

## Crane, Oregon History

Crane, once a thriving little city with five restaurants, four hotels, two general merchandise stores, a dance hall, a newspaper, a bank and a movie theater was never rebuilt to its former glory after a series of devastating fires, the last in 1938.

The town was at its peak during the time it served as the railhead for the Union Pacific Railroad. The railroad arrived in 1916 to much fanfare from Harney County citizens. The Burns Times Herald reported, "Chief Construction Engineer Young brought the first train in with two coaches and several flat cars filled with excursionists from Ontario, Vale, Juntura, Riverside and other points. As soon as he had disposed of the excursion people, he invited the Harney County people to ride with him, and the train was soon filled. It was necessary to make two trips to and from the scene of the big steam shovel in Crane Creek Gap, to accommodate all."

The railroad was destined for Burns to serve a new sawmill there, and in 1924, the line was completed into Burns. The businesses might have survived to serve the eastern half of the county had the town not be plagued by fires.

With the arrival of the railroad, Crane became a thriving business center and permanent buildings started going up. One of the first stores sold groceries and dry goods, and was owned by a Mr. Lee. Later the Hotel Denman was moved in from nearby Harriman. A large store called the Vale Trading Company was established by Mr. Dunlop, of Vale and sold groceries, dry goods and machinery – its slogan was Everything for Everybody."

A high school was built on Crane Creek, and Alice Smith began teaching on October 28, 1901. In 1910, Archie McGowan established one of the first and oldest Ford dealerships in Oregon and sold four Model T's.

Weinstein's also had a store in a brick building that was later turned into the Rivoli theatre, and movies became a part of the town's entertainment. There was also the Hudspeth store and the Crane State Bank. Crane once had three garages, a warehouse, a lumber yard, livery stables, a butcher shop, restaurants and a shoe repair shop operated by Fred Terhufen, who also sold shoes.

In August 1916, P. J. Gallagher and George E. Carter, established a newspaper, the Crane American. Gallagher soon left to pursue a career as a lawyer and Carter continued to publish the newspaper until 1935. He sold the business and it was moved to Burns in 1936 where it ceased publication after a short time.

The state highway department began building a gravel road Oregon Highway 78, into Burns in 1917, and its completion in about 1920 greatly improved travel conditions for those in the southern end of the county.

Ranchers in the area around Malheur Lake moved their families to Crane during the summer months while they did the haying and then moved them back to the Lawen area each winter to feed their cattle and send their children to school. When the railroad came in 1916, Crane citizens saw that they would need an elementary school. With the addition of the lower grades, more people began to make Crane their permanent residence.

The tiny community today is the home for Crane Union High School and Crane Elementary School. The high school is a boarding school for the children of ranch families who inhabit the vast rural regions of the county. Some students are living over one hundred miles from home.

A few families live there, the post office and a café/service station/tavern/RV Park, and farm supply are the only businesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Catholic Church and a community chapel serve the community's spiritual needs. In the heyday of Harney County's growth, the town was an important, bustling center of trade. A post office was established in 1895 with Henry C. Turner as the first postmaster. Discontinued in 1903, the office was reopened in 1911, and continues to serve at the present time.