

Wallowa History Center

Preserving Our Past for the Future

*The Wallowa History Center works to save the memories, stories,
and photographs that define the history and culture of the places we call home.*

– Newsletter Number 17 • January 2012 –

Some Wallowa Fire Department History

Wallowa Sun
September 17, 1914

Three Horses Die in Fire Monday Night Wallowa Livery Stable, Barn and Stevens Building Completely Destroyed

A fire completely destroying the N.D. Crofutt Livery stable, a building belonging to Mrs. Minnie Stevens of Cove on Main Street, and a barn back of the livery stable owned by H.D. Driver occurred in Wallowa on Monday evening at 9:30 o'clock. Three horses belonging to B.F. and G.W. Ross were also burned. The origin of the fire is unknown. Mr. Crofutt states he had no fire in any part of the stable that day. Some men who intended to sleep in the barn that night had retired; one of them, who had not yet fallen asleep, noticed smoke coming up through one of the hay chutes and upon examination discovered the lower part of the barn ablaze. The alarm was immediately given and the fire brigade was soon upon the scene.

A number of horses were in the barn, five belonging to Ross Bros. and all were rescued with the exception of the three horses belonging to these gentleman. The horses were valued at \$640, this price having been refused only a short time before, and a pet racehorse. They also lost a camp outfit worth \$300. They felt their loss keenly, both being old gentlemen, who were on their way to Baker. B.F. Ross narrowly escaped with his life. Owing to such a strong wind, the fire gained such rapid headway that it proved utterly impossible to save the buildings or much of the contents.

The residence of E.A. Holmes occupied by E.L Holmes was saved only by the miraculous efforts of the men, as it lay directly in the path of the wind. The west side of the residence was slightly damaged, and the fruit trees between the house and the Stevens building were ruined, Other buildings slightly damaged were the roof on Morelock's Opera House, and the front of the building occupied by Enterprise Electric Co. Had it not been for the steady down pour of rain, the greater part of the town would have been in ashes, as the water pressure would not have been great enough to extinguish the fire. N. D. Crofutt estimates his loss at \$2,000 and carried no insurance, the insurance having run out only a few days previous. Mr. Driver's loss is valued at \$500 and no insurance. The Stevens Building was insured for \$900. The livery stable was one of the first buildings in Wallowa and was built about 25 years ago.



Livery stable fire in Wallowa, 1914

Wallowa Sun
August 19, 1915

Organized Fire Company

Night Marshal Ashley got the young men of Wallowa together and partly perfected an organization for fire fighting, which will be organized this evening. There will be three hose cart stations in the city, and it is the desire of all citizens that there be a company organized for each of the stations, one for the east end of Main Street, one close to the school house and one at Brownlee's Cash Store in the northwest part of town. Those signing up were Fred Ashley, Ross Hood, Ralph Couch, Wallace Baird, Harold Maher, Curtis Burton, Orville McKenzie, Kenneth Hall, and George Rogers.

They will practice again this evening and hope to get a lot more recruits to join.

Wallowa Sun
September 15, 1915

Fire Company Practicing

Night Marshal Ashley is making fine progress with the fire company organized a couple of weeks ago. On every Tuesday and Thursday evening he had the boys out for practice and at the same time sprinkle down the dust on Main Street besides some of the side streets. Let the good work go on and give the boys all encouragement, for a good fire company is one of the chief assets of our city.

Wallowa Sun
September 16, 1915

False Alarm Calls Out Fire Company Boys Responded Quickly and Had Apparatus Out in Less Than Two Minutes

Last Thursday evening about 6:30 a false alarm was turned in and the new siren worked fine. The new fire company just organized responded promptly and had the hose cart as far as the bank corner in less than two minutes time from the first sound of the siren. The fire was supposed to be at the Wallowa Machine Shop. They were working late that evening setting tires on some wagon wheels, and burning some waste, and excelsior made the flames shoot out the top of the flue from the tire furnace, which caused the fire alarm to be turned in.

We want to compliment the new hose company for their quick work in getting to the station in so short a time and getting the hose cart started to the scene of where the fire was supposed to have been when they were notified that it was a false alarm. In conversation with W. A. Purdin, the proprietor of the machine

shop, he stated he wished the Sun to thank the fire fighters for him for their quick response. All the business men we have talked with have the loudest of praise for the new fire fighting organization, and are glad to see the young men of Wallowa take the interest they do.

