

## THE PROLOGUE - AN OVERVIEW OF SHASTA COUNTY HISTORY

High in the northern reaches of California, at the base of towering Mt. Shasta, Shasta County wedges itself between the mountain ranges which dominate the north state area. A section marked by diversity, Shasta County offers lucrative rewards to timberman, industrialist, miner, agriculturalist and recreation seeker. Shasta is a county of high mountains in the north and productive valleys, with rapidly growing cities, principally in the south. Her rivers include the mighty Sacramento and its tributaries—the Pit and McCloud. Altogether her fluvial system provides over one-sixth of the water power energy of California. In addition, the second largest dam in the world, Shasta Dam, stands at the head of the Sacramento Valley as a key structure in the great Central Valley Project. From Shasta Dam and nearby hydroelectric projects extend the vast power lines which transmit electrical energy to the central portion of the state.

Farm products from over a thousand farms, including beef cattle, grains, fruit, hay, pigs and milk, provide a food supply source for the north valley. The principal agricultural region is the semi-circular valley section comprising southern Shasta County, as well as the northeasterly plateau area known as the Fall River Valley.

Industrially, Shasta County is dominated by lumber. Two large employers, the Kimberly-Clark Corporation and U. S. Plywood Corporation, Shasta Division, employ together approximately 2,000 men. These two major lumber concerns are supplemented by numerous smaller companies. Other types of manufacturers employ an additional 1,000 Shasta County workers. Mining, although a fraction of former days, adds nearly \$1,000,000 per year to the county's wealth. Recreationally, Shasta County provides an abundance of opportunity for the sports-minded. Hunting and fishing, water sports at Shasta or Whiskeytown Lakes, camping in Lassen National Park or Castle Crags, Shasta or Burney Falls State Parks are all available within the county boundaries.

In addition, Shasta County's towns and cities provide extensive educational, cultural and recreational facilities. The largest of these is Redding with about 15,000 people, followed by Anderson, Central Valley, Burney in the northeast section, and Cottonwood on the southern boundary.

In approximately 120 years this county has changed from untouched forest and plain to the modern industrialized region just described. The name of the county itself, granted by the state legislature in 1850, came from the majestic mountain to the north. Originally, so the story goes, Mt. Shasta was named by Russian traders who viewed its snow-covered elegance from the Coast Range and called it by their native word meaning "white, chaste or pure." Others attribute the name Shasta to the tribal group which lived at the foot of the mountain. Perhaps the name resulted from a combination of both alleged origins.

The aborigines of this area were of several family groups. In the south the Wintus inhabited most of the area adjacent to the Sacramento on the west, while across the river to the east and as far north as Pit River were the northernmost segment of the Yana family. North of these in the present Fall River area were the Achomawi and Atsugewi, or Pit River Indians. These were the peoples that in the 1820's and 30's witnessed with foreboding the coming of the vanguard of western settlement—the mountain man.

The first of these was an American-intrepid, Jedediah Smith, who, in 1828, traversed the southernmost portion of what would become Shasta County. Smith was soon followed by other fur-seekers, mainly those in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. Alexander McLeod, Peter S. Ogden, John Work and Michael LaFramboise were part of this company who came into the area via the Pit River, following this stream to the Sacramento and thence into the expansive Sacramento Valley.

However, it remained for an American, mild-mannered and intelligent P. B. Reading of New Jersey, to bring permanent white settlement to the area. This was accomplished in 1844 when Reading received a 26,633 acre grant from the Mexican government. This pioneer lived on his

vast estate until his death in 1868. His innumerable contributions to the county truly acquired for Major Reading the right to be named the "Father of Shasta County."

The gold rush in Shasta County, triggered by P. B. Reading's discovery of the precious metal in 1848, brought rapid settlement to the area. From Oregon, from the east via the Lassen and Nobles Trails and from the south, men came to search for gold in the streams of Shasta County. The first argonauts threw up tents wherever the diggings seemed promising: at the Clear Creek Diggings, at Upper or Reading Springs, and at Lower Springs. More permanent villages followed these "tent cities," as wooden and brick buildings marked the settlement of the early "boom-towns." Shasta, Horsetown, French Gulch, Whiskeytown, Janesville and Texas Springs were among these.

County government came in 1850 with the subdivision of the state into counties. Major Reading's ranch served as temporary headquarters for the county seat until it moved to Shasta in 1851. By 1853 there were 4,050 people in Shasta County, 3,448 men and 252 women. Of these, approximately 2,000 were miners engaged in placer mining with pick and pan, with an average yearly yield of \$1,246 per miner. At this time there were 908 acres under cultivation, barley serving as the major product.

By the 1860's the initial mining boom was receding. Quartz replaced placer mining and the mining company supplanted the individual miner. The county, which had originally comprised nearly the entire northeastern section of California, was now whittled away to its present size, with the formation of adjacent counties. There were seven townships and seven post offices by 1862 according to a Bancroft questionnaire on the county. Education for 288 children was offered; however, most of the schools were open only seven months during the year. In addition, there were twelve sawmills, two steam grist mills and two quartz mills. Many of the first "boom-towns" were in a state of decline as the country turned to agriculture and kindred pursuits to supplement the mining industry.

