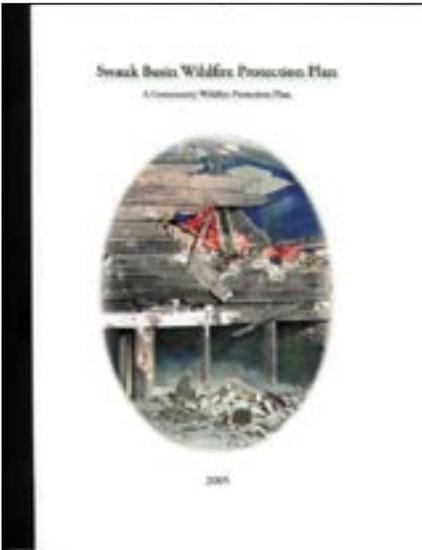


Swauk Basin History

Gold Created A Community



2006



Swauk Basin Wildfire Protection Plan. A wildfire protection plan was created for the Swauk Basin under the authority contained in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003. It provides for coordinating homeowner's activities with those of county, state and federal government agencies in reducing risk from wildfires.

Scanned picture by Wes Engstrom

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Cover - Miners And Flume. The picture, taken about 1900 near Liberty, shows how gold was recovered from stream beds when there was only hand tools to get the job done. Dirt, gravel and gold was shoveled into the flume where water then washed the dirt and gravel away leaving the heavier gold behind in the riffles in the bottom of the flume. None of the miners in the picture have been identified.

Picture by Pautzke in the Wes and Carole Engstrom collection.

History and Community

This Swauk Basin history was written as part of the *Swauk Basin Wildfire Protection Plan — 2005*. It is Appendix A in the plan. It is being reproduced here for those interested in Swauk Basin history but not necessarily the wildfire protection plan.

At one time Liberty, Lauderdale and Swauk Prairie were a community. People living in the area shared common problems—poor roads, little money, little entertainment and long rides to town, and they looked out for each other.

Over the years, as transportation became more efficient, that sense of community diminished as people came to identify with larger, distant communities. People no longer shared common problems.

The threat of wildfires presents all homeowner as well as the land managers in the Basin with a common problem, and solving that problem calls for establishing a sense of community. Only now the “community” needs to include government agencies.

Besides the threat of wildfire, homeowners and government agencies also share a common history, and that common history provides a starting point in creating a sense of community where neighbors help neighbors.

A look at history will help in finding common ground and in establishing a sense of community.



Historic Liberty Town site. Liberty town site is in a 17 acre historic district in the center of the Swauk basin. It was named Meaghersville until 1912 when the post office moved from old Liberty and Meaghersville came to be called Liberty.

