

Pilot Rock, Oregon



Named for a large bluff of basalt near the community. The post office was established in December 1868. Andrew Sturtevant was the first postmaster. The town was platted in 1876.

Pilot Rock Beginnings

Gold was discovered in the Blue Mountains in late 1861. This created a rush gold miners to the area. Three men arrived that winter. "Hookey" Burke, a freight hauler, decided to spend the winter at what is now Pilot Rock. Andrew Jackson Sturtevant, pushing a wheelbarrow towards the gold fields decided to stop there in 1862. And finally, John Alta Sylvester who thought he would cater to the wintering miners. Andrew Sturtevant was the most successful of the three, founding Pilot Rock.

Sturtevant, was born in England. He arrived in America and headed westward arriving in Salem in 1861.

He obtained a position as a teacher but decided that this was not the life for him. He headed for the Blue Mountains, and into the history books.

Imagine pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with all your worldly goods all the way from Salem to Eastern Oregon, via the trail along the Columbia River! Working along the way or living off the land, Sturtevant followed the path of the wagon trains to arrive at Birch Creek to join Burke and Sylvester.

While Burke was intent on establishing Mt. Pleasant, and Sylvester was developing Alta, Sturtevant set about platting Pilot Rock. In the end, it was Pilot Rock that ended up as a stagecoach stop and then to be designated as a post office. Much of Pilot Rock's town proper is a result of Sturtevant's work at platting the town site, acquiring land that he donated for the school as well as the Methodist Episcopal Church and parsonage in 1883. He served twice as County Superintendent of Schools, and served as a member of the school board. Pilot Rock has the distinction of having School District No. 1 of Umatilla County.

The town was platted in 1876. It was incorporated in 1903 and was re-incorporated in 1912, with a new charter drawn up to conform to the Oregon statutes.

Bibliography List

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"East Oregonian-Century Old Umatilla County"

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Pilot Rock has a special place in my heart because of my best friend Margaret. She was married to Clark Berkely Sturtevant, son of Lowell Sturtevant, descendants of Andrew Jackson Sturtevant. They met and married in Wrangell, Alaska (Lowell was a barber there) and that's where they lived happily ever after until Berk passed away.

Umatilla County, Oregon 1922 PILOT ROCK

Back in the early days of Oregon, when our now prosperous and wealthy county was only a small part of a vast, unexplored, unbroken and unsettled West, even then the cry had gone out that here in our beautiful Blue Mountains, on to the south of us and bid in the bosom of Mother Earth, there was gold in abundance, which could be had for the finding. And what will men not dare for gold?

And so we see them come, by twos sometimes, but often one lonely man on a pony and leading another pony which carried a pack topped off with pick, shovel and gold pan. No paved road in those days to lead on, for the citizens had not yet voted bonds for roads. There was not a fence or a trail to break the monotony of waving bunchgrass except an occasional path made by roaming wild animals.

Always in the far distance were those fascinating Blue Mountains, breathing of romance and mystery and beckoning on as plainly as though they had spoken the words, "Seek and ye shall find."

But the distance was far and as these explorers traveled over the plateau that is south of the present site of Pendleton they grew accustomed to watch for a guide that never failed them, R huge cliff of rock that can be seen for miles as it towers heavenward just at the junction of two creeks now known as East and West Birch Creek. This rock was such a true pilot to those who passed that way that it came to be called Pilot Rock. Under its shadow the weary pilgrim found rest and water for himself and beast and here finally these prospectors would bring their families for temporary homes, while they went farther into the hills in their search for gold. This soon necessitated a school, and Pilot Rock is proud of the distinction of having School District Number One of Umatilla County.

The town for many years was transient, but for the past twenty years its progress has been unwavering. The opening up of the resources of the country around and to the south has gone steadily on, and the three large

