

Historic Old Alturas Has Stable, Thriving Business, Sleek Cattle

By BILL JENKINS

COW Country! There's still a lot of it left around the Alturas country. You find that out when you drive through. Pick-ups, some carrying the scratched, painted or burned brands of their outfits, are lined up along the curb. High heeled boots beat a staccato tattoo on the streets of this bustling little city across the California line.

Lush green meadows extend up to the very edge of this town of nearly 4000 persons and sleek Herefords graze along the Three Flats highway that cuts through Alturas.

While cattle ranching is still the major industry of the area, the smoke from lumber mills rises into the sky from the two mills in Alturas itself and from the mills in Canby, a few short miles to the north.

THE history of Alturas goes back to the early days of the West and is well filled with stories of roaring adventure in Indian fights, cattle feuds and the rigors of life in the raw and untamed West of the latter 19th century.

First settlers at the site of what is now Alturas were three brothers, Presley, Carlos and Columbus Dorris, who took up adjoining homesteads in the area in 1870. Presley had seen the Pit River valley before, in 1846 while on duty with the army during the Mexican war, impressed by the possibilities of the new land he brought his kin with him to carve a new home.

To aid them in their ranching work the brothers built a crude but strong bridge across the Pit, which was for many years the only crossing of that stream. Within four short years a small but ambitious settlement had grown up around the bridge site. The village was known as Dorris Bridge, and contained a general merchandise store, livery stables, a hotel and in 1874 a room was added to the store building to house a post office. This structure burned in 75 but was replaced with a building of native stone that is still standing and in use.

AT this time Dorris Bridge was still in Siskiyou county. That county covered the entire area now embraced by both Siskiyou and Modoc counties. Settlers in the region became aroused over the difficulties of the long hard trip to Yreka, the county seat, and agitated for a division of the area. On February 17, 1874, an act of the California legislature created Modoc county. The town of Dorris Bridge was decreed as the seat of county government until otherwise provided by law.

In 1878 a community vote changed historic Dorris Bridge to Alturas. Alturas is an Indian word meaning "Top of the Mountain" and is literally true in this case. Alturas lies in the center of a high plateau and the ground slopes away from it to the east, south and west.

Fort Bidwell, to the east in Surprise valley, was created in 1865, and helped to hold down the depredations of the various Indian tribes. Including Modocs, Flatheads and an occasional invasion by the Shoshones. More ranchers brought their herds into the area and started the establishment of this inland cattle empire.

EARLY day cattlemen drove their cattle as far as Marysville, Cottonwood and Anderson to reach railroads where they could ship. There are still many residents of Alturas who took part in these drives and who can tell vivid tales of the rugged trips.

In 1909 the first railroad reached Alturas, a narrow gauge line which ran to the city from Reno. This road was taken over by the Southern Pacific when they put in their line from Alturas to Lakeview, thus putting Alturas on a main line railroad.

Present day Alturas is a living symbol of this slow but steady growth. The cattle industry, always one of the most stable in the United States, tended toward growth rather than boom, but growth and subsequent drops in business and population. There are no empty industrial buildings in the city today. Stores and shops do a thriving business with assured demand for the goods and services of each.

NOT that Alturas never had a boom. It did. Back in the palmy days of the 1920s that "boom" crept over the horizon. The Pickering Lumber company announced in June of 1928 plans to build a \$1,000,000 mill unit in Alturas which would supply employment for some 1500 men when completed. In October of the same year the Southern Pacific told their plans to make Alturas a division point on the Portland to Klamath Falls line.

The news spread and the population of Alturas soared from 1500 to well over 4000 souls. Work was started on the mill with a two-year construction plan in mind. New homes were built in the town, but there was an utter lack of planning or foresight. Consequently the city was caught short as far as facilities were concerned. The water system was inadequate, the sewer system fell far short of the minimum and streets were in sorry shape.