Photo in the Wes Engstrom collection



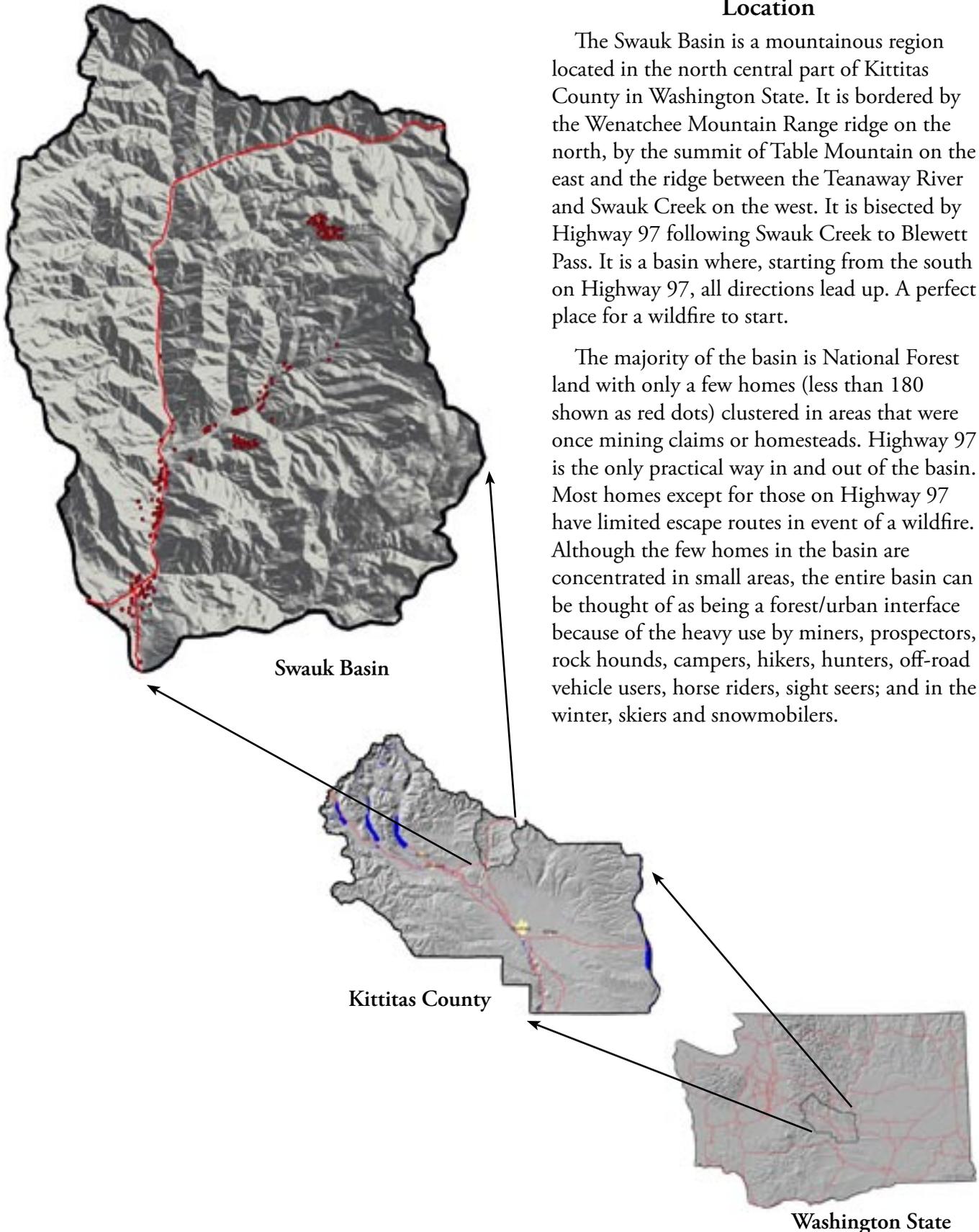
Liberty Fire Hall. The community hall, still under construction in the summer of 2004, was used for the initial public meetings to discuss the fire plan.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