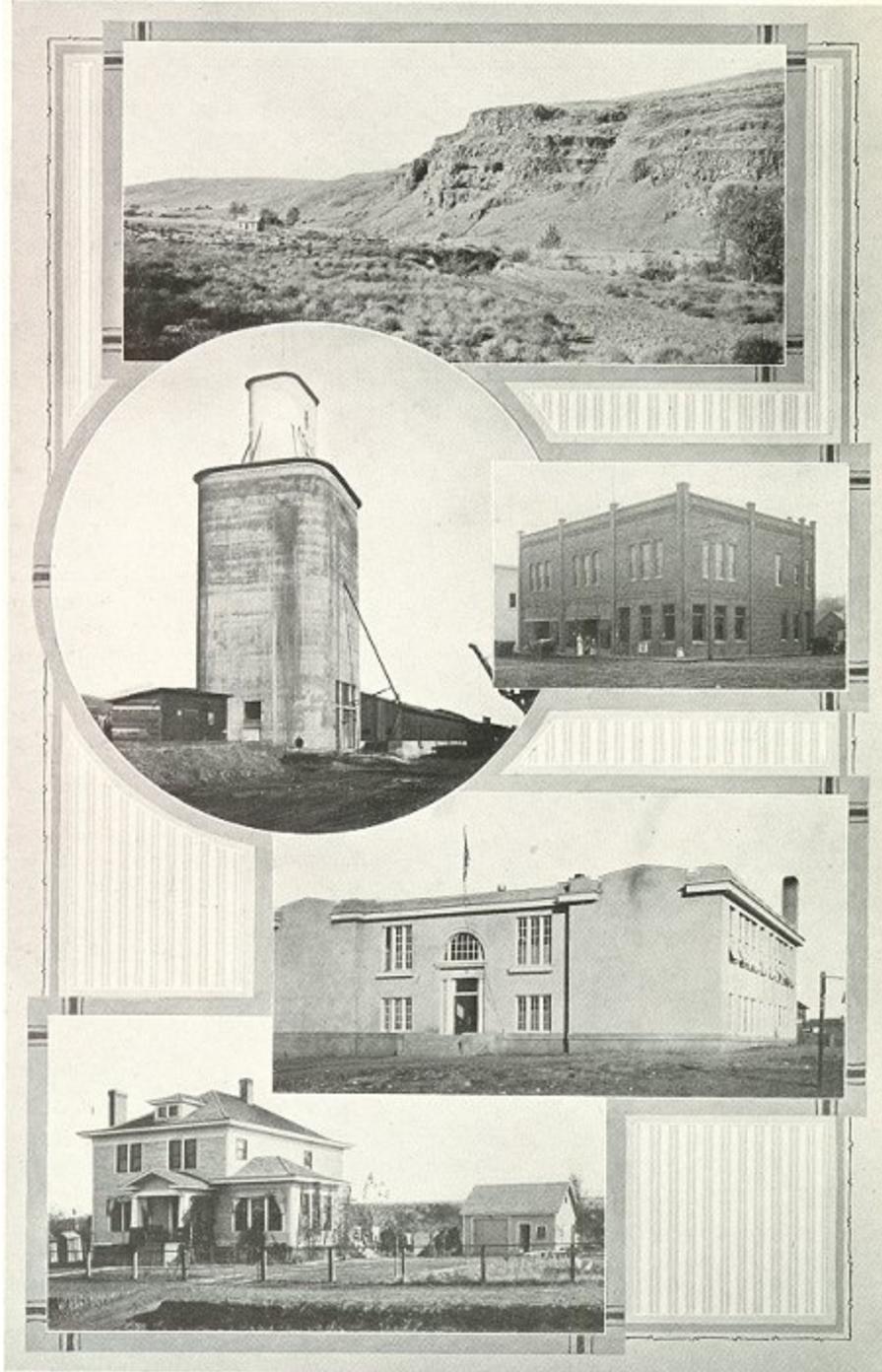
warehouses at Pilot Rock attest to the fruits of honest labor. Wheat, cattle, wool, sheep, dairy products, fruit, poultry, and lumber are shipped in large quantities from Pilot Rock, which is the terminus of the railroad for the

south end of the county. This also makes Pilot Rock the distributing point for many miles south, east and west for merchandise and supplies. To meet the demand thus created, the town has three prosperous general merchandise stores, one hardware store, one drug store, a bank, a hospital, a hotel, three garages, a lumber yard, a confectionery, a moving picture theater, two lodge halls, a newspaper, and a branch County Library. Her schools are among the best, two imposing buildings standing in conspicuous elevations on two sides of the town. One of these, the High School, was built in 1919 and represents the south end of the county, which united and formed Union High School District No. 2.

Pilot Rock has one good church building, where services are faithfully carried on in the Presbyterian faith.

The elevation of the town is 1,817 feet. The rainfall averages 15.08 inches. Close to 1,000,000 pounds of wool and nearly 300,000 bushels of grain pass through her warehouses each year. She also shipped out to the markets of the world during the past year 286 loads of livestock, 206 of which were beef.

Her citizens are worthy heirs of those sturdy pioneers of the early days and combine their sterling qualities of courage, perseverance and integrity with the progress of the present day civilization.



Pilot Rock

Historical landmark from which Pilot Rock derived its name

Pilot Rock Elevator

A real home First Bank of Pilot Rock

Union High School