

PRESCOTT

Mrs. Minnie Fowler McCrae, daughter of Frances Fowler, who took 640 acres of land where Prescott now is located is authority for the early history of this area as follows:

Frances Fowler and his wife, Mary, came west by covered wagon in 1865 and took up government land. After filing on it and settling here with his family, the land became theirs in 1868 as a Donation Land Claim. They built their house on the southern end of the island. It later became filled in between the island the mainland on the Oregon side of the Columbia, so is no longer an island.

In 1883 a small lumber mill was built where the Graham dock is now, and houses were built for the mill workers. The village was named Danby. After several years the mill was

discontinued, and the houses were empty, when Robert Graham and his family came here in 1900. At that time Balfour and Guthrie of Portland were the owners, having obtained it by foreclosure of a mortgage they held on the property. The Grahams bought it in 1901, 131 acres in all. Several of the old houses were moved together to make the first home of the Graham family, and others of the buildings were used by other families. Among these were the Ward, Furer and Ruby families.

The railroad was completed to Astoria in 1898, and then it was easier for the settlers here to visit other towns along the river. There was no station here for some time and they had to go to Rainier to board the train.

In 1906 the Beaver Lumber Co. bought a site north of the Graham property, and began operations in 1907, and Danby was re-named Prescott. This was said to have been because the mill machinery was bought from the Prescott Machinery Co. The post office was established at this time, with Anna Barker first postmaster. Before this time, there was a small school near Little Jack Falls, but after the new mill started operation, a larger school was built at Prescott. At this time, Prescott was made a railroad stop, and a depot was built. There was also a price warfare between the river boats and the railroads, each wanting the business of carrying passengers and freight. It was several years later when the highway was built, and automobiles became common. People now go by private cars or airplane, taking the business from both the river boats and the trains.

In early days, lights were kept burning along the river by night so boat captains could see. Kerosene was burned, the lamps were tended by men who made the rounds to keep the lamps filled with oil. Robert Graham tended five lamps on 37 miles of river for many years. Boats which served the small places were the Harvest Queen, Oklahoma, Bailey Gatzert, Potter, Sarah Dixon and Lurline. Two boats which were sunk near Prescott were the Feltre and George W. Elder. The Elder was re-floated and put back in service.

The Beaver Lumber Co. was in operation about 20 years until it was sold to the Clark and Wilson Co. in 1927. Up to this date, men who worked in the mill lived at Prescott, but after this date, the mill was enlarged, and most of the men came from surrounding areas to work here. There were from 320 to 380 men working in two shifts at the peak of production.

Mr. J. G. Beck furnished further information about the mill operation.

He worked for the Clark and Wilson Co. for many years. He states that this was not the original Clark and Wilson Co., but a new organization composed of stockholders of both the Beaver Lumber Co. and Clark and Wilson, plus several new additions.

In turn, superintendents were C. G. Kellar, Roy Avrit and Cy Greenlaw. This takes up to the time the mill was dismantled in 1945. What was left was sold to Blakely, Neely and Hart.

During the years, various improvements were made. A new hog to grind chips and a new conveyor from the mill to the dock, and new chains were built. The dry kiln was reconstructed and enlarged. New and larger planers were put in, and many other improvements were made. Where the original mill cut 110 thousand per day of 10 hours, the mill now cut up to 270 thousand in a day of 8 hours. When running two shifts, the average was about 480 thousand a day, which was no small operation, even in these times.

Insurance on plants of this kind is so high that only a partial insurance was carried. The insurance even at that cost from 55 to 70 thousand per year. The pay roll was increased over the years going from \$750,000 to considerably over a million a year, and adding the longshoremens, to almost 1½ million per year.

During these years the method of handling material made a vast change. There were endless conveyors, lumber carriers, traveling cranes, etc., to facilitate the handling of materials.

Union organization, also, rose, resulting in a strike in 1934, which lasted some time. Several minor strikes occurred through the years, the last one after the war.

Before the war ships of all nations stopped to load cargo. Many were manned by motley crews—Lascars, Hindus Filipinos, Chinks, Japs, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, French, German, English, Dutch, and those from South America. Many ships were

luxurious, some were only tramps, but all were interesting.

A great deal of amusement was always caused when a Jap boat arrived. Twenty or 30 Japs would pile off at a time to spear carp in the sloughs. They ate carp with rice, making a tasty dish.

During the war practically all the output of lumber went for some federal purpose. Millions of feet went by truck, rail and water. Some of the shipments were almost fantastic. Hundreds of thousands of feet of lumber were put on trucks, with police escort and relay of drivers, was hauled to shipyards in Seattle, San Francisco and even to New Orleans. Millions of feet were taken to Tacoma and Seattle and there re-loaded on barges and cargo planes, and either shipped or flown to Alaska.

The most fantastic of all was when the armies of North Africa and Arabia needed wooden pipe staves. These were hauled to Seattle, loaded on cargo planes, and then flown clear to Arabia. Over 600 miles of wooden pipe was laid to supply water to the troops as they advanced. Many mills were in on this operation, as speed was necessary and the need too great for any one mill to handle.

At the war's end, Uncle Sam took over the plant as a loading operation. Then the mill was dismantled and the machinery sold to companies along the coast. What was left was sold to Blakely and Hunt, who sold to private individuals.

Since the mill was discontinued, Prescott is almost a deserted village, reached by a branch road from the Lower Columbia River Highway.