

Snake Falls,

EAGLE ROCK HISTORY

Written October 1933, by the
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Rock D. A. R.'s

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In the year 1864 Robert Anderson and Matthew Taylor built a ferry a few miles north of what is now Idaho Falls, and from Eagle Rock. As traffic increased it became necessary to build a bridge, but as the river was so wide at the ferry, a better location was sighted, and the bridge was built midway between the present railroad and Broadway bridges; the first bridge was washed out, but in 1866 a more substantial one was built. It was first called Taylor's Bridge, but afterwards Eagle Rock Bridge. This name was also given to the new town which was built near by. There was much traveling and freighting in those early days; as many as six thousand head of cattle and numerous droves of sheep were driven across the bridge in a single day; as an exorbitant toll was required from all travel over the bridge, it was a source of a large revenue to the company who built it. A man named White owned and operated a salt works in the mountains near Soda Springs. He had a line of freighters, some with ox-teams, and some with mules, that made regular trips to Montana, this being a supply for salt for a large region of territory. Toll was also collected from this source, but after the railroad was built, the salt works was discontinued, and the long line of freight wagons seldom passed over the bridge. Mr. Robert Anderson and his brother, J.C. Anderson, erected a small shack for general merchandizing which in a few years was replaced by a log and adobe building; the settlement of the surrounding territory increased so fast, and their business increased accordingly, so in a few years a large brick building replaced the old ones, and for many years it was known as Anderson's Store and Bank. Some of these early settlers of the land near the

town came from as far away as the New England states; they came in the early seventies; two of these families, Bucks and Heaths were the first to irrigate their land from Willow Creek near where they homesteaded, and also the first to raise wheat and alfalfa in this part of the state. Mrs. Rebecca Mitchell, in her book of "Historical Sketches", gives the following tribute to Robert Anderson:

"Robert Anderson, one of the pioneer business man, was a man of rare mental and financial ability. He saw the dawning of the busy days of Idaho, drank in the inspiration of the rapid development of this part of the state; was a member of the Territorial Constitutional Convention which gave us our present constitution. He was steadfast in his convictions of right, firm in his business relations, kind and tender to the suffering; a friend in the time of need. His untimely death by accident in Missouri brought sorrow to many hearts in Eagle Rock as was and Idaho Falls as it not is".

Until the year 1880 Eagle Rock was little more than a good trading post and a stage station; it was the only crossing on the Snake River, but in the year 1880 a narrow gauge railroad was built from Ogden, Utah, to Butte, Montana; it was called the Utah and Northern Railway. At the same time the shops were located here in the northern part of the town, and Eagle Rock became a very busy place. Men from many states even from the far East came to help build the shops and company houses. I will mention the names of six young carpenters who came here directly from Omaha, and who had taken the advice of Horace Greely, "go west, young man". The men had been working for the Union Pacific Railroad but having heard of the new road to be built farther West came here. These men were B.J. Briggs, Ed. Winn, W.H.B. Crow, W.W. Keefer, J.H. Keefer, and Louis Elg, all with the exception of Mr. Elg still living. These men played an important part in the building up of the city later on. They all secured work in the shops and in helping build company houses, etc.

Two of these men, W.W. Keefer and Briggs, then went on the road from Butte to Ogden, still in the employ of the railroad company, to build bridges, water tanks, and depots, and they traveled in box-cars, had cooks, and a regular traveling outfit. Mr. Briggs afterwards married, took up land not far from town, and built a fine home there. In a few years he sold it and moved to Eagle Rock, and for many years was one of the best lawyers here; he is now located in Bremerton, Washington, still practicing law. Mr. Crow's name will be mentioned at a later time in this history. W.W. Keefer - for many years he was one of the best building contractors in the city, have erected many of the best business houses and homes here; he is now retired.

The other three men, Winn, J.H. Keefer, and Elg, opened saloons on Eagle Rock Street, but in a short time engaged in other occupations.

This was then called Oneida County and extended from Malad, the county seat, to the Montana line. Among the railroad buildings was a supply house 25 x 40. This building was afterwards moved on rollers to a point near Coy's coal office, and used for the first depot. Many of the company houses were built along Eastern Avenue; a commissary store was built near where Rogers Brothers seed house now stands; a deep cistern was dug near where the Milner Apartments now are; this place became a very busy western town, but this activity lasted only until the spring of 1886, when the shops were moved to Pocatello. This removal left the town practically dead and the population decreased from about two thousand to less than four hundred in population. The town was now in a very unsettled condition; many of the houses were torn down, some were sold, and some removed to other localities.

Some of the improvements during the time of the R.R.