Location

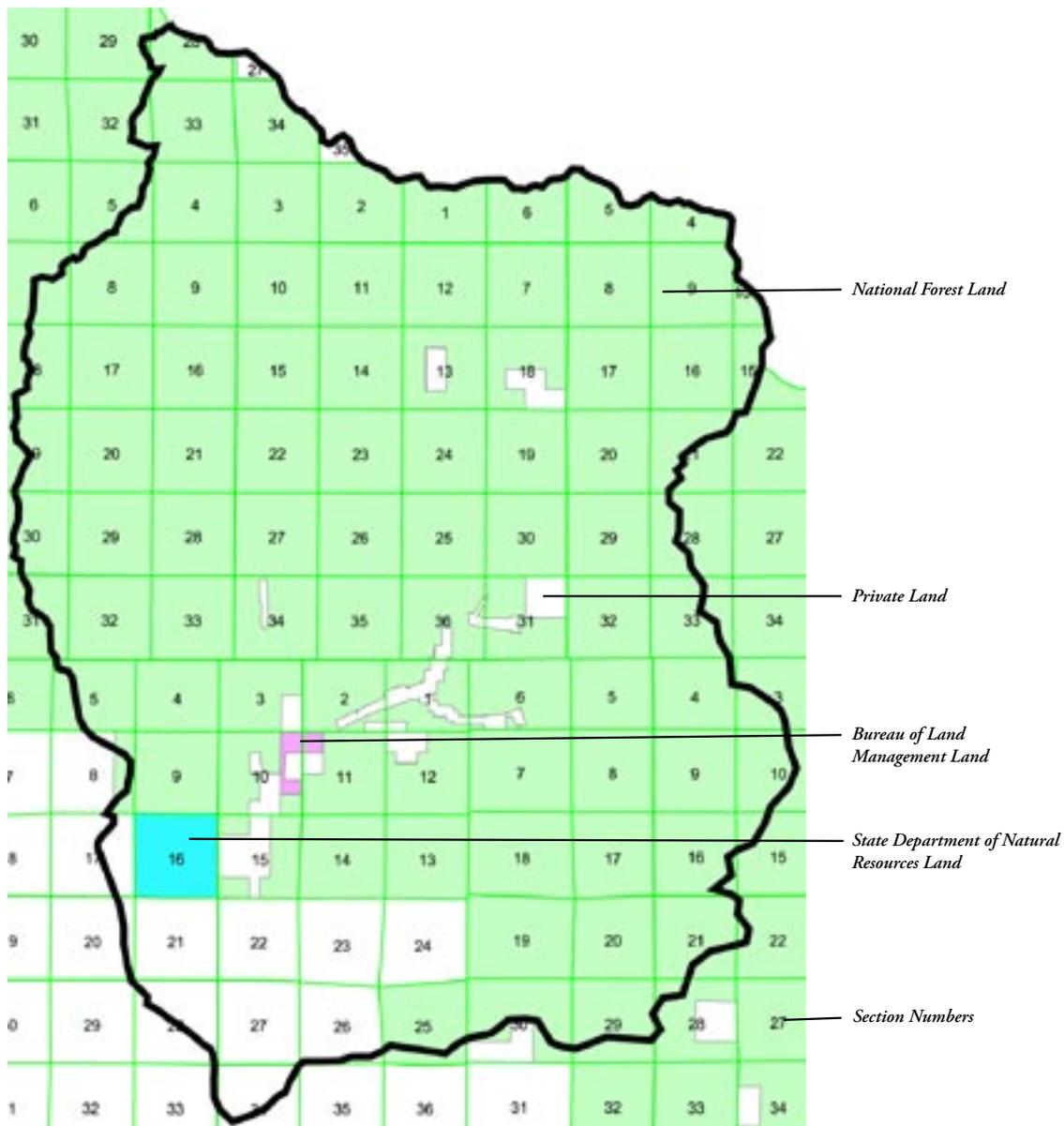
The Swauk Basin is a mountainous region located in the north central part of Kittitas County in Washington State. It is bordered by the Wenatchee Mountain Range ridge on the north, by the summit of Table Mountain on the east and the ridge between the Teanaway River and Swauk Creek on the west. It is bisected by Highway 97 following Swauk Creek to Blewett Pass. It is a basin where, starting from the south on Highway 97, all directions lead up. A perfect place for a wildfire to start.

The majority of the basin is National Forest land with only a few homes (less than 180 shown as red dots) clustered in areas that were once mining claims or homesteads. Highway 97 is the only practical way in and out of the basin. Most homes except for those on Highway 97 have limited escape routes in event of a wildfire. Although the few homes in the basin are concentrated in small areas, the entire basin can be thought of as being a forest/urban interface because of the heavy use by miners, prospectors, rock hounds, campers, hikers, hunters, off-road vehicle users, horse riders, sight seers; and in the winter, skiers and snowmobilers.