The present fire company is one of the best assets the town has, and we would be more than pleased to see the other two hose houses have as good an organization as the one on east Main Street. Who will take the lead at each of these outlying stations and organize them?



Gazebo at end of Main Street in Wallowa housed fire dept. hose cart

Wallowa Sun
October 21, 1915

Fire Boys Will Have Practice Run This Evening New Company Organized in the Northwest Part of Town Station Located in Brownlee Block Captains Elected for Both Companies

The second hose company was organized this week in the northwest part of town, the station being in the Brownlee Block. The new company has been out practicing a couple of times since organizing and can make quick work of it when it comes to making coupling and getting water turned on.

This evening at 8 p.m. the two companies will have a practice run to see which company can make a certain distance of a run and couple the hose and hydrant and get the water through the hose first. The run will be made on First Street, one company going to the hydrant opposite Rousavell and Marvin's store and the other from the hydrant just this other side of the City Bakery, There will be a bonfire built on one of the vacant lots for the fire fighters to put out. The race will be worth your while to witness.

The city has purchased badges about an inch square for the two companies with the words Wallowa No. 1 and No. 2 on them, and the boys are wearing their badges. The roster of the two companies follow:

Hose company No. 1

Ross Hood (Captain), Kenneth Hall, Harold Curtiss, Harold Maher, Ralph Couch, Orville McKenzie, Curtis Burton, Fred Ashley, Scott McCrae, Wallace Baird, Donald McDaniel, Walter Ashley, Waldo Bratton, Jim Plass.

Hose Company No. 2

Earl Pfeffer (Captain), Clarence French, Stanley Shell, Virgil Coverstone, Kenneth MacIntyre, Coley Wray, Brent Finley, Roy Whittaker, Eugene Alford, Bruce Brace.



Wallowa Fire Department badge, which belonged to the late Kenneth Hall

Wallowa Sun
October 28, 1915

A Good Run

Last Thursday evening the two fire companies were out for a practice run. The night marshal built a small blaze on the vacant lot west of the Presbyterian Church, and turned in an alarm as a signal for the boys to start to see which company could get water on the blaze first. No. 2 Company from the Brownlee station were the winners, getting coupled up and turning water on the blaze first. Of course, No. 1 was to certain extent at a disadvantage as their run was slightly up grade, but the boys took their defeat good naturedly and say, "It can't be done again." We understand that another run will be made again in the near future to keep the companies in practice. The rivalry between the two companies is good and it will be the means by which we will have a good fire fighting bunch of laddies if the occasion ever arises that we need them.

Wallowa Sun
August 2, 1934

Shell's Fire

Following by only a few months time the disastrous fire which took the Miller Hotel, Wallowa was visited Wednesday morning by another blaze, which wiped out a landmark of the earliest days in the valley.

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The fire, of unknown origin, broke out at 12:30 Wednesday morning, being first discovered by Mrs. Gordon Martin who told Gordon to rush to the scene while she turned in the alarm.

The fire had caught in the upper story and had made good headway before breaking through the roof. When discovered it had just burst into violent flame. Chances for saving it were slight from the start.

The heat from the blaze cracked the plate glass in the windows of the bank, drug store, Sun office and other buildings up and down the street. The telephone building was in danger for a time, and considerable damage was done to the windows in it. All telephone connections were soon damaged and no calls could be put through.

Fred Henning of La Grande started at 1:00 o'clock with help to commence repairing, and late in the day phones were again in order.

The fire department did good work in checking the fire from spreading to other buildings. The Hauprich store was in danger and had not strong effort been made in fighting it from the west, it is possible that the four adjoining buildings, including the Searle Insurance office, Lively Pool Hall and the old Wallowa Café would have gone.

The Enterprise fire engine truck broke down on the way here and was assisted by the forest truck.

Rapid work made it possible to remove considerable of the merchandise from both the Hardware and Shell store.

Neither Bruce Cox nor either of the Shells would comment as to their immediate plans as to rebuilding. They stated that they would be ready to resume business temporarily as soon as they could get quarters. Mr. Cox took an option on the Marvin building and some of his merchandise was stored there and moved from the fire. Stanley Shell says he will have his grocery department ready within a week for temporary business. The Shell Mercantile Company has established business offices in the rear of the bank building.

Special thanks to Wayne Johnson for donating the space for the Wallowa History Center.