

BACK IN TIME

Some old gas stations

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

A few years ago I was asked if I remembered the old gas service station on top of Jacksonville Hill. For some reason, I do not. Lorna Erskin, a Forest Creek friend, told me about one being there in the 1930s and that Mr. Ed Demer had a photo of it. Well, it did not take me long to contact him and he kindly let me have a copy (top photo). He remembered it quite well because his grandparents lived across the road from it.

I also found that Maud Pool, at the time the Applegate news correspondent for the Medford *Mail Tribune*, wrote in a March 12, 1930, article: "New Station Going in near Applegate. Seeing an opportunity to serve the tourist and vacationists who flock to the Applegate in the summertime, T. S. Cady is preparing to open a service station, with free picnic grounds near his home at the summit of Jacksonville hill. Construction of the station which will be operated in connection with the Union Oil Company is well underway, and Mr. Cady expects to be ready for business in a short time. The new concern, which will be named The Summit Station, will include a line of lunch goods, and the inviting picnic grounds among the pines at the rear of the building will make it a favorite with the autoists. Mr. Cady is assisted with the carpenter work by I.E. Clapp. Mr. Cady, who has lived here since coming from Idaho a year ago, says he thinks Southern Oregon a fine place, and he is interested in the future progress and development of this country."

Now my research began for some other old gas stations in our area. In looking through John and Marguerite Black's book, *Ruch and the Upper Applegate*

Valley, I found that the Ruch store had a gas pump. In 1896 Cap Ruch built a cabin/store/post office on ten acres of land between Applegate and Uniontown Roads, now Applegate and Upper Applegate Roads. About 1915 he expanded the store building and a gas pump was installed in the front.

Then competition started in 1928 when his nearby neighbors, Chester and Martin McDonough, built the Sunnyside Gas Station with a lube and oil change pit. They sold tires, tubes and other automobile supplies, and customers had convenient restrooms on the lower level. They added a stock of groceries some years later.

There were gas pumps at the Copper Store, which was built in 1934 by Mr. and Mrs. Crow. Many people wondered how this business could survive in such a remote area. But it did. Many people just took a Sunday drive up the Applegate to stop and visit with the locals there and have a soda pop or a beer and buy things for a picnic. It would probably still be there if the Applegate Dam had not been built, but now that store location is at the bottom of the lake.

I was told there were gas pumps sometime in the early 1940s at the small building by the McKee Bridge. The station didn't last long and the building was later used by the Upper Applegate Lions Club for their meetings. The Upper Applegate Store (now McKee Bridge Store) had some gas pumps later but they were discontinued when store owner Willard Wilson stopped using them.

Also, there was a gas station built in 1947 at Applegate across the road from the Pernoll's store (now the Applegate Store and Gas Station). Owners were Edward

Kubli and his son, Norman.

I have no idea how many more early day gas pumps sprang up here and there in our area, but I did find an interesting photo of some in Jacksonville. There were two pumps on the sidewalk in front of the Masonic Lodge building on California Street (middle photo by Margaret LaPlante), and a 1925 photo shows a gas station at the end of California and 5th Street built by Mr. W.A. Childers and his son-in-law Mr. Leonard McKee (bottom photo).

Old gas pumps are now considered antiques and are interesting to see in collections. They bring back nostalgia of those bygone days when you could fill your tank for a few cents and get away from the farm for a day of relaxation.

Evelyn Williams with Janeen Sathre
541-899-1443

