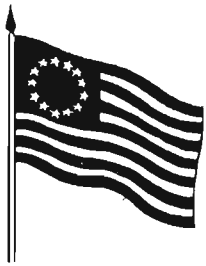


Black Diamond Historical Society

April 1976

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P.O. Box 232
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98010

BDHS Newsletter

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Recollections, Corrections, Articles, Questions, and Comments are welcomed by the Editor.

1976 OFFICERS

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The general aim of the Society are to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the history of Black Diamond and the surrounding towns of Ravensdale, Selleck, Kangly, Elkcoal, Danville, Bayne, Cumberland, Palmer, Navy, Kummer, Franklin, Krain, and Lawson; collectively, the early activity centers of the Green River Coal Field.

In our first few beginning months we have discovered the above aims will

provide us with activities and work for many years to come. Its exciting to see our history come to light, and a great history it is indeed. Our coal mining heritage is unique, and one to be proud of. It is our hope that the Society will reflect this pride to those around us.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A Constitution has been written and adopted, a Charter drawn up and sent to the office of the Secretary of State, and we are now a bonafide Domestic Non-Profit Corporation of the State of Washington.

The town has designated the old Railroad Depot as the town Museum and work is underway to repair and restore the Depot to its original condition. Ted Barner is in charge of this project and work on replacing the foundation of the building is progressing well. The new foundation will be of concrete, and local contractors, society members, and other interested parties have volunteered their time, material, and expertise to complete the work. The Town Council approved the disbursement of \$500 to purchase concrete and other materials needed for the foundation. If anyone is interested in donating time, material, or know how for the Depot restoration, please contact Ted. The more the merrier! We need all the help we can get. The Depot will have to be rewired electrically heated, plumbed, finished inside, wall-papered, and secured before it is ready to house artifacts.

As you are probably aware, judging from the overwhelming success, we have published a 1976 Appointment Calendar containing old Photos of Black Diamond and surrounding areas. The fourth printing is now out, and nearly all of those have been sold. No one would have believed, when the idea



was first conceived, that we would be able to sell 850 calendars. The sales were so successful we plan to make this an annual project. Many great photos have come in already, and the '77 edition, which will be ready for sale by Labor Day, should be even better than this years. Get your order in early so you won't miss out!

Mining lamps, photos, and other artifacts are on display in the display cabinet in the City Hall. Our thanks to those who loaned and donated the articles. Drop by and take a look; you won't be disappointed.

A membership drive is currently underway. Those who joined the society by April 1st were designated Charter Members and their names will be placed on an attractive document which will be framed for display in the museum. There are now 98 annual and 17 lifetime members in the society.

Louis Zumeck, Chuck Holtz, and Carl Steiert have been researching the Oregon Improvement Company papers (this company built the Columbia and Puget Sound Railroad, and owned the Franklin mine and town) at the U. of W., hoping to find when and who built the railroad depot. This information is needed in order to register the Depot as a National Historic Site, another project the Society is currently working on.

An excellent Sony Cassette Recorder, recording tapes, and office material were recently purchased. Plans are being made to record various long time residents of Black Diamond, and other old-timers whose reminiscences will be a valuable contribution to the flavor of the area history. Don't be surprised if Don Mason comes knocking at your door with a recorder slung over his shoulder.

Black Diamond has been designated an Official Bi-Centennial Community. The town purchased two attractive signs so stating, at \$28 each, placed them at the north and south entrances to the town, and they were promptly stolen. If anyone has any knowledge as to the whereabouts of these signs, please contact a Society Officer as their return is highly desired. These signs would be a valuable addition to the Museum as mementos of the town's participation in our Country's 200th anniversary.

Mr. Ed Reitan, President of the White River Historical Society, and his wife were guest speakers at our April meeting. They gave an interesting presentation which included many helpful ideas regarding the managing and stocking of our Museum. The meeting was well attended.

The Society has applied for a \$500 grant from the King County Arts Commission for the purpose of copying and mounting old photos. Prospects for obtaining this grant appear encouraging. Cross your fingers!