The state board of health demanded that the city improve sewage and sanitation facilities. The lumber company threatened to move to another site for the same reasons and demanded paved streets on top of that. The city went out and spent over \$300,000 to do this.

THEN came the crash! The mill had been built and machinery ordered but it never came. This news was followed shortly by the death of Pickering and bankruptcy for the company.

The depression dashed the SP's plans and the promised division point never materialized.

Alturas was in the hole. And no ready cash to get out. But again the aggressive spirit of the citizenry came through. They paid off the debt at 45 cents on the dollar and squared away for future growth.

That that growth came steadily is pointed out in the spacious, well-equipped schools and in a greatly expanded business district. Mills came into their own, adapted to a smaller scale operation. Smaller scale but steadily growing. Today huge lumber trucks roll along the highways in steady procession.

TAKE a look at the area around Alturas today: It draws trade from a number of smaller towns in that area, such as Likely, Canby, Adin, Davis Creek and Lookout. From the Surprise valley area to the east come the people of Cedarville, Fort Bidwell, Lake City and Eagleville.

To the north and west of Alturas lies a half million acre wilderness appropriately called the Devil's Garden. An area of lava rocks and sagebrush—but pocketed over the entire area with beautiful valleys and meadows where ranchers have taken up their trade.

It was in this area some 40 or 50 years ago that the once-famous Triangle ranch reached its heyday. It was one of the storied ranches of the period and at one time supported not only a large operation with all the attendant buildings and stock corrals and out, but operated its own store and school and had a post office located there.

To the south lies one of the richest pasture and hay areas in the West. Both the South and North Forks of the Pit river flow around this area along with creeks too numerous to name that offer water to irrigate the land. Ranchers grow enough hay on these and other areas that they never have to ship cattle out of the country for the winter months but feed them on home lots.

Also in the south, slightly east of Likely, lies the biggest bed of peat moss in the entire hemisphere. This peat is mined during the dry summer months and countless carloads of it shipped to the south for use by nurseries and other places needing its aid to the soil.

To the west lie vast areas of pumice soil, now so highly prized in the making of pumice blocks for building. Many firms in the area are engaged in manufacturing the bricks made from the special sand, which is mined on an open pit basis and is so pure that little need be done but to scratch off the sagebrush and larger rocks.

To the north and east is found a deposit of a peculiar sand called Perlite.

PERLITE is a gray colored sand which when heated with a special process expands and forms the basis of a new insulating material. A fairly large deposit of this is now being worked and shipments are being made by truck and rail.

In the air transportation picture Alturas stands high as a "probable" for feeder airline service via Bonanza Airlines. Bonanza, if and when the case is reopened, has applied for service from Phoenix to Klamath Falls with several intermediate stops. Alturas would utilize the wartime army field built seven miles north of town for this service. The field was built as an emergency landing strip for B-29s and has more than enough runway space for any commercial ships now operating on this route. One feature of the field is that in taking off to the south from the time the plane's wheels leave the ground the actual flight may be made downhill for the next 26 miles.

In the city of Alturas they are getting under way with a \$182,000 civic improvement project which will see greatly expanded services for water and sewage systems. This entails the sinking of several new wells at strategic points around the town and an extension of sewage facilities designed to give adequate service both now and in the future should there be an appreciable growth of the city.

The hospital is currently being enlarged by the addition of a 25-bed unit, construction of which is expected to be completed in the next few months. An eight-bed unit is also going up in Cedarville. These are financed by a three-way division of the expenses by federal, state and county funds.

HUNTING and fishing in the area is considered some of the best in the state and thousands of hunters flock to the fields and streams for a crack at deer and ducks and geese, not to speak of the eager Waltons who come in search of fish. A large antelope herd is located



SALUTE DAY visitors in Alturas and Canby last week were startled by the red painted faces of many of the youngsters on the Alturas streets. It was freshman initiation day at Modoc Union high school. Here three seniors load up the pop for the freshman reception. Left, Jim Austin receives a case of soft drinks from Jim Austin. Kenny Austin is in the background.

