacked like cordwood, in carts, leaving our burdens in the morgues behind the bank and above Mike Robert's saloon. I knew them all, but many were so mutilated it was difficult to identify them. Among the victims was Doctor McSwor whom I remember, George Conser, the banker, identifying by his striped trousers. On the personal side, Rasmus recalled that he was wearing a fine new pair of \$9.00 striped pants for the first time on the day of the flood. Like many others he didn't have time to change his clothes for a week and when he did the trousers were beyond cleaning. A young man then, he also regretted the loss of a flowered stamp saddle and silver bit and spurs which vanished with the family home. But most vividly he remembers the return of Ed Ashbaugh to his home town after the flood. It was Rasmus who had to tell him that his wife and seven children were all drowned. The Ashbaugh house, standing on the Garnet Barratt property facing Court street, was demolished. A visiting neighbor girl, Zeda McDowell, also perished with the family.

Saloon Stock Found Near Present Site of Mill

By Bert Mason, Portland

The events of Sunday, June 14, 1903, are well impressed upon my mind as I spent the day in Ione, Oregon. A hot, sultry day, during mid-afternoon, a violent wind and dust storm came on and was followed by more very sultry weather. An electric storm occurred a few miles south of Ione and quite a lot of rain fell. About sun-down I climbed the bluff to the graveyard and spent some time watching a display of lightning in the direction of Pilot Rock.

I started down to town and heard noises in the east of town and observed two men riding horseback and doing a lot of yelling. When I reached Main street Bruce Kelley and Les Matlock were there and were announcing that Heppner had been destroyed by flood and many people lost.

The townspeople were alarmed and went to the hill on foot, by wagons and other conveyances and on horseback. A crowd formed at the main intersection before Wollery's store and the first order which Mayor Wollery gave was for men to go to the Ione Hotel and gather up bedding and distribute it to the folks who had taken refuge below the rimrocks. I made numerous trips carrying blankets and then went to the intersection where the men were waiting the coming of the flood. But it seemed that it would never get there and it was about 10 p. m. when the water arrived, but there was only a few inches which came down Main street and not much more on Second street.

The main damage to Ione was that one small residence which stood near Willow Creek was carried away and yards were covered with mud and some basements flooded. When it became apparent that the crest of the flood had passed, Mayor Wollery told me to get some one to go with me to Heppner and get a report upon the conditions.

I asked William Adkins to go. We went to the Livery Stable and secured a couple of saddle horses and rode up the street where we were joined by Kelley and Matlock and started for Heppner. I think the hour was about midnight. The moon came out. As we reached Jordan Siding, we could see the flood waters which covered the fields and were obliged to climb above the bluff at the Pettley's ranch and again one mile below Lexington we were again obliged to climb the bluff.

As we reached the outskirts of Lexington, Les and Bruce turned off to make exchange of a horse which they had secured on the way down and William and I rode on to Heppner. We arrived around daylight and the first wagon which we caught up with carried several bodies and we were told they were the children of Jim Willis. The first buildings into town were the railroad depot, a wool warehouse and a residence which was protected by a small bluff which extended out of the hillside. The next buildings along Main street were the former residence of J. B. Sperry and then up that block to the Fair building. When we reached the Roberts stone building we found the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Mallory had been carried across a block onto Main street and was resting against the curb in front



ANOTHER VIEW OF MAIN STREET looking south from above the southwest corner of Center and Main streets. The sign directly above and behind the big watch is for Gordon's Stables which was located about where the Empire Machinery company building now stands. Most of the buildings on the west side of Main street survived the waters, but as can be seen here, those on the east side were either demolished and washed away or moved out into the middle of the street. There are probably many old time residents left who can identify the two men shown looking at the debris, but the Gazette Times was unable to find anyone who knew for sure who they were.

of the stone building. We were obliged to ride up the side walk as every business building on the east side of Main street had been pushed across the street. A large collection of wrecked buildings mixed with hail stones and mud was piled up where the Heppner Hotel now stands.

We rode up the side walks to near the bank, secured a cup of coffee at the Palace Hotel and as it appeared that help was needed, I told William Adkins to take the horses to Ione and tell of conditions.

A number of men came along and asked me to go down the creek to work among the wreckage for bodies. We proceeded to a point just across Willow Creek from where the Heppner Sawmill stands. A large pile of wreckage was our object for search. As I remember, the first thing we found was the stock of Chris Borchers Saloon. About 8 a. m. Charles Jaynes came to the creek and asked for help to pick up a body, which Jaynes said was that of Dr. P. B. McSwor.

We returned to our job and worked until noon and then went up town for a snack. Afternoon I was told to go to the Morgue, which was on the second floor

of the Robert's building. Bodies were coming very fast and one look started me hunting for another job. I found the remains of a Lumber Yard where a gang of men were making up coffins from muddy lumber and I carried material to workers for the remainder of the day.