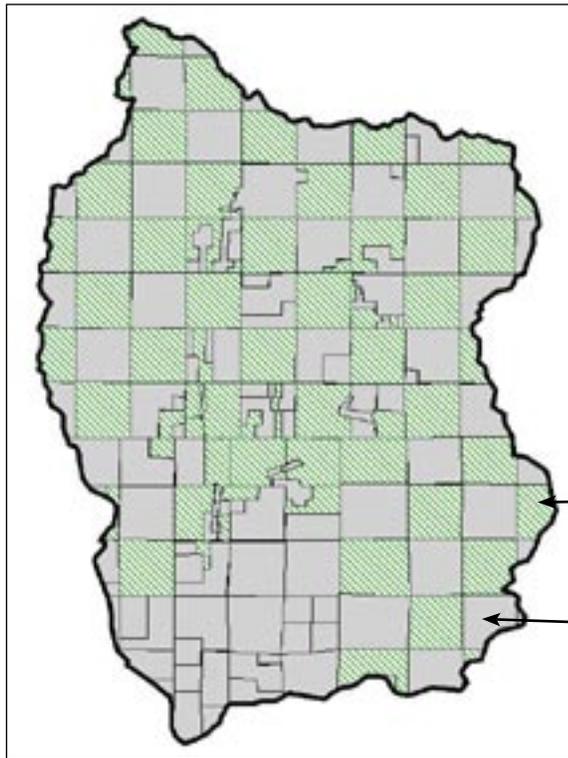


Land Ownership

The Swauk Basin includes just over 53,000 acres, ninety percent being National Forest, the balance divided into Bureau of Land Management, State Department of Natural Resources and private ownership. Most of the private land is owned by U.S. Timberlands. The remaining private land was originally patented mining claims or homesteads now divided into small residential lots, mostly less than five acres. The entire Basin is forested except for small clearings along creek bottoms. There is sheep grazing on the National Forest lands and cattle grazing on some of the private timberlands.



Comparison of Land Ownership—Past and Present

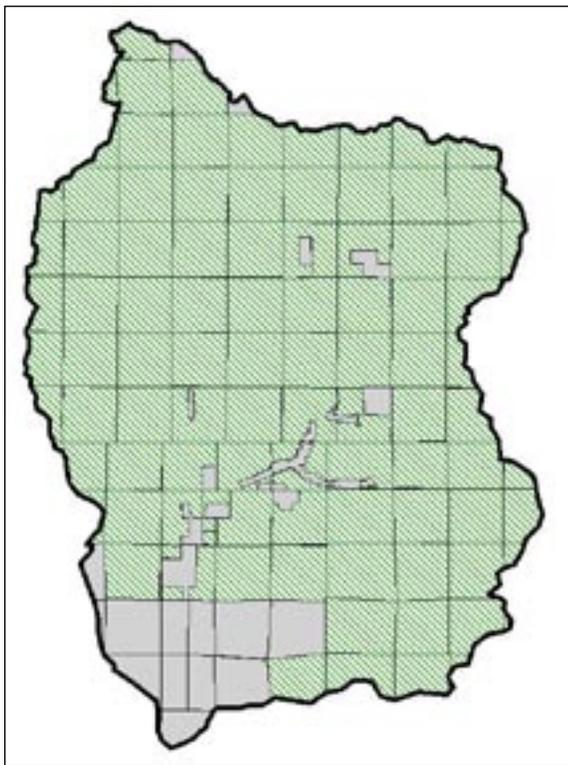


Land Ownership in 1934. In the late 1890's half of the land, all odd numbered sections, were granted to the Northern Pacific Railroad. There had also been homesteads and patented mining claims leaving only about 40 % of the land managed by the Forest Service.

Map based on Metsker's Atlas of Kittitas County, Washington, dated 1934

Government Land

Private Land



Land Ownership in 2004. Most of the private land in the Basin has been acquired by the Forest Service through exchange and donation.

Map based on Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State Department of Natural Resources and County Assessor data

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Liberty Cafe on Highway 97. The Liberty Cafe is one of only two commercial businesses in the Swauk Basin. The other is the Minerl Springs Resort on property leased from the Forest Service.

Photo by Wes Engstrom



Liberty Mountain Development. Liberty Mountain is a development of vacation homes on the old Al Nicholson homestead three miles above Liberty. There is no power or telephone service to development.

Photo by Wes Engstrom



Wenatchee National Forest Gate. The discovery of gold in 1873 initially had a great influence on the history of the Swauk Basin, but it was the formation of the Wenatchee National Forest 35 years later in 1908 that has had the greatest impact on Swauk history.