In the area which offers hunting during special season periods and serves as a tourist attraction at all times.

Speaking of tourists, here's one that keeps the Modoc County chamber of commerce busy. Tourists passing by always mark the old offices of the NC and O railroad. This old structure, now cut up into private offices and apartments, was built many years ago and follows the general outline of the missions scattered throughout California. People driving through spot the high old bell tower and the bells in it and then write back to the local chamber "If the bells in that abandoned mission aren't being used is there any chance that we might buy one of them?"

In actual fact only one of the bells is made for actual use, the others being dummies. And the one that is in use isn't for sale. Tough luck.

Officers of Home Extension Units Get Special Training

Officers of the extension service units throughout the county will return to their respective groups with a clearer conception of their duties as leaders as a result of the instruction offered them on "Officers' Training Day."

There to instruct the women on their duties and to explain the program for a new year of extension work were Frances Clinton, assistant state leader of the home extension staff, and Mary Glenn, home extension demonstration agent.

Following the introduction of Miss Glenn staff, and Mary Glenn, home of the county committee, Mrs. Ray Garrison, county chairman, presided at the business meeting. Mrs. E. E. Kilpatrick led the group in singing.

Mrs. Kilpatrick, a delegate to the state convention, also gave a report on council activities, and Mrs. Mark Taylor explained the revision of standard unit requirements.

Fairhaven

Fairhaven home extension unit's rally day meeting was held at Moore park September 21.

The meeting was opened by Mrs. W. E. Davidson, chairman. At the short business meeting, members decided to start sessions at 10 a. m. and close at 3 p. m. Reports of the homemakers' camp held this summer were given by Mrs. Lee Holliday, Mrs. Percy Cook and Mrs. Al Holliday.

The following chairmen were appointed: 4-H club, Mrs. Harold Schieferstein; standard units, Mrs. Roy Cook; hospitality and membership, Mrs. Robert Hurlbut and Mrs. Ed Thompson; finance, Mrs. Percy Cook and Mrs. Lee Holliday; publicity, Mrs. Hans Ziehnert, and Mrs. Clara Williams; recreation, Mrs. Al Holliday; ACWW, Mrs. Putt Roberts.

Project leaders for October will be Mrs. Holliday and Mrs. Schieferstein. A potluck luncheon was served at noon.

Those present were Mrs. George McDonald, Mrs. Paul Talley, Mrs. Ed Thompson, Mrs. Harold Schieferstein, Mrs. W. E. Davidson, Mrs. Karl Friedrich, Mrs. Merlyn Mikkelson, Mrs. Clara Williams, Mrs. Hans Ziehnert, Mrs. Lee Holliday, Mrs. Percy Cook, Mrs. J. Rouse, Mrs. Roy Cook, Mrs. Robert Hurlbut, Mrs. Clinton Myers, Mrs. Al Holliday, Mrs. Lee Holliday, Mrs. Kieth Rice.

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supporters of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's "secular government" program and a leading opponent of "communal politics, the Indian practice of basing political factions on religious and racial communities."

In the Constituent Assembly he has been a leader of the bloc which has pushed through constitutional guarantees to religious and racial minorities in India and was among the first to applaud India's decision to remain in the Commonwealth.

'Nest' Planting Aids Russian Forests

MOSCOW (AP)—Russians in putting into effect their large forestation program are relying heavily on the "nest method" of tree planting.

This method was proposed by Academician Trofim Lysenko, Russia's leading agronomist, who declares that it is based on the principles of Michurinist biology.

The nest method of tree planting involves the planting in a small circle of a number of seedlings. It is claimed that within this group of seedlings there is no conflict and that they assist each other in mutual defense against their enemies—woods and grass. Experiments have shown, papers declare, that the survival of tree seedlings is much higher in "nest planting" than is the case with individual planting.

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