

NORTHEASTERN SHASTA COUNTY

In the northeastern section of Shasta County lies a high plateau area, dominated by a series of small but productive mountain valleys. The entire section, known for its abundant hydroelectric development, is commonly called the Fall River area.

The history of this region seems to fall most conveniently into three eras. The aboriginal period, dominated by the Achomawi and Atsugewi, or Pit River Indian group, was the first. This epoch was discussed in another section of this study. The years 1855 to 1920 approximate the second period—a time of white settlement and eventual domination. During this time most of the towns which dot this mountain region were begun. The twin features of isolationism and agrarianism pervaded this era; both factors related directly to the geographical remoteness of the region. The third period in northeastern Shasta County history began at about the World War I period and is still in progress. This has been the most dynamic phase of this area's story. The production of lumber and hydroelectric power comprised the main industrial background, abetted by the recreational and agricultural lure of the section. New roads and the coming of the automobile in the 1920's solved the apparently insurmountable communication problem with the rest of the county. With expanding population and abundant natural resources this area became an increasingly important part of Shasta County.

White men first encountered northeastern Shasta County in the late 1820's. Fur-seeking trappers from the Hudson's Bay post at Vancouver, led by Alexander McLeod in March, 1829, plotted their north-south trail through the Fall River area. This route followed the Pit River to Hat Creek, thence to Cow Creek and finally to the Sacramento. John Work, Ewing Young and Michael LaFramboise all traversed this route in the 1830's. In 1846 American explorer John C. Fremont came into this section and called it Fall River Valley. In addition, part of the ill-fated Lassen Trail followed the trappers' route established by the Hudson's Bay people. Whites coming into this area found the Indian reception to their encroachment somewhat uncordial. Work, in 1833, spoke of "trouble with the Indians in the Fall River area."

Initial white settlement reached the Fall River area from the north in 1855. Two Yrekanas, Alva Bowles and Z. H. Rogers, came into the valley with mill machinery to set up a lumber business on the upper falls of Fall River. During the same year, Sam Lockhart, aided by Judge A. M. Rosborough, formed a road company to insure an adequate route between Red Bluff and Yreka. The road was opened and a ferry across Pit River just below the mouth of Fall River put into operation in 1856. Tragedy accompanied this first civilizing mission into northeastern Shasta County, however. During the winter of '56, Bowles, Rogers and Sam Lockhart's brother Harry were massacred by Pit River warriors. Embittered by his brother's death, Sam Lockhart enlisted a volunteer reprisal group at Red Bluff. This small force, abetted by a similar contingent from Yreka, succeeded in annihilating some sixty Achomawi tribesmen in April, 1856. Not satisfied, Sam Lockhart continued to seek out and kill Indians with a methodical and morbid glee. By May, 1857, Lockhart stated that his reprisals had accounted for "all but one of my brother's killers."

The year 1857 saw the establishment of Ft. Crook in the mountain area. This military installation was named for Lt. George Crook, destined to become an Indian fighter of widespread reputation, but in 1857 a young lieutenant bent upon a thorough suppression of the Pit River tribes. The post was completed in 1860. A brief description follows:

The fort proper was a mile in any direction from the flagpole and consisted of about twenty small log buildings, set in an oblong square, each one separated from the other by a picket fence which was joined to the building.

The establishment of Ft. Crook and the unofficial terrorizing of the natives by the "Pit River Rangers" nearly ended the Indian menace by the 1860's. The "Rangers," an aggregation of some twenty-five rough and tumble volunteers operating under the license of mob violence and strong whiskey, responded to an Indian killing at Hat Creek Station in 1859 with the destruction of some sixty peaceful tribesmen. A military detachment called Kibbe's Guard completed the task of subjugation late in the same year. Thus the Pit River Indians were relegated either to a reservation or to communities called "rancheries" where they lived—or rather existed—in crude bark shanties, deprived of the freedom of movement which had been theirs before the coming of the white man.

