

FALL CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 293, Fall City, WA 98024

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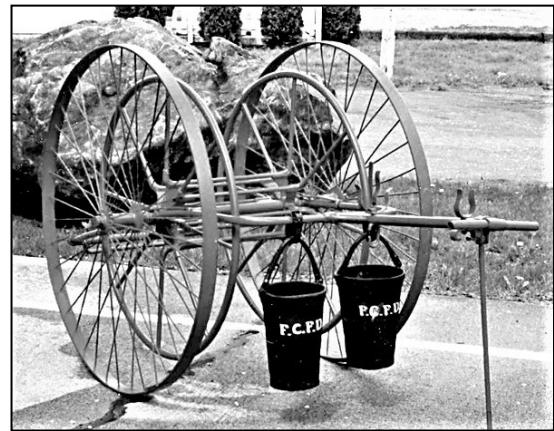
The Beaver Lake Fire of 1939

Wildfire season is nothing new, and at times fire has been a tool in crop management and clearing areas for hunting grounds. However, in 1939 a rancher's fern patch fire near Beaver Lake almost reached Fall City. A partial report from HistoryLink.org, Essay 8121:

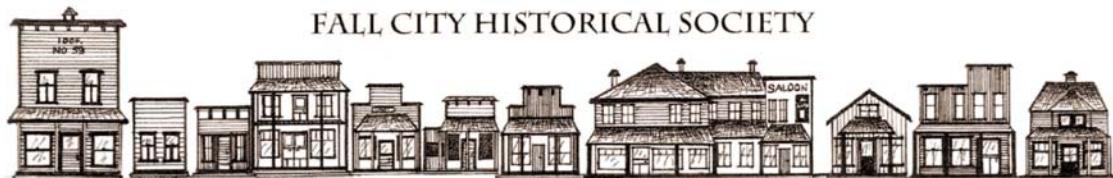
"Between April 16 and 18, 1939, a massive brush fire burns more than 35 square miles in King County, on and east of the Sammamish Plateau. It is one of the largest brush fires (if not the largest) to strike King County during the 1930s. Volunteers from the Issaquah Rural Volunteer Fire Department, county road crews, mine crews, crews from the Washington Forest Fire Association, and Works Progress Administration as well as 30 Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees from Camp Sultan raced to the scene to fight the fire. By Sunday night at least 12 square miles had burned, and with no end in sight, firefighters stayed up fighting the fire all that night and into Monday, April 17. The unusually warm weather continued, with temperatures again approaching 80 degrees. And by Monday the winds had changed again and now blew from the west at about 10 to 15 mph, sending a wall of flame back toward Fall City and Preston. At one point firefighters found themselves surrounded by towering curtains of flame and had to fight their way out. Their problems were exacerbated when they found they did not have enough water to fight such an enormous conflagration and were left to carefully pick their battles. Still, by Monday night it looked as though firefighters were finally getting the upper hand. The winds eased and slightly cooler, moister air was on tap for Tuesday. But shortly after sunrise on Tuesday morning, the westerly winds kicked up again and reignited the fire for a grand finale. The fire again raced east, crossing the Redmond-Fall City highway for the first time and briefly threatening Fall City before firefighters were finally able to quell it for good at about 10 a.m., three or four miles west of Fall City."

As the Fall City Fire Dept. was not formed until 1946, at this time firefighting was limited to available volunteers and two hand-drawn hose carts. The town was alerted to a fire by the telephone operator initiating a siren on top of the building and ringing all phones. Even though the Fall City Water Dept began laying pipe and installing fire hydrants in town in 1924, this system was not always successful as when, in 1931, Bonell's Store burned to the ground.

The Beaver Lake Fire, as it was informally called, is not often mentioned in most King County histories, probably because there were no casualties and property damage was minimal- only two homes and a few outbuildings were destroyed. Quite different from today!



**Hand Drawn Hose Cart
King County Fire District 27**



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Saw Mill Tour → Sept 18, 2022

Join us on Sunday, Sept. 18 from 3:30pm - 4:30pm for our popular Sawmill Tour

We are excited to hear an interesting presentation on the history of the Isackson Sawmill from Duane Isackson, whose father, Henry Isackson, founded the sawmill in 1936. In addition, Duane will provide a demonstration! This is a great family event. There is parking available, but carpooling from Fall City would be a good idea. Drive toward Redmond on Highway 202 approximately 12 miles, to the traffic light by the gas station at NE 244th. Turn left on 244th, and the sawmill is visible from the road on the right side.



2022 Pop Up History Museum

Sept 20 - Oct 1 Fall City Library

Come Explore Our New Exhibits in the Meeting Room

More details coming soon on our Facebook page

Support for our work from King County Heritage 4Culture is gratefully acknowledged.