The Civil War, far removed from the mines and villages of Shasta County, did, nevertheless, evoke more than a passing interest from local citizenry. The *Shasta Courier* of October 4, 1862, displayed this concern in reporting that "contributions in Shasta to the fund for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers amounted to \$1,200." More than one barroom brawl, creek-size argument or public oration, in addition to thorough war coverage in the local papers, displayed this area's interest in the "War of the Rebellion." One fairly typical incident recounted in the *Courier* of May 30, 1863, will illustrate this partisanship:

The other day at Watson Gulch, in the southern part of this country, a violent sessionist, by the name of Griffin, commenced cursing the Administration, Abe Linkin and denouncing the war and all Union men, when a true Union man, named James Drew, formerly from New Hampshire, after enduring all the abuse he could stand from the traitor's lips, told him he must stop. But the secesh thought he could whip about 5 to 1 mostly Union and he kept on with his slang, when Drew threw off and knocked him down and finally after a scrimmage, succeeded in compelling him to keep a civil tongue in his head. The time has come when those worshippers of Davis will not be allowed to insult the ears of Union men with impunity.

At the conclusion of the war in April, 1865, celebration was the order of the day. At Shasta, the *Courier* reported that the local brass band "took possession of Knox's Saloon and blew it full of patriotic music, eliciting cheer upon cheer for the county, our generals, our navy and our President. Lager flowed freely and was drunk to 'Here's hemp to Jeff and liberty to his subjects.'" The writer added that: "At Whiskeytown, French Gulch, Millville and all other towns from which we have been able to hear, rejoicings great and noisy prevailed."

The coming of the railroad and with it the establishment of the more permanent localities made the decade of the 70's an important one in Shasta County history. In 1872 the iron horse first came to the county and with the rails came Cottonwood (on the north side of Cottonwood Creek), Anderson, and Redding as terminal points on the Central Pacific line. It was also dur-

ing this era that the principal town of northeastern Shasta County, Fall City, later changed to Fall River Mills, was founded by William Winter. Shasta, the county seat in the foothills six miles west of the railroad, began a decline during this time which would be culminated by the removal of the county seat to Redding in 1888. The county in 1874 had 6,200 people and was described as a "grazing and mining county."

Immigration, a key descriptive word for all of California during the latter 70's and throughout the 80's, propelled Shasta County's growth. Across the county, immigration societies were busy propagating descriptive folders telling of the area's beauty and promise. Mining continued strong with increased activity in copper mining in a semi-circular copper belt five to twenty miles north of Redding. Lumber from the eastern Shasta County forests was providing a new and growing industry, while around Anderson the growing and processing of a variety of fruit products was evident. Anti-Chinese feeling ran high during this time. This movement resulted in the forcible expulsion of Orientals from Redding in 1886. Shasta County had wanted people during this time and by 1890 her wish had been granted with a total population of 12,206.

The final decade of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th were times of intense copper mining activity in the county. By the turn of the century, Shasta County had grown to 17,318 people. Her semi-circular copper belt, which ran from the Mountain Copper Company on the west to the Bully Hill and Ingot districts in the east, produced almost 700,000,000 pounds of copper from 1898 to 1918. The peak year in copper was 1909. Silver and iron ore were also plentiful during this era as Shasta led all counties in California in the mining of these three minerals. Keswick, which grew from a hamlet of twenty to 2,500 in five years, and Kennett, today under Shasta Lake, were new cities arising amid the smoke of the copper smelters. Smelter fumes had their affect on fruit farming, still a major county resource. Crops were ruined on farms as far south as Anderson, fish in the river were killed, and county residents were subjected to odorous discomforts by the enveloping fumes. The end of this period saw the decline of the copper industry with the coming of low prices, stiffer competition and increased shipping problems.

1920 to 1940 was the lethargic period in Shasta County history. The county actually declined in population by approximately 7,000 during this time. All mining except gold ceased and the average miner was making less than \$1 per day. Some lumbering, agricultural and horticultural enterprises, combined with PG&E building activity remained, but on the whole it was a sleepy era marked by depression, hard times and a large quantity of rural tranquility.

Shasta Dam and World War II combined to awaken the county in the late 30's and early 40's. Work on this vast Sacramento River structure commenced in September, 1938, and with the dam came a multitude of newcomers to Shasta County. By the time the dam was completed in 1944, the county had over 30,000 people and such hastily devised names as Summit City, Project City and Central Valley were imprinted on the county map. The post-war boom in Shasta County continued where the war era had left off. Recreation, lumbering, electric power, agriculture, building and manufacturing were the bulwarks in this most important stage of Shasta County history. Educational facilities, including Shasta College, were begun, subdivisions appeared on land that had pastured grazing cattle, and the multiple problems of sky-rocketing population were met resolutely by city and county officials. As Shasta County concluded the 60's, a diversified economy, abundance of natural resources and a hard-working populace promised to make this area a significant contributor to the development of northern California.