Toward the end of the 60's the eliminating of the Indian menace, plus an abundance of cheap land, brought new settlement to the valley. Dick Pugh, a former scout for Captain Crook and white leader of the local natives, was the initial rancher in Fall River Valley. Election of district officers took place in 1859, while the town of Burgettville was founded by blacksmith Bill Burgett early in the following decade. This first town was located one mile from Ft. Crook, a fact reported to have been occasioned by an army ordinance prohibiting the operation of a saloon within one mile of a military reservation. Several other population centers in northeastern Shasta County were started during this era. These included: Burney Valley, settled in 1858 by Sam Burney, who was killed by Indians a year later; Hat Creek Valley, first settled by John Walker in 1862, and Goose Valley, which claimed approximately thirty residents in 1866. By 1868 the *Shasta Courier* described the Ft. Crook country in the following promising terms:

During the past two years, the population of Pit River, Fall River, and Burney Valleys has steadily increased, until that isolated section of country has become a point of considerable importance. Two trading posts are doing a good business in furnishing supplies (probably Burgettville and Pitville; the latter was a small ranching center on the Lassen County line first settled in the early 60's by Will Hollenbeck and Charles Young).

Although the area commanded a minimum of inhabitants in the 60's, it did possess the right combination to nearly effect a rebel seizure of Ft. Crook in 1863. The *Red Bluff Independent* of May 2 reported this escapade as follows:

Plans for the capture of Ft. Crook were discovered this present week, just in time to prevent carrying out of the project. The parties to whom was entrusted the carrying out of the rebel enterprise approached a citizen of that section offering ample inducement for him to engage in the attempt, stating to him the plans and intentions of the secessionists, which were to capture the arms and ammunition, which by the way, could have been easily accomplished by a dozen men, and use the fort as a rendezvous for guerillas. They struck the wrong man and the consequence was that their movement was conveyed to the fort and the parties were arrested and are now in irons.

Soldiers from this outpost also provided a further object of the wrath formerly vented upon the Indians by Sam Lockhart. In the 1860's Lockhart operated a saloon near the fort, and according to the *Courier*:

Soldiers clandestinely left their quarters and went down to Lockhart's for the purpose of imbibing some "red-eye," or "tangle-foot." On one occasion a row arose, wherein one of the soldiers was well beaten over the head with a pistol in the hands of Lockhart. This treatment called for retaliation and on a subsequent occasion the soldier, healed, got Lockhart out and fired at him several times and wounded him, though not seriously. Supposing their man permanently disposed of, the attacking party proceeded to rob and burn the premises . . . Lockhart now seeks redress.

The early 1870's marked the erection of Fall City (later Fall River Mills) near the junction of Fall and Pit Rivers. A geographic entity in 1872, Fall City resulted from the vision of famous California businessman, William Winter. An early immigrant to California (1843), stockman and gold-seeker, Winter was captivated by the beauty and potential of the mountain valley area. He envisioned the region around the confluence of the Fall and Pit Rivers as the natural location for a flouring mill, and completed construction of this \$40,000 four story turbine-run operation in November, 1873. At that time, the *Shasta Courier* acknowledged the presence of a store, hotel, blacksmith shop, feed stable, saloon, wagon shop and two houses in the year old community.

Although Winter's grandiose scheme proved overly optimistic, the town that he established continued to serve as the center for a productive agricultural region. Despite its isolation (tri-weekly mail in the 1870's), Fall City was able to create a bit of excitement from time to time. The killing of mail carrier George Klein in January, 1874, an event described by the *Shasta Courier* as a "dastardly murder . . . which has scarcely a parallel in the annals of crime," was one such disturbance. This act was perpetrated by a local young man named John Baker, who, after slaying his victim on the lonely trail between Hat Creek and Burney Valley, relieved the body of some \$500 and then returned to a dance being held at Fall City. When the body was

discovered and brought into town for examination, Baker sympathetically viewed the remains with the rest of the startled populace. His false assurance was shortlived, however. An easy trail from the scene of the crime to his home and then to the dance was all an aroused citizenry needed. Forcibly removing Baker from the custody of Constable John Clayton, a crowd of masked men proceeded to hold trial upon the young man in a local blacksmith shop. A Fall City resident described their summary justice as follows:

The crowd . . . put a rope on his neck and strung him up. After keeping him up a short time, he was lowered and asked to confess; on refusing to do so, he was again strung up and this was repeated until life was nearly extinct, when he promised to go with an officer and show where the money was and also confessed to the murder.

Baker was later hung for his crime at the county gallows at Shasta.