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I want to thank everyone who has taken part in the activities of the Society thus far. Special thanks go to those who worked on the Calendar; in compiling, selling, and especially to everyone who received and bought them. We are looking forward to publishing the 1977 edition. This will be a big help toward reaching the Society's goal of restoring the Depot and making it a place of interest and credit to the whole Community. I urge everyone to get involved, and join with us in "digging" up the past. It is proving to be very interesting.....Carl Steiert, Pres.

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

For the cash donations from: the Sons of Italy Lodge, William Petchnik, Mr. & Mrs. Harry LeMire, Joe Dal Santo, and Arthur Windbeckler.
For artifacts, photos and supplies from: Muriel Wing, Max Ferlich, Art Bellack, Dave Garret, Bill Parkin Jr., Jim Manoski, Evan Morris, Mary Grgurich, William Scott, Barbara Hougardy, and Shay's Photo and Printing.

Questions and Answers Department

Do you have any questions regarding local history, families, businesses, etc.? If you will contact the editor by phone or mail, the Society will do their best to research these questions, printing the answers in the newsletter under this title heading. Let's get some questions in so we can have some answers in our next issue!

some answers in our next issue!



★ Population- How Many? ★

I'm sure you've probably heard a hundred different figures quoted regarding the population of Black Diamond. Well, we went to the original census books of King County, located at the U. of W. Graduate Library, and this is what we found: 1885..... Slaughter (Auburn)... 327; Renton... 782; Squak (Issaquah)...596; Newcastle...992; Osceola (Enumclaw)...562; Titusville (Kent)...414; Black Diamond...342. The Black Diamond breakdown is as follows: 331 males and 11 females; 271 white males, 11 white females; 60 Chinese (no sex breakdown); 47 married, 275 single; 51 over 15 years of age could not read or write; 235 males U.S. citizens over 21 years of age, 6 female U.S. citizens over 21 years of age, 91 male aliens over 21 years of age, 1 female alien over 21 years of age, (the broken down figures do not add up correctly in all cases perhaps minors were not included in the count in some instances).

Black Diamond probably reached its peak population in the 1st or 2nd decade of the 1900's. As space and research time permits, census figures will continue to appear in this column.

From The "Sparkler" (Black Diamond School Paper) April 1938

5th grade... Geraldine Sternig and Ann Rogers are out with the mumps. We hope they will be the last ones to have them... Madlyn Conrad.
 6th grade... We are sure most of you went to the operetta on April 11 & 12, & we'll bet you thought the same as the 6th grade!!! We liked the outstanding performance of "Huck Finn" played by Rudy Zinter.
 Freshman... What would happen if: Laverne was a gardenia instead of a "Hawthorne"?; Virginia was a mine instead of a "Mill"?
 Junior..... How many folks forgot to remember the date of April 22? It seems that quite a few did from the looks of the crowd that attended the Junior Prom.....It was overheard that any of the boys who didn't get out and dance were to be punished by the rest.G. Duncan
 Miscellaneous... Observed at a weiner roast this past week... Tom Zumek was having a grand time renewing his old friendship with Diddy Clark (P.S. He ended up by taking Virginia Mills home.)

Photos

Does anyone have, or know of, an old photo of the Catholic Church which also shows the rectory. If so and you would be willing to let the Society copy it, contact Joe Wilkening or Chuck Holtz. We need it for the calendar.

LETTER FROM THE PACIFIC COAST COMPANY PAPERS

Seattle, Wash. April 30, 1907

Mr. H. W. Cannon, President
 No. 10 Wall Street, New York.

Dear Sir:

I wired you Thursday evening, the 25th inst., in regard to explosion at Black Diamond mine but through press of other matters, have neglected to confirm by mail.

The explosion was caused on account of a cave in the old workings which forced a quantity of gas down into the breast where coal is now being extracted. The main cave in the old workings occurred several days ago and did not release or cause any gas. For this reason the men did not apprehend any danger. An additional cave occurred about 6:30 o'clock Thursday morning. The fans were working well and the gas would have been cleared away in a short time but it so happened that the cave occurred just before the men were going to work and their lamps ignited the gas before it could be all forced out by the fresh air. Four men were killed and nine injured. Three of the injured have since died making the total of seven dead and five injured. Mr. Anderson reports the damage to the mine will not exceed \$10.00.

