

SP's Plans for New Town Made Medford

Railroad Engineer Provides Name of New County Seat

(Editor's note: This is another in the series of articles on historical facts about various Jackson county subjects. Today's article is on Medford. It is one of a series of folders published by the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce.)

(Information in the folder came from "A History of Medford," by Jane Snedcor, 1935; "Oregon Geographic Names," by Lewis A. McArthur, 1944; "The History of Jackson County, Oregon," by William Pierce Tucker, 1931; Jackson county court records and board minutes, Medford Commercial club, 1920.)

In the very heart of the beautiful Rogue River valley, the railroad planned to start a new town.

The name first selected was Middle-Ford, as David Loring, the railroad engineer, claims because Bear creek was forded at this place. Loring had lived in Medford, Mass., and so he shortened the name of the new townsite to Medford. People in Jacksonville were not enthusiastic about the new community and referred to it as "Chaparral City."

The land selected for the new townsite was owned by C. C. Beekman, C. Mings, C. W. Brobeck and Ira J. Phipps. These four men on Oct. 27, 1883, agreed to convey to the Oregon California Railroad company a tract not exceeding 20 acres for a depot and other railroad purposes.

By the spring of 1884 the railroad was completed as far as Phoenix and the first week in January, 1888, found trains running south over the Siskiyou into California.

As soon as the railroad reached Medford, the government established a post office. Early equipment consisted of a cigar box, later discarded for a soapbox provided with nine compartments. Still later a case was built with 30 compartments. J. S. Howard served as postmaster for 10 years.

Western Town

Medford was a typical little western railroad town in those days, with a few wooden store buildings and a great many saloons, some of them occupying tents. Frequently the more hilarious men rode up and down Main and Front streets, firing revolvers. Occasionally tempers flared and a shooting scrape occurred.

Being a late comer, Medford's wild west days were short lived. The town matured quickly as citizens bent their efforts toward organization for the responsibilities thrust upon them by an approaching 20th century. During its first winter (1883-84) 40 wooden buildings had been erected. Population in 1890 was 967. By 1910, it was 8,840.



Articles of incorporation for the town were signed by Governor Moody on Feb. 24, 1885, and adopted by Medford leaders March 11.

On March 28, the board of trustees met at the office of J. S. Howard and elected officers: J. S. Howard, president; R. T. Lawton, recorder; J. H. Redfield, marshal; Charles Strang, treasurer; E. B. Hurt, street commissioner; I. J. Phipps, A. Childers, Dr. E. P. Geary and W. H. Barr, trustees.

Early Improvements

Ordinances were passed. The first provided for punishment of individuals guilty of disorderly conduct, riots and disturbances. Ordinance number two prohibited "minors from loitering about the depot." Hogs were not to run at large after Oct. 1, 1885.

In August, 1886, three dozen pails, two good ladders, two hooks, and 200 feet of manila rope served as fire equipment. In 1908 a fire hall was constructed at the southeast corner of Sixth and Front streets. A team and wagon were added, and Mr. Amann became fire chief.

Sept. 7, 1886, the county court was petitioned for \$1,600 to build a bridge across Bear creek. Medford agreed to pay the remaining costs.

Early in 1884 the first school was held in a one-room building on South Central at the present site of the new Franklin building next to Ward's store. A Mr. Williamson was the first teacher. It was a subscription school and each pupil paid \$8 per year.

In May, 1884, the Medford school district was organized. A school was built at the present site of the court house. During 1891 it was moved to West Tenth st., just back of the Catholic church. Today it serves as an apartment house.

Another large building was built on the property vacated in 1891. This burned in 1895. It was replaced by the Washington school in 1896. In 1931 the building was razed to make way for the present county court house.

The first hotel was the Tor-



voted a \$2,800,000 bond issue providing a second line from Big Butte Springs and doubling the supply.



Organization, Communication

The first civic club, known as the Ladies Aid Society, was organized the summer of 1884. Nearly all the ladies belonged to this civic and social group. On Sept. 25, 1903, the Medford Library association was formed. A library was started in Haskins' Drug store with Leon Haskins as librarian.

March 14, 1895, the leading business men of the town met and organized a board of trade. Captain W. S. Crowell was elected president. This was the forerunner of the Medford Commercial club, organized in the summer of 1902 with C. I. Hutchinson as the first president.

The Commercial club occupied an exhibit building by the railroad on the northwest corner of Main and Front streets, formally opened May 13, 1905. In 1920 the club's name was changed to "Medford Chamber of Commerce." In 1935 it was again changed to "Jackson County Chamber of Commerce."

The Medford Mail Tribune is Medford's oldest newspaper. It was established Feb. 20, 1885, when McGinnis started the "Medford Monitor." The following year Ira A. Phelps bought the paper, changing the name to the "Medford Advertiser." He sold it to T. Harlan who changed the name to "Southern Oregon Mail."