There was entertainment other than "necktie parties" in this mountain area. The typical western 4th of July, complete with singing, food, oration and a Grand Ball, was an annual affair. In addition, theatrical arts were fostered by a Dramatic Club. However, if one performance recorded in 1874 was typical, Fall City's contribution to the legitimate stage was hardly worth the effort. The *Courier* correspondent complained that, "There seemed to be a universal lack of life in every actor," adding:

There was also little variety . . . little singing, and to crown all, a defective flue in the rooms below filled the hall so full of smoke that a stranger would have believed the audience to be witnessing a death scene in some grand old tragedy judging from the tears streaming from their eyes.

To emphasize the uprightness of local extracurricular activities, one writer asserted that in Fall City "the only saloon in the place has been forced to close out for want of business."

The 80's were a decade of both progress and disappointment for northeastern Shasta County. Along with the rest of California, this remote region experienced a land boom during the era. In 1882 Fall City had approximately two hundred and fifty people. In 1890 approximately fifty newcomers had been added. The Shasta County *Democrat* (Millville) declared that the Fall River area had developed from a nearly primitive state until "now nearly every quarter section of land is filed on and improved." The *Fall River Advocate* described this leading village of the northern county area as a "lively and enterprising interior town . . . that abounds in natural advantages and enterprise." Local editorials exhorted concerted action to "attract to our resources that which is most needed—attention and capital."

Not only was Fall River Mills (the name changed from Fall City sometime during the decade) growing, but the adjacent communities were also expanding. At the head of Fall River Valley lay Dana with a store, blacksmith shop, town hall and school serving five or six families. West of Fall River was Cayton Valley, first settled by L. Cayton, a nephew of General U. S. Grant. This became an area of cereal crops, fruit and stock raising. Burgettville, six miles northwest of Fall River now possessed its own church, school and Masonic Lodge. Pitville, on the stage road to Big Valley, in 1889 had two hotels, two blacksmith shops, a general merchandise store and a Literary Society, to serve the settlers along Pit River. Fourteen miles southwest of Fall River Valley lay the Hat Creek area on the stream by the same name. This region, an immigrant stopping point on the east branch of the California-Oregon Trail in the early days, in the 80's was noted particularly for stock raising. In addition, a state fish hatchery was located on Hat Creek. The Hat Creek area was served by the Carbon and Cassel post offices. The latter location originally served as the collection point for the Winter's toll road from Burney to Fall River Mills. Burney Valley, twenty miles to the south of the Fall River Valley area, was served by a town of the same name—containing two general merchandise stores, a hotel, blacksmith shop and post office. This village, located on the main road over Hatchet Mountain to Redding, polled forty-three votes in the election of 1880. The title of the Burney Valley post office was shortened to Burney in 1894.

In addition, two new towns arose in the region in the 80's and early 90's. Nearly in the center of Fall River Valley, a promoter named Swasey in 1888 started a town which he modestly named for himself. Initiated because of its founder's falling out with residents of Fall River Mills (in 1889 Swasey told the editor of the *Cottonwood Register* that he had been run out of Fall

River Mills by a few old silurians and a chicken thief), Swasey shortly became a flourishing village containing several stores, a hotel, flouring mill, town hall, Christian church, and school. Described by its founder in the town's newspaper, the *Fall River Mail*, as the "metropolis of the valley . . . offering special inducements to parties seeking business locations," Swasey soon absorbed its neighbor, Burgettville, into a single post office. In 1892 the name Swasey was changed to Glenburn. The second town, McArthur, was begun by a Fall River grocer named John McArthur. An early settler on Pit River, the senior McArthur made use of his large family (nine children) to establish the community bearing his name. Acquiring several thousand acres of swamp land northeast of Fall River Mills in the 70's and 80's, he formed his family into a corporation to improve the acreage and proceeded to drain much of the area in the 1890's. Erecting a store and residence in 1903 on the old Zumwalt place some four miles from Fall River Mills began the actual settlement of McArthur.

The period before the turn of the century was one of isolation and rural tranquility for north-eastern Shasta County. Although some seven to eight hundred people had settled in the Fall River area by 1885, the difficulty of travel to and from this mountain region inspired one correspondent of 1889 to acknowledge that:

We are an isolated people, a quiet community of our own; even strangers to the government; the land having never been surveyed. Our knowledge in general is crude, being derived mostly from the newspaper, not a very reliable means of obtaining information, but sufficient to satisfy our natural curiosity. We are living in imagination—the prospects of the iron horse and civilization invading our country are sufficient to assure our future happiness.