As I returned to town I was wondering where I would find something to eat or a place to sleep. I met up with some lone folks who were just starting home and I hopped in. We reached Ione just as the Portland Relief train pulled in. The first person whom I met was Mr. William Hughes who came through on the train. Mr. Hughes asked, "Have you been to Heppner?"

"Yes," I replied. He asked, "Did you see anything of Percy?"

When I told him that I had met and talked with Percy he was the most happy person whom I had met during the past twenty-four hours.

I started out on foot the morning of the 16th and followed every bend of Willow Creek to one mile past Lexington. I did not see a piece of wreckage in that distance and have never

heard of but one body having been recovered below Lexington. That was the body of Mrs. Julius Keithley which was found on the Eli Summers ranch one and a half miles down.

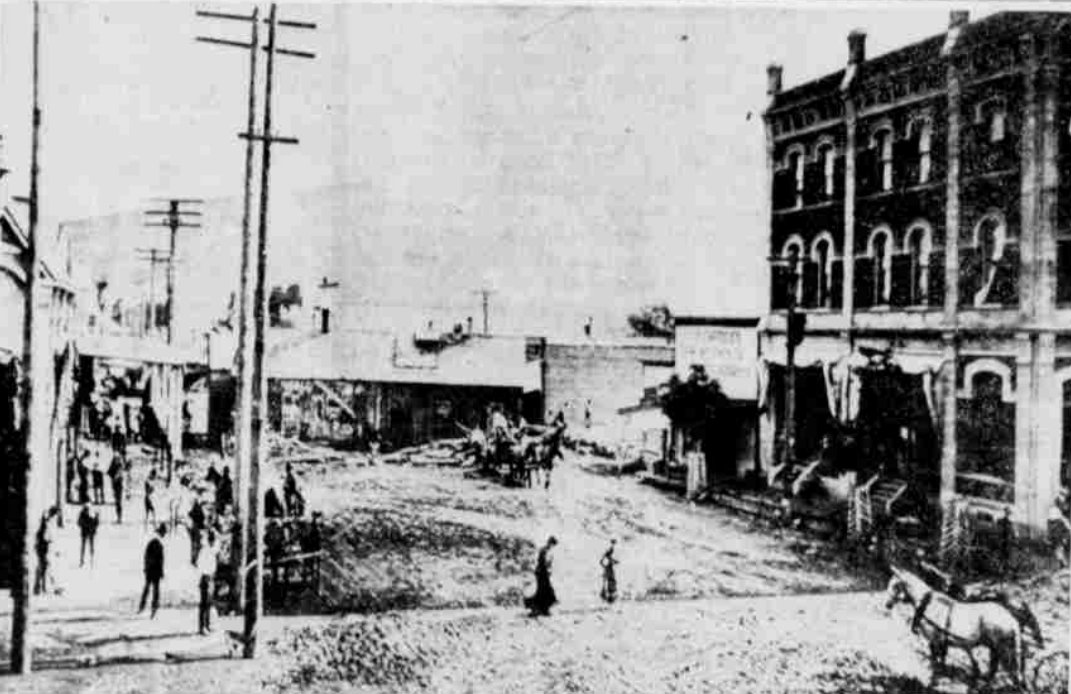
I met a number of searchers 1½ miles above Lexington and while we were talking someone discovered an arm showing in the creek. I helped carry the body to the road and caught a ride to Heppner.

About the first person whom I met was J. A. Wollery who had been assigned to take charge of the Commissary that was in the Palace Hotel Sample Rooms.

Mr. Wollery said, "Bert, you are just the man I need to take over the Commissary."

I took over there and spent the remainder of the week in receiving the relief shipments and disbursing supplies. A restaurant was operated in the front section. I had meals there and slept on the sample table in the back room.

(Ed. Note: Mr. Mason is a well known former resident and rancher of the Ione area, now living at 15226 S. E. Meadowlark Lane, Portland 22, Oregon.)



LOOKING NORTH ON MAIN STREET from the corner of May this picture was taken from the front of the building that stood where Fullerton Chevrolet company is now located. On the right is the old Palace Hotel, and on the left corner the old First National Bank building. The present bank is on the same corner, but in a new building. Main street was completely blocked, as this photo shows, with buildings which washed in from the east side (right) of the street. Barely discernable behind the building sitting in the street, is the old building which now houses the Heppner Garage. The Palace Hotel as well as many others adjacent to it were later destroyed by the fire of 1918.

PROGRESS, GROWTH, PROSPERITY...

... The First National Bank of Portland congratulates the industrious people of Heppner and is proud of their progress... growth... and Prosperity of this progressive section of Oregon.

First National's recent remodeling is in keeping with its faith in the future of Heppner. First National will continue to encourage and support all industry in its banking needs. And in the future, as in the past, it will be our policy to furnish the best possible banking service to the residents and businesses which are developing this area.

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