Sidewalks were made from Eagle Rock Street to where the Milner Apartments now are; there was no leveling of the ground; the railroad ties which were used for the walks were laid on the uneven ground, and the sagebrush grew in between the ties and beside them. Eagle Rock Street was the business part of the city, and besides a number of saloons, there was a meat market run by a man named Wilbur, who afterwards moved to Pocatello; a book store, the name of the owner was Felson; a small bakery, Mrs. Ross, the owner; Dr. Bean's Drug Store, Frank Ramsey being the druggist; a notion store run by Mr. Bunting; a grocery by Johnson and Poulson, and Dick Chamberlain's large frame building at the end of the street; he also had a saloon and pool hall and had rooms to rent on the second floor. Dick Chamberlain was a very early settler; he kept a rough house and many fights and shooting scrapes took place in his building; he had been a soldier in the Civil War, and in later years, though at times financially embarrassed, he would never take a pension from the government; said he had not fought for money, but did his part to help save his country. His common law wife, a very peculiar woman, after his death still lived in the old dilapidated house; rented rooms for travelers to sleep in at the low price of twenty five cents a night, dirt, bugs, in the bargain. She was finally taken to an asylum in Blackfoot, where she died. The building was then torn down by the city to widen the street at that corner, now called Chamberlain Avenue.

The first local W.C.T.U. was organized in 1884. The members rented a room on Eagle Rock Street (originally called Front Street) for a meeting place. They had a large muslin sign

with the letters "W.T.C.U." on the front of the building; one night a joker took the sign down and put it over the door of Chamberlain's Saloon. The members heard of it and the next morning were early on the scene. Mrs. J. Ed. Smith had a large pole, and soon removed the sign, but it was torn in pieces by her efforts.

There were some fine homes built on South Capitol Street, as well as many others scattered around.

The first trees were planted in front of the old Keefer house on North Water Avenue; the house was built and owned by a shop man named Thomas Manning, and was sold by him to W.W. Keefer in 1888. Mr. Manning had several friends who lived on the Island, now called Menap; these friends were James Bush and John Reed; they brought some small cottonwood trees for Mr. Manning and planted them in front of his home where they grew for many years, always in danger of being broken or killed by the stock which then ran loose.

Schools

On June 6th, 1882, Mrs. Rebecca Mitchell, a Baptist self supporting missionary, arrived here from Hoopston, Illinois. Six days after her arrival she opened the first school in Eagle Rock. She had forty pupils. She used the little shack she had rented, near the depot, on the south side for a school room, boxes and benches for furniture. Some of our progressive men and women of today were her first pupils. In 1883 a frame building was erected near the site of our present library; ~~as~~ was used for all school purposes. After a few years a block was purchased by the city and the building was moved to the present site now occupied by the Central and Junior buildings.

Churches

The first Sunday School in the town was organized by the pioneer school teacher, Mrs. Rebecca Mitchell, June 11th, 1882. Mrs. Mitchell immediately began to raise money for a church building, and in two years through private subscriptions and friends in the East the Baptist Church was built, and dedicated in November, 1884, the first church between Ogden, Utah, and Butte, Montana. People of all denominations helped to establish this pioneer church, but in time withdrew to organize their own churches. Mrs. Mitchell had sent back to Illinois for her furniture, and a small organ of hers was used in the church. Mrs. Mitchell gave many entertainments for the young people, chiefly along the Temperance question. Mrs. Sarah Crow was the first musician to come to Eagle Rock, and was the first organist for the Baptist Church. After the building of the church several of the most regular attendants at the morning service were Robert Anderson and his wife; they were always accompanied by a tall negro servant, who seated himself in the farthest back seat near the door. The first resident minister was Rev. Elder of the Methodist Church who remained only six months. The M.E. Church was erected some years later. Rev. M.J. Lamb was the first pastor of the Baptist Church, and had the oversight of the erection of it.

There was a franchise of twenty years on the first bridges, but for nearly twenty-four years toll was still collected by the company who built them. In 1888 a number of public spirited citizens with W.H.B. Crow as leader went to Boise, and through their efforts the toll system was abolished, and the bridge was thrown open free to the public.

The first newspaper in Eagle Rock was dated April 1st, 1885 and was published by W. B. Wheeler, who had previously been

publishing a paper in Blackfoot. It was Republican in principle. George Chapin was the first person to edit a Democratic paper. Eagle Rock is situated on that point of the Snake River where the water rushes through a deep gorge in the lava, and of all the natural resources which surround the town and which when utilized will make a large city, none are more potent than the possibilities that lie in this great river.