A thorough investigation was made and the coroner's jury exonerated the Company of all blame. The verdict was as follows:

"That the said deceased persons came to their death by an explosion of a pocket of gas liberated by an unavoidable cave and ignited by some miner unknown".

While there is probably no legal liability attached to the Company, we will, as heretofore in such cases, do what may seem reasonable, for the widows and orphans of the deceased employees. It has been our practice in the past to help the widows and children in cases of this kind. Such action has a good effect on the rest of the mine employees, besides saving the Company considerable annoyance and expense in litigation.

Four of the deceased were married men.

Yours truly,

J.C. Ford

Vice-Pres't & General Manager,

Since writing above have a report from Black Diamond to the effect that another man is dying. This will make five married men dead.

Get a load of
these antiques!
It's rumored they
could play ball
too.????



Black Diamond Soccer Team
1941. Bottom row, left
to right: Steve Androsko,
K.O. Spatig, E. Brennan,
Joe Remedo, and Herb Wells.
Center Row: Pete Dearden,
C. Thompson, Jack Hope,
J. Chilcott, W. Sigmund,
F. Manowski, and Ned
Chilcott.
Back Row: T. Zumek, Tony
Foglio, F. Zumek, and L.
Zumek.



HISTORY

The following historical sketch on Mortonville is primarily a condensing and paraphrasing of the article "The Town That Moved 900 Miles", by Donald H. Clark, published in the Sunday Supplement to the Seattle Times, November 30, 1949. Material on early Black Diamond was obtained from miscellaneous sources.....The Editor

Birth and Exodus

It was the year 1859. Jim Cruikshank and his partner Francis Somers were sitting in a San Francisco saloon buying drinks for an old miner, and listening to his story of how coal out-cropped on the south slopes of Mt. Diablo, not too many miles distant from San Francisco.

San Francisco was a boom town. Ships streamed into her sheltered harbor bringing men with thoughts of finding their fortunes in this western land. Coal was in short supply; a commodity in great demand to heat and run the factories and homes rising with ever increasing frequency.

The two partners decided this was their opportunity for riches. They loaded their prospecting outfit onto a Sacramento River Steamboat and headed upriver for New York Landing. From New York Landing in Contra Costa County, located near the present-day town of Pittsburg, the two miners headed south through the desolate hills toward Mt. Diablo, looking for the coal out-croppings as they traveled. They found their coal on the 22nd of December and named the vein "Black Diamond". Samples were taken and sent out from New York Landing and the return results proved the coal to be of excellent steam quality. Somers and Cruikshank then tried to borrow money to open a mine and build a road to the Sacramento River, five miles away, so they could transport their coal to market. Having no success in this venture they soon became discouraged, finally abandoning their find; they didn't even bother to secure a title to their claim.

A few months later a Welsh coal miner by the name of Noah Norton filed on the Black Diamond vein and then managed to convince a group of Martinez business men to invest in his venture. The money was advanced to develop the mine and build a road to the Sacramento River. The Black Diamond coal started moving to the New York Landing in 1861 and that landing's name was then changed to Black Diamond.

Norton built a home close to his mine, and other homes and buildings soon followed as the mining operation expanded. A Hotel, the Black Diamond Exchange was erected. Three more mines were started on the Black Diamond vein and the area expanded further as another vein was discovered. The mining district was named Carbondale.

The settlement which sprang up around the Black Diamond mine became known as Nortonville, after its founder. The town took on the familiar characteristics of a Welsh mining town; permeated with coal dust and smoke. In addition, it was unbearably hot in the summer; conditions suitable only for the hardy. The miners were Welsh though; used to heavy work and arduous living conditions.