Photo from the Fred Krueger collection.

Swauk Basin History

by Wes Engstrom

The Swauk Basin has changed in the last one hundred thirty years since it was first settled. The forest has gone from an open park-like stand of ponderosa pine to a dense jumble of vegetation that only looks pretty, to some, from a distance. The ownership of the land has gone from 100 percent U.S. government to 40 percent back to 90 percent U.S. government. The government's attitude toward management of the land has gone from promoting the development of its resources to stopping its resource use and converting the land to a forest sanctuary for wildlife. Throughout the one hundred thirty years the one constant has been the recreational use of the land and a certain fondness by the people in the Kittitas Valley for the area. The result of this history is a Basin with a small amount of private property with a handful of full-time residents surrounded by a National Forest that is ready to burn.

The time line for the area is as follows:

- In the 1870's gold was discovered which spurred the development of the entire Kittitas Valley.
- In the 1880's half the land (odd number sections) was given to a railroad.
- In the 1890's gold miners built a wagon road through the Basin, it became Highway 97.
- In 1908 the Wenatchee National Forest was created managing forty percent of the land.
- In the 1910's homesteading was encouraged at the expense of mining.
- In the 1930's logging was extensive on both private and public land.
- In the 1940's the Forest Service began acquiring private land.
- In the 1950's and 1960's the Forest Service eliminated non-conforming uses.
- In the 1960's and 1970's ownership of the Liberty town-site was challenged.
- In the 1990's President Clinton's forest plan created a sanctuary for the spotted owl.

Today the challenge is bringing conflicting interests together to keep the forest from burning.



Liberty Town Site About 1900. The hillside in the background shows the open nature of the forest 100 years ago. The large building in the middle background was the community hall. The two story building in the foreground was the hotel, it is still standing and in use as a home.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection



Liberty Hillside Today. The hillside is the same as shown in the 1900 picture above. The open nature of the forest has been filled in with dense ladder fuels. Individual old trees on the ridge line seen in the 1900 photo can still be identified.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

Gold Discovery Creates a Community

The Swauk Mining District formed in 1873 after gold was discovered in Swauk Creek. Unlike many mining camps, Liberty did not boom and then bust. Instead it rose and fell, certainly, but did not become a ghost town. It instead became a living ghost town. The discovery of gold was at a gravel bar a few hundred feet north of the present Liberty Road turnoff from Highway 97. There are many stories about the event. One of the more colorful is from *Valley of The Strong*, A KIT Publication, Yakima, Washington. It is as follows:



“Old Liberty” in 1912. The Swauk mining camp came to be called “Liberty” when the post office was established in 1892. The camp and post office no longer exists.

Photo courtesy of Kittitas County Historical Museum

*“If I went home this filthy,” said **D. Y. Borden**, one of a party of prospectors riding through the Swauk Creek area. “I’d be thrown out of the house. So let’s make camp at the creek and boil our clothes before heading home.” “Good idea,” agreed **Tom Goodwin**, who was riding near him. “And while we’re at it, we can do a little panning.”*

*“Forget the panning,” growled **H. R. Beck**, “I’m sick of finding nothing but sand. But I’m all for boiling the clothes.”*

*This was in 1873 and the men were returning from an unsuccessful prospecting venture in the Stuart Range and down Ingalls Creek. In the party were the Goodwin brothers, Beck, **George Mycock**, Borden and several others—all tired and discouraged.*

*After starting a fire, the men settled down to eating a lunch of beans and biscuits before starting the laundry operation. **Benton Goodwin**, who was deaf and mute, finally went down to the creek with a pair of buckets.*

On dipping the first bucket into the creek, he happened to loosen a stone with its rim. After a swirl of muddy water had cleared, Benton saw something glistening on the streambed. Plunging his hand into the cold water, he pulled out a handful of gravel—and there, nestling in the dark gray gravel was a small gold nugget.