How the water was first supplied to the early settlers

W.H.B. Crow was the first person to remedy that want by putting in a water system; the pump house was situated along the river back of where Ed. Winn's and the Wright houses now are; some residents had hydrants but at times the water failed to run and the best way to be sure of a water supply was to have a barrel in a convenient place in your back yard and have it filled several times a week by the water haulers. Thomas Nixon, still living in the city, was one of the first water haulers. The river water in those days was not considered unhealthy. Through the courtesy of Mr. Hill, our present watermaster, the statement of the first water system, also of our present one, will be given in this history:

Eagle Rock, Bingham County. Population estimated 250.

Water works built in 1885 by Eagle Rock Water Works Company. Engineer, C.H. Clark. Labor done by company. Water supply, Snake River; pumping to tanks. Pumping machinery, Dy. cap. 144,000 gallons. No. 8 Knowles pump driven by Halladay windmill with a Shapley boiler for reserve. Tanks, two dy. cap. 35,000 gallons each. Distributed mains, C 1., W.1, 1-1/8 miles services W.1. taps 20, meters, 1, hydrants, 4. Consumption 35,000 gal. Pressure, ordinary, 20 lbs., fire, 100 lbs.

Financial cost, \$8000.00. Capital stock, \$3,000.00 Debt, \$2,000.00 Interest 12-6/8 percent. Annual operative expenses, \$1700.00. Annual revenue consumers \$1700.00. Hydrants, free. Management, Pres. J.M. Bennett, Pocatello. Secretary, W.H.B. Crow. Mrs Crow afterwards purchased the plant. His assistant was Peg-leg Ellis.

Statement of Mr. Wyatt Hill, Manager of the present water-works system of Idaho Falls, dated March 1st, 1933.

Idaho Falls water works plant, municipally owned. 74 miles of pipe line. Size of pipe lines, 12" 10" 8", 6" 4" 2". 156 fire hydrants size 6" 4" 2". 151 gate valves, size 12" 10" 8", 6" 4" 2". 1923 service connections 4" 2" P 3/4". 9 pumps. 2 well pumps each 3000 gallons per minute, total, 6000. 4 Buster pumps; 3 river pumps each 1200 gallons per minute, total 3600 gals. per minute.

The dam across Snake River for our present water system was put in by W. W. Keefer.

Library

The first public library was opened in the winter of 1884 and 1885. It was organized by the W.C.T.U. under the management of Rebecca Mitchell. Between three and four hundred volumes were collected by her from Eastern friends through private correspondence and solicitations, also through denominational papers. Current expenses of light and fuel were met by voluntary offerings. The Baptist Church basement was used as a room for this library. Mrs. Mitchell, assisted at times by Rev. Barclay, the pastor of the church, acted as librarian without pay. This library was well patronized by the railroad men who were glad to have a comfortable,

quiet place in which to spend their evenings. In a few years the railroad shops were moved to Pocatello and the patronage of the library fell off, so Mrs. Mitchell took the books to her own home; they were still open to the public and school children often came for some book needed for reference; in time many of the books were lost, or worn out, and as none were added to the list, the W.C.T.U. took charge of the remaining ones, which were afterward used as a nucleus for a new library by the W.C.T.U.

(The preceding article on the first library was written by Mrs. W.H.B. Crow and sent to our present librarian, Miss Marion Orr, who kindly gave it to the writer of this history.)

Stores

The Z. C. M. I., a large rock building, was built about 1882. Wheeler and Glenn were managers, and the store was known by their name; a bank was also connected with the store; Julius and J. J. Johannesen had control of the banking business; the large room above the main store was used as a dance hall, but in a few years, as a furniture room. The furniture was shipped from Salt Lake City and Ogden, Utah, and was knocked down and set up here after arrival. It might be interesting to give the names of some of the early clerks: Mrs. Alice Bybee Boomer, Mrs. Lulu Gleason Kerr, and two of the Molen girls, Mrs. Joe Hurst and Esther Payne.

There was a small grocery store situated just close to where our underground tunnel empties into the Snake River; the proprietor's name was Eastman, but was familiarly known as Jo He, from the name of an Indian medicine he sold; this medicine was supposed to cure all the ailments the human body was subject to. The extreme end of Eagle Rock Street was the general merchandise store of the Lewis Brothers. A good business was done here, but after

the railroad shops left, the store goods and the house occupied by the family were removed to Bellevue. The old blacksmith shop now owned by W.W. Keefer was a store room of the Lewis Brothers. John Reed and Jim Bush also had a small grocery store on the south side.

The Burgess House was the principal hotel in early days; it was a large frame building on the corner where the wholesale grocery department of the Z.C.M.I. now stands; it was afterwards called the Brooks House.