This possibility of a railroad afforded a glint of hope to the region in the '80's. Survey crews marked out the area in 1886-87. Their exertions resulted in a public meeting in Fall River Mills where a resolution was drawn up which attested to the support of the local citizenry in any such venture. However, nothing came of the railroad movement.

In conjunction with the railroad "fever" of the '80's was a "boom" in the use of the section's timber resources. By 1885 several sawmills were operating and good grade lumber was selling for \$8 a thousand. The Florin Brothers' furniture factory near Fall River Mills and the Hawkins Mill at Dana were prominent lumber producers. Timber during this period was cut for the asking—a fact which attracted numerous logging ventures. This ultimately led to the establishment of several local newspapers whose principal purpose was the publication of timber land notices. Included among these impromptu journals was the *Fall River Advocate, Mail, Free Press* and *Iron Dollar*.

Another unfulfilled Fall River dream of the '80's was the development of a woollen mill in the area. The editor of the *Fall River Advocate* asserted the practicality of such a venture in 1889, maintaining that Fall River "would be a second Minneapolis." This plan was also never achieved.

However, the last decades of the 19th Century were not completely uneventful. Although growth was leisurely, it nevertheless did occur. The importance of this region as a supplier of water power was in the offing in the 1890's. There were nine schools and three churches in Fall River Valley by 1889. In addition, agriculture had expanded to a considerable degree and Fall River farmers began to haul their goods to the railroad towns of Sisson, Mott and Dunsuir. Two flour mills in Fall River Valley, Winter's and Swasey's, sold at the following prices: mill wheat - \$1.10 per hundred; flour - \$4 per barrel; and barley - \$1.04 per hundred. During this period in Fall River Valley, eggs sold for 8¢ a dozen; chickens - \$3 per dozen; butter was 25¢ a pound; and a laborer made \$1.50 per day.

Although the editor of the *Courier* lamented in 1893 that "Fall City is not what it used to be or should now be," he did acknowledge a sufficiency of entertainment in this arcadian region. Among the many Fall River area diversions, the 4th of July celebration of 1889 is noteworthy. Highlighting the day's festivities were the antics of the world renown tightrope walker—Blondin, on a three/eighths inch wire seventy feet above the falls on Fall River. An eyewitness account of his remarkable gymnastics stated:

We have seen a great deal of rope walking, but this was the best we ever saw. He walked across the rope four times and wheeled a wheelbarrow across once. First starting from the south side of the river, he walked across to the north where he got the wheelbarrow and wheeled it back, when he again walked to the north side and put a dress on himself, blindfolded and hobbled himself, and walked half way across the stream and then again to same side walking backwards. He then walked out about midway on the wire, turned twice around it, hung with his head hanging downward by his feet, then climbed back on top of the wire, walked to the side from which he started and climbed down.

Despite the ups and downs of the last years of the 19th Century, northeastern Shasta County continued to grow slowly as it entered the 20th. It was still a secluded area, isolated from civilization to the southwest by the menacing pinnacle of Hatchet Mountain. A county survey written in 1905 described eastern Shasta County as a dairying and agricultural area, possessed with an abundance of timber and scenic beauty. Land in the valley was selling at this time for \$8 - \$15 per acre.

Secondary education, absent in the region until 1911, was begun in a church in McArthur in September of that year. Elementary classes had been available at Ft. Crook in the 1860's, and in 1878 William Winter had set aside several lots in Fall City for a school site. Other educational centers dotted the valley, but there was no opportunity for high school instruction until the 20th Century. The first high school year saw a total of eighteen students enjoy the privileges of learning in Fall River Joint Union High School, set up by the voters in 1910. Despite a dispute over location, the new high school continued after 1914 in its own facilities at McArthur.

By the 1900's the north valley area faced the same problem it had encountered in the 1800's—geographic isolation. "Going down below" as the trip to Redding was called, required a week's time in the early days. As a result, this trip was made annually—or at best, semi-annually. It was an exciting time of travel over the mountains and down the winding road in the seventy-five mile excursion to the "Hub City." Careful planning was needed, for sufficient supplies must be purchased for several months and such a journey could not be attempted during the winter months. This problem would be alleviated, but not really eliminated, until the 1930's.