The Black Diamond mine flourished, and the operation soon needed expansion beyond the financial limits of the Martinez group. A railroad needed to be built and additional mining equipment and operating capital were needed. Pierre Cornwall, experienced in mining operations and with a fair amount of capital for investment, in partnership with Avlinza Hayward and Darius Ogden Mills, San Francisco financiers who had accumulated vast fortunes supplying the California gold rush, took over sponsorship of the Black Diamond mine. Cornwall managed the mining operations while Mills and Hayward made the financial decisions. A narrow gauge railroad was built, and Cornwall brought in a stern and efficient Welshman, Morgan Morgans, to superintend the mining. Morgans was respected by his workmen and managed the Nortonville operations for over twenty years. The Black Diamond Coal Company was organized and soon became the major producer on the Mt. Diablo field. Nortonville's population increased to 900, mostly Welsh miners from the Pennsylvania fields or direct from Wales.

The Carbondale district also expanded, and other towns grew up around the area. By the middle 1870's the district population was near 10,000. Nortonville and Somersville, a few miles distant, were the largest towns in the district. They shared the same field to bury their dead.

Nortonville was not without its share of grief. A fire destroyed the mine hoist works and engine house in October 1874. This same fire would have destroyed the town had it not been for the combined and determined efforts of the townspeople in bringing the fire under control. Eight miners were killed, six disabled. Diphtheria and Typhoid then struck the town simultaneously and few were the families who didn't lose at least one child.

By the late 1870's the Carbondale district was starting to run out of coal. The remaining coal was of poor quality, and the high quality coal from British Columbia and Washington Territory (Newcastle and Squak) were threatening the Carbondale market.

The Black Diamond Coal Company owners had heard reports from Washington of the existence of new high quality coal fields south of Seattle in the Green River region. Faced with the decision to give up mining altogether or transfer to the better coal fields in Washington, the company chose the latter. They amended the company charter to allow mining outside the Mt. Diablo area, and in late 1879 or early 1880 Victor Tull was sent north to explore for new coal fields. In July 1880 he discovered high quality Green River coal. After extensive tests, the company sent B.B. Jones, in the fall of 1881, to do more prospecting in the area. He okayed the field discovered by Tull and sent mine crews in to clear trails and begin developing a mine. In April 1882 Tull sent 800 pounds of coal from the new mine, called the Black Diamond (#14), to San Francisco for further testing. The results were so good Cornwall himself headed north to inspect his interests. He soon realized he had one of the most valuable mines on the coast, if a railroad could be built.

In 1882, Villard, who controlled the Oregon Improvement Company (O.I.C.) held a virtual monopoly over northwest transportation. As a result of a survey Villard had ordered of his Western Washington operations, the Green River coal field had been mapped; the value of the new McKay vein was confirmed. Villard wanted to extend his railroad, the Columbia & Puget Sound, from Renton to his land holdings in section (19), Franklin. Due to the rapid expansion of Villard's Northwest operations, the O.I.C. suffered from financial instability. Because of insufficient funds and a legal battle with the Northern Pacific for land in the Franklin area, the railroad construction was delayed for almost two years.

Seattle interests wanted that city to be the shipping terminal for the Green River Coal. To assure this they offered a \$100,000 subsidy to the O.I.C. to complete the rail extension to the coal fields. Cornwall wanted a railroad built as soon as possible as the Mt. Diablo field was declining fast. With the Seattle money and a \$50,000 advance from Cornwall, to be paid back through reduced shipping rates, the O.I.C. was able to complete construction of the narrow gauge Cedar River extension to Black Diamond. The rail reached the Black Diamond mine on December 12, 1884. With the delivery of large mining equipment made possible, the Black Diamond mine began large scale operations, shipping the first commercial coal in April 1885. The Nortonville operations could now be closed.

In the spring of 1885 superintendent Morgans took his top man north to take over operations of the Black Diamond mine. Most of the men left their families in California until housing could be built and money saved for the passage. By the end of 1885 the two to three hundred people had sailed north to their new home. Black Diamond was born; the exodus complete.

The Society meets in Black Diamond at City Hall, 7:30 P.M., the second Monday of each month, June and July the exception. The photos for the '77 calendar will be selected at the May meeting. See you there.



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