Benton’s heart started pounding. Six years earlier he had been prospecting with a group in this same spot on the creek. He had panned out a minute trace of gold, but the rest of the group had laughed it off as too insignificant to bother with. They had humorously named the spot “Discovery Bar.” But here was proof that there really was more than a mere speck of gold in Swauk Creek.

Excitedly, he popped the nugget into his mouth for safekeeping, filled the two buckets and struggled up the bank. At the top, with a bucket in each hand, he broke into a run, with his cargo of water sloshing and splashing around him.

As he burst, wide-eyed, into the camp, the others thought surely a bear must be after him. Several grabbed for their rifles and crouched ready for a shot at the beast.

Benton, mumbling incoherently, set down the now half-empty buckets, grabbed his brother by an arm and pulled the rifle from his hands.

“What’s the matter with you?” Tom yelled.

Raising a hand to his mouth, Benton spit the nugget into it, and extended the palm for his brother’s inspection. It took several long seconds before Tom could close his suddenly gaping mouth—and yell:

“Yahoo! Benton’s found a nugget!”

Within an hour they had more than \$5 worth of coarse gold and a nugget worth more than \$100. All thought of returning home vanished, and during the few days at Discovery Bar they took out more than \$600 in gold. By then, however, their supplies had run out, and they were forced to head for civilization—though vowing as they rode never to reveal the location of their strike. Somehow, though, the secret did get out, and a rush was on to the Swauk district.

The resulting mining camp on the Swauk developed into one of the earliest communities in Kittitas County. It was complete with a post office, school, stage lines, stores and a community center. It was a place that became famous for its Saturday night dances. Most important, however, was that it didn’t develop as a rip-roaring mining camp but instead as a community for families.

Two Mining Camps Are Named Liberty

There were only two mining camps within the Swauk Mining District, and they both were named Liberty. Not at the same time but in sequence. One still exists and the other is just a memory. The first mining camp was in the area where gold was first discovered on Swauk Creek. That is the area where the present Liberty Road connects with Highway 97. In April of 1892 a Post Office was established which the locals wanted to call the Swauk Post Office. However, the postal authorities did not approve the name because there already was a Sauk Post Office on the Sauk River and it would be confusing to also have a Swauk Post Office. The story goes that the postmaster, “Bull” Nelson (**Gustaf Nilson**), had invited some of the miners into the new post office and told them “You’re at liberty here boys, so set down, lay down or do as you please.” Later, when the postal inspector asked for a name different from Swauk, the boys suggested “Liberty.” Thus Liberty, the name of their camp, represents freedom and miners like freedom.

The second mining camp was on Williams Creek about two miles east of the first camp. By 1895 most of the activity had moved to this camp called Meaghersville. It was pronounced “Mearsville.” In July of 1912 the Post Office was moved to Meaghersville and instead of changing the name of the Post Office, the name of the camp gradually changed to Liberty. From old photographs it appears the “Liberty Post Office” sign was simply taken off the building in old Liberty and put on a store in Meaghersville. There wasn’t any formal paper filed anywhere changing the name. Map makers have been confused ever since, and some state maps still show Liberty on Highway 97 and Meaghersville where present Liberty is. The last structure in the original Liberty location, the Chic Cafe, burned in 1962 and now no trace of the old camp remains. The



Remains of Meagher’s Cabin in Liberty Historic District. Thomas Meagher is credited with finding the old gold bearing channel of Williams Creek. The mining camp was named Meaghersville before it became the present Liberty town site.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

Liberty Post Office closed in 1951. Mail is now handled through the Cle Elum Post Office.

Three Types of Gold Mining in the District

Most mining districts have two types of gold mining, placer and lode. The Swauk Mining District has three, placer and lode gold mining in the usual ways and, in addition, pocket mining for wire crystalline gold. Gold crystals occur only in half dozen places in the world. Specimens from the Swauk Mining District are among the best and are found in mineral collections throughout the world. Placer gold is recovered by washing gravel, lode gold by digging ore from a vein in rock and grinding it to free the gold, and wire crystalline gold is found by following seams through the rock to find pockets of gold. When the pockets are found, nothing more needs to be done to recover the gold. Usually just wash the mud off, occasionally soft calcite needed to be dissolved to free the specimen. The largest nuggets in the State came from the Swauk District. Some were on display at the Field Museum of History in Chicago. Wire crystalline gold from the Swauk is on display at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington DC.