Despite the area's remoteness, progress continued. Agriculture remained the backbone of the section's economy. An average run of 20,000 head of cattle was reported in the Fall River area in 1919, and a \$40,000 meat packing plant was built to process these animals. In each of the mountain valleys, wheat and alfalfa led the way in the production of grains, grasses and flour. Timber added to the economic prospects of the region as evidenced by the creation of forest reserves by the federal government. In addition, the purchase in the early 1900's by the Red River Lumber Company of Westwood of \$2,500,000 worth of timber holdings, included much forest land in this area.

Nevertheless, it remained for the power rampant in the waterways of northeastern Shasta County to create the greatest economic stimulus of the early 1900's. Emanating from the rugged Cascade range and the vast underground reservoir of the lava beds to the north was a splendid hydroelectric supply source available principally through Pit River, Fall River, and Hat Creek. The concept of a vast web of diversion dams and tunnels, recognized in the 1890's, was realized in the first three decades of the 20th Century. Although electric power was made available to the mountain area in 1905, the year 1919 marks the turning point in the hydroelectric picture. In that year the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, in immediate need of additional power resources, purchased the property and water rights of three Shasta County hydroelectric owners. These included the holdings of the California Power and Manufacturing Company on Hat Creek, the Red River Lumber Company on Fall River, and the rights of the Northern California Power Company, principally located on Pit River. Despite transportation difficulties, the PG&E succeeded in building five major diversion dams, plus miles of tunnel and millions of dollars worth of electricity generating equipment within the next decade. The two hydroelectric plants on Hat Creek near Cassel were completed in 1920-21. In 1922 the waters of Fall River were diverted above the town of Fall River Mills to a powerhouse on Pit River canyon. Pit 3 near Burney Falls led to the creation of the Lake Britton recreation area, while the completion of one additional facility on Pit River finished this vast undertaking. Contingent upon the development of northeastern Shasta

County power was the building of an extensive transmission system to substations throughout northern California.

With the hydroelectric developments of the 20's came increased growth into the mountain area. New communities sprang up at the various powerhouse locations, and the older towns felt the stimulation of a population increase. In 1919 the now second oldest agricultural fair in California was started at McArthur. The high school by 1926 had grown to eighty-two pupils. In 1934 local papers headlined "Fire Sweeps Fall River Mills—Loss of \$100,000." However, the town was rebuilt despite the fact that this devastating holocaust had destroyed twenty-four buildings, most of the town's business district.

The 30's, years of economic chaos in most areas, brought added growth to northeastern Shasta County. The major factor in this expansion was the completion of a modern highway to Redding in the 1930's. In addition to the importance of the hydroelectric facilities, was a growth in both the lumbering and recreation activities. In 1936 Carl Phelps began what would subsequently become the Burney Lumber Company. Four years later the Scott Lumber Company, also near Burney, was completed. By the early 40's, this growth would swing the population pendulum to Burney. Inhabited by about fifty people in 1920, this town tripled in the next three decades. Within eighteen miles of Burney lay five PG&E hydroelectric plants employing ninety men, as well as lumber concerns with an annual payroll of \$1,116,000. Sports and recreation, accelerated by the beauty of Burney Falls and other nearby scenic areas, also brought settlement. During this period the Fall River area was comprised principally of large holdings verdant with grains and grasses. From the approximately six billion available feet of fir, cedar, and pine timber in the mountain region came seventy-five million feet of lumber annually. In addition, the Fall River Meat Company in 1940 reported an annual kill of 2,000 beef cattle and 5,000 hogs and lambs, while the local milling concern reportedly exported 100,000 bags of flour per year. Finally water power from the PG&E plants had achieved a total daily output of 81.5 million horsepower.

During the 50's Burney continued to lead the growth of northeastern Shasta County. Lumber continued to expand with the building of the Lorenz Lumber Company near Burney and the C & P Lumber Company at Goose Valley. Two years later the Scott concern added a fertimulch plant. In addition, a railroad track was completed in the 50's between McCloud and Burney. Subdivisions, trailer parks, and new business buildings were signs of a 3,350 person population. In addition, a new high school was built in Burney in the late 60's.

By the late 60's this mountain area, no longer a remote nonparticipant in county affairs, was growing steadily. Its economy, based on a variety of stable resources, indicated that the Fall River region would continue to serve as an important supply center for Shasta County and the rest of the north Valley.