

Manufacturing in Cottage Grove

Most are aware the economic history of mining, lumber, and agriculture, but Cottage Grove also has its fair share of manufacturing.

Match Factory (yes it ends as you would suspect)

Plans for the Match Factory were first mentioned in the Leader on January 10, 1908 with the announcement that Jason E. Fox was starting the factory in Cottage Grove on the east end of town. He expected to employ 10 to 12 individuals paying each an average of \$2/day. He believed once it was running at full capacity, they would produce 40 gross a day.



A Match Block

Newspapers reported machinery was being installed for the new match factory in March of 1908. It would be another month, before the first blocks of matches would be produced. At the time, a block of matches was a block of wood crosscut, with the base left intact and the cut ends treated. Match sticks were broken off the full block to be used.

It may not be a surprise that the match factory was destroyed in a fire. A date for the fire was not found but was first reported in the May 5th edition of the Western Oregon Newspaper under the heading "Match Factory is Destroyed". The fire started shortly after the staff left at noon, probably for lunch. The cause of the fire seems to have been as simple as an ember from the furnace that landed in the rafters. While not the cause of the fire, the chemicals used to make the matches feed the flames causing the wooden building to burn fast. The factory employed 15 people at the time of the fire and the business had no insurance. Mr. Fox stated that 400 cases of completed matches were shipped that morning before the fire, but another 400 cases were destroyed in the fire. The factory was never rebuilt.



The match factory after the fire, you can still see smoke rising.

Cottage Grove Manufacturing Company

The Cottage Grove Manufacturing Company focused on furniture and was well known for custom made products. Descriptions found of products include a beautiful mantle board with French plate glass mirror, and mission style mirror stand seven feet high.



The company was located on the corner of Main and what is now highway 99, where The Covered Bridge Brewing Group and Little Ceasars are today. Business seemed to be going well in 1918. On April 19 the Cottage Grove Sentinel reported remodeling plans.

“Manufacturing Co. is Remodeling its Plant: Improvements will make the mill one of most modern of kind on the coast. The Cottage Grove Manufacturing company has commenced extensive improvements to its plant. The additions to the main building on the south and east have been torn away and the main building will be extended to take in this extra ground space. All the machinery will be moved and rearranged and sufficient new machinery added to make the plant one of the most modern of its kind on the coast. All machinery will be electrically driven. The company already has on hand orders to keep it busy several months and Manager S.R. Smith thinks that work on these can be started within three weeks.”

The company was a casualty of the great depression and the buildings were dismantled around 1944. There is one remaining piece of the company, the cement wigwam burner in Trailhead park. Built in 1917, the Cottage Grove Manufacturing Company installed it to burn wood waste.



Early companies enjoyed easy access to lumber, waterpower, and the railroad for shipping. While manufacturing has never been the top industry in Cottage Grove, it has been a long-standing source of local jobs. That tradition remains today with companies like Kimwood, Pacific Yurts, and PacTech.

Discussion Points

1. Both companies described used a lot of wood to create their products, why would Cottage Grove be a good place for them?
2. Do you think manufacturing will ever be the largest industry in Cottage Grove? Explain why or why not?

Vocabulary

Gross: an amount equal to twelve dozen; 144

Intact: not damaged or impaired in any way; complete

Mission Style: design that emphasizes simple horizontal and vertical lines and flat panels that highlight the grain of the wood

Sufficient: enough; adequate