Wire Crystalline Gold. Liberty is well known throughout the world for its rare wire crystalline gold. It can be found in most major mineral collections and miners still search diligently for the specimens.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

Last Innovation to the Ancient Arrastra Was In Liberty

The Swauk Mining District has a unique type arrastra. Some form of an arrastra has been used during the pioneer stage of mining in just about every part of the world. Gold ore is reduced to a mud by grinding action between a drag-stone and the rock-lined bottom of a tub. Mercury is used in the tub to amalgamate with the fine gold released from the ore as it is ground. The heavy mass of gold amalgam stays on the bottom as the mud is washed away by constantly running water into the tub. The amalgam is collected and is heated in a retort to vaporize the mercury, leaving the gold behind.

The Spanish are credited with bringing the arrastra to the West Coast of the United States via Mexico. Hence, it is commonly called a Spanish arrastra. Originally the arrastra was powered by man or animals, but as technology developed, water wheels were used where water power was available. The local arrastras used a very innovative water wheel unique to this area. Instead of a vertical water wheel, local arrastras had a horizontal undershot water wheel which looked much like a merry-go-round, with the tub in the center and the drag-stones tied directly to the spokes of the wheel. It does not use a gear as does a vertical water wheel nor does it require a heavy framework to support it. It operates on a single replaceable wooden bearing and is about as light weight and stable as is possible for a large water wheel. It may be that this was the last improvement made to the ancient arrastra in its 3000 year history, but

the innovation was lost to the historians because industrial technology developed better devices, such as the stamp mill, and the ancient arrastra was quickly forgotten.

In 1897 there were eight arrastras in operation in the Swauk Mining District. They were soon outclassed by the more modern stamp mills, but nevertheless, arrastras were still being used here in the 1930's and one, the Virden arrastra, was used in the 1950's. It is still a mystery who came up with the idea of using a horizontal undershot water wheel. Was it a local invention or was it brought here from somewhere else? A search through mining history books has not found a single mention of such a water wheel any where else, and no one living around here now has been able to tell us why local arrastras used this unique design while arrastras just fifteen miles away did not. Perhaps it was one of the same people who had the foresight to build the first Liberty school who also had the natural engineering ability to adapt technology and create a truly great improvement in arrastra design. That is, to create what can be called the "Liberty design" for the arrastra.

Miners Build a Highway

The prospectors who discovered gold in Swauk Creek in 1867 and again in 1873 were prospecting farther to the north and were returning to Yakima after unsuccessfully looking for gold in the Peshastin and Mt. Stewart range. Gold was discovered on Peshastin Creek above Ingalls Creek at about the time the Swauk deposits were found. There were no wagon roads at the time. The prospectors were using Indian trails and pack animals. At first pack trains were used to haul necessary supplies for developing the mines. Wagon roads were needed when the Peshastin Camp began major development in the 1890's. A narrow canyon on Peshastin Creek just above Ingalls Creek prevented any wagon from getting through from the north. Therefore, lumber, steam boilers, stamp mills, trams and cables could not be brought from Wenatchee, they had to come from Ellensburg or Cle Elum over the Wenatchee Mountain Range.

In 1891 the mining companies in the Peshastin built a wagon road from Mountain Home, up Park Creek over the Wenatchee crest and down the Peshastin Creek to the mines in Culver Gulch. They followed the old Indian trail with a series of short switch backs up the steeper parts of Park Creek and Peshastin Creek. Kittitas County Commissioners were asked to help, but they declined. Miners then each donated one week of labor and the mining companies donated equipment and supplies to build the wagon road. In 1892 the Blewett Mining Company bought a major interest in the Peshastin Mines and also assumed responsibility for the road. They opened the Blewett Post Office and in 1897, when the



Virden Arrastra in the 1970's. The arrastra was used to grind gold ore. The arrastras around Liberty used a horizontal undershot water wheel for power, probably the only place in the world to do so. Vandals destroyed the arrastra in 1974. A working replica of the Virden arrastra was built in Liberty in 1974.