George Putnam came to Medford in 1905 and began publishing "The Tribune." In October, 1908, A. S. Bliton sold the "Medford Mail" to Putnam who consolidated it with "The Tribune" calling it "The Medford Mail Tribune." In 1919 Putnam sold his interest to S. Sumpter Smith, manager, and Robert Ruhl, editor.

In 1926 the county seat by vote of the people was moved from Jacksonville to Medford. The cement building on the northwest corner of Fifth and Central served as a court house. This became the city hall when the new court house on the northwest corner of Oakdale and West Main streets was completed in 1933.

The radio broadcasting station KMED was established in the Sparta building by W. J. Virgin on Dec. 26, 1927. As early as 1922 he had opened a radio station, KPAY, at the fairgrounds and later moved it to the Sparta building.

Aviation Although the railroad gave Medford its start, aviation captured the community's imagination early. In 1920, the chamber of commerce voted \$300 to equip a landing field at the fairgrounds according to specifications from the war department.

Medford was the first com-

munity in Oregon to have regularly scheduled air mail service, provided in 1926 by Pacific Air Transport (now United Air Lines).

In 1929 the citizens voted a \$120,000 bond issue to establish an airport north of town. A \$60,000 bond issue was voted in 1940 to match Federal funds for further improvement as part of the national defense program.

In 1947 West Coast and Southwest Airways (now Pacific Air Lines) both established additional air service for Medford. Citizens voted a \$250,000 bond issue to provide a new air terminal building. Today the Medford airport is the second most active in Oregon, serving over 80,000 passengers per year.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce

Centennial Day Set In Grants Pass

Grants Pass—The southwest Oregon city of Grants Pass will open its Centennial celebration with a Memorial Day parade May 30.

The parade will include historical exhibits, the earliest automobiles, trucks and old firetrucks and buggies. Marchers will be in Centennial attire. There will be mounted units, bands and the well-known Oregon Cavemen of Grants Pass.

A Rogue River Boatnik will start at 1:30 p.m. from city park. Powerboats will compete on a roundtrip over a 25-mile stretch downstream through dangerous riffles and rapids to Galice.

A barbecue will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at city park. The host will be Glen Woodridge, a boatman who has been plying the treacherous Rogue for many years. Beef and bear meat will be served.

The day will include a boat and water show, a hole-in-one golf tournament and a donkey baseball game.

Edwin Abbey, noted American painter who died in 1911, became a member of Britain's Royal Academy in 1898.



WHOOSH—A spectacular splash was created at Medford airport Friday when nearly 1,000 gallons of water were dumped from a new tank plane that will be used this year by the forest service in "bombing" forest fires. On an actual fire, a soupy mixture of borate, which serves to coat combustible material, is used, according to USFS Fire Control Officer S. T. (Tenny) Moore. The test drop was to check release mechanism and determine coverage. The plane, as well as two others contracted by the forest service, are owned and piloted by Medford Air Service. Last year, 10 fires in this area were effectively controlled by the "bombing" method, according to Moore.

EAST EVANS CREEK Family Moves to GP

By NELLIE BERGMAN
East Evans Creek-Meadows—Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Allen, who have been living in a trailer house in the Meadows, have moved to Grants Pass to be near his work.

The meadows are getting a long wished for rain.

Hermon Gerhardus has returned from a visit at Portland.

Mrs. Mamie Archanbeau has returned to her home at Milo after a week's stay at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Bergman.

Mrs. Curt McRea and children have returned from a visit with her family in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Le Vasseur of Myrtle Creek visited the Carl Bergmans recently.

Mrs. Lily Harth and Mrs. Ben Dawson were visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Guy Bishop Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Singler and daughter, Norma Jean, have moved from Rogue River to their ranch in the meadows.

ARTERIES BLOCKED
Frankfurt, Germany—UPI—The Institute of German Industry said yesterday the East German Communists had blocked 200 railroad lines, highways and canals which formerly went through the 900-mile-long border separating West Germany from the Soviet zone.

The National Automobile club estimates that traffic accidents in the United States in 1957 took one life every 13 minutes.

Four Teenagers Injured in Crash

Four teenagers were taken to Rogue Valley hospital about 1:15 p.m. Saturday after the sedan one was operating struck a tree at 200 Valley View dr.

Investigating Medford police officers said Ronald Duane Roberson, 17, of 312 Perrydale ave., driver of the car, told them he was driving at 25 miles per hour when "all of a sudden the tree was in front of him."

Roberson and William Gail Crowl, 18, of 111 Chestnut st., were treated for injuries and released. Elaine Davis, 16, of 1093 Brookdale rd., was admitted to the hospital and later released, and Clifford Albert Coiner, 16, of 129 Taft st., was confined to the hospital.

Police said Coiner complained of pain in the shoulder, back and legs.

MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Or. Sunday, May 17, 1959

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Rockville Centre, N. Y. — (UPI)—Royal Toner, 65, former president of the National Fisheries Institute, died here Friday.

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IT'S COTTON TIME U. S. A.! National Cotton Week—May 18 to 23