The first post office was in the Anderson Brothers store, and Isreal Heald was the first Postmaster; he held the appointment under the government, but Robert Anderson did the work for a number of years, as Heald cared nothing for office work; his appointment was a political one, but of no practical value. The post office was afterwards removed to a small building just south of the Burgess Hotel; next to that building on the alley was Alma Marker's store. Mr. Marker was a fine violinist, and played for the dances which were held in the large room above the Z.C.M.I. Mr. Marker is still in business; he is one of the oldest business men in this part of the state. Just across the street from these buildings were the homes of Charles Ramsey and Dr. Bean.

Three brothers named Thomas were the first tailors in this community, James lived in what is now the Wright house on South Capital Avenue. He just lately died in California. His son, Larry, now a prominent citizen of Blackfoot, drove the delivery truck for Z. C. M. I.

There was an old building just East of the Marker residence that used as a court house; many civil cases were tried in this building by the judges of that day; this old building had quite

a history connected with it. It was said to have been standing there even before the Andersons came to this country, and was used by trappers and prospectors as a cache for their wares, which were afterwards sent East for sale. The first judges were Bayless and Rogers. Bayless lived in a shack along the river; he had a son who was a gambler and caused his father much trouble. H.L. Rogers was the father of B.M. and W.D. Rogers, two of the most progressive citizens of the present time in our city. The unsettled condition after the removal of the shops kept the lawyers very busy settling disputes. Four of the leading ones were, Samuel Winters, William Reeves, Kentucky Smith, and J. Ed. Smith. The latter came here in 1882. He worked in the railroad shops during the day, and practiced law in the evenings; after the shops left he made the law his entire business, and for many years was the leading lawyer in the city. His daughter, Mrs. Hattie Smith Wilson, has the honor of being the first child born in Eagle Rock, born in 1884. Several other people are claimants, but they were born in the country, near the town. Another old timer is Jerry Dineen, who came here in 1885; he was a saloon man for a number of years. The first yardmasters were Edward Fanning and George Payne. The daughter of George Payne married G. H. Storer, son of a pioneer, also was a saloon man on Eagle Rock Street. In the early days W. W. Keefer made coffins, but Mr. Biethan opened a branch of his furniture store in Blackfoot on the South side, and also sold coffins; after this store was discontinued Keefer bought the coffins, and added to the stock so no more home made coffins were made.

Sam Taylor was one of the first sheriffs of Bingham County and was a fearless and efficient officer. He never carried arms.

but when he had to make an arrest no matter how desperate the character he was after he went unarmed, and always brought in the man he sought. It is said that his reputation for fearlessness and it being known among the desperadoes that the sheriff always went unarmed gave him a measure of protection which some other officers did not enjoy. He owned the first brick house in the town situated on Eastern Avenue, and it was regarded as one of the show places of the community. Sam Taylor also had a large ranch out near the mouth of Henry Creek where he raised fine horses. One strain was branded with a capital letter "T" and another strain was branded "SI". These horses were celebrated far and wide for their stamina and speed, and some of the strain is still in the country. He finally moved to Ontario, Oregon, where he now is living, a very old man.

One of the blessed characters of the early days was known as "Aunt Bett". She was a relative of Mrs. Sam Taylor and lived with them here many years.

Indians

The Indian in those early days was at home anywhere he chose to pitch his tent, hunt and fish where he pleased. It was an interesting sight to see them move. The braves rode fast horses in front of the procession, the squaws riding behind dragging the tent poles on the ground, little ones behind and before their mother on the ponies. At one time a very fine looking buck all togged out with paint and feathers attracted the attention of an Easterner, who wondered if he had a name. On inquiry he learned much to his amusement, that his name was Rats up the Tail.

Placer Mining

In early days it was a very common sight to see men sitting

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along the bank of the Snake River with pans filled with sand in their hands, sifting out small particles of gold dust; at one time about two thousand men were mining on both sides of the Snake from American Falls to Shoshone. If one of the miners who left this section in 1870 was to return he would seek in vain for some familiar object that would remind him that this was the same sage brush and desert place he had been in many years ago; only two familiar objects might meet his gaze; the eternal lava rocks of the Snake River Canyon and the towering Tetons to the Northeast.

In the very early settlement of Eagle Rock there was no public cemetery. The alley back of South Capital Avenue along the river bank was used a burial place. Six now unknown persons were buried there; several graves were of children; the others were supposed to be those of men who met violent deaths. After a few years some ground was purchased by the town for a burial place where our beautiful cemetery now is.

In January, ¹⁸⁷⁰ ~~1880~~, the name of this town was changed to Idaho Falls so Eagle Rock History ends at that period.

Written October, 1933, by the Historian of the Eagle Rock