Photo by Wes Engstrom



New Development on Old Blewett Pass. There is a new development on a Section of land at the old Blewett Pass. Most of the development is in Chelan County except for one structure in Kittitas County. The old Blewett Pass Highway is the only escape route from the area.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

United States Geological Survey (USGS) made the first map of the area, they named the Peshastin Camp “Blewett” and the old Indian pass over the Wenatchee Range “Blewett Pass.”

In 1915, Washington State was converting wagon roads to automobile roads. The Sunset Highway was created to connect Seattle and Spokane. It was planned to go over Snoqualmie Pass to Ellensburg then north over Colockum Pass to Wenatchee, go over the Columbia River at Wenatchee and on to Spokane. The only bridge over the Columbia was at Wenatchee. Kittitas County Commissioners had already paid for a survey over Colockum Pass. Cle Elum interests objected as they wanted the road to go over Blewett Pass. The Commissioners agreed to pay for another survey over Blewett Pass. However, they specified an eight percent grade, the same as the wagon road and too steep for a practical automobile road. Cle Elum interests were incensed and raised money for another survey over Blewett Pass, only this time on a five percent grade. The matter was settled when **A. J. Sylvester**, the Forest Service Ranger, offered to contribute \$1000 toward the cost of the road if it went over the five percent grade on Blewett Pass. Discussion ended and work begins. The incredibly sharp hairpin curve was named “Echo Point,” not because you can hear an echo there, but because the Cle Elum Echo newspaper was instrumental in organizing Cle Elum interests to pay for the survey.



Hauling a Boiler for the Peshastin Stamp Mill. The miners had to build the wagon road over old Blewett Pass to haul large equipment from Cle Elum and Ellensburg for the stamp mill at Peshastin. That wagon road later became Highway 97.

From the Fred Krueger collection

The old Blewett Pass highway was a real exciting experience with its sharp curves, steep hillsides, lack of guard rails and narrow width. In the 1950's the highway was rerouted over Swauk Pass 4 ½ miles east of Blewett Pass. The pass was 30 feet higher (4071 ft. versus 4102 ft.) but the grade was much less. When the road was first moved, it was named Swauk Pass for a while. Locals, however, continued to call it the Blewett Pass Highway and finally the state acquiesced. Now the passes are called Old Blewett Pass and Blewett Pass even though it goes over Swauk Pass. What started out as a miner's wagon road is now a major state highway, SR 97.

Most Land in the Basin Becomes Private

Most odd sections of the land within the Basin were granted to the Northern Pacific Railroad in the 1880's and 1890's as part of their land grant agreement for building the railroad. The railroad was granted the odd numbered sections of land for 20 miles on each side of the tracks in exchange for building the railroad. The railroad in turn sold the land for whatever price they could get to pay their expense of building the railroad. Because Meaghersville was already occupying Section 1, the railroad was given an even numbered section to compensate. By the 1930's Cascade Lumber Company had bought 23,000 acres of the railroad land in the Swauk Basin. The balance of the non-federal land

was owned by miners, homesteaders and Washington State. In 1889 Washington State had been granted sections 16 and 36 in each township to fund schools. Many of these sections were sold or traded by the State. When the Wenatchee National Forest was created in 1908 only 40 percent of the land, about 21,000 acres, in the Swauk Basin belonged to the Forest Service. The balance, 32,000 acres, was private.

A National Forest Changes the Rules

Until 1908 miners in the Swauk Basin were not encumbered by federal bureaucracy. Under U.S. law an organized mining district established their own rules for mining within the district. The boundary of the mining district, the size of the claim and the requirements to be met to retain the claim being the most important rules of the district. The district also recorded the claims and settled disputes over the claims. When the Swauk Mining District was formed in 1873 a claim was established as 1000 feet rim to rim on the creek and the miner had to be on the claim on a certain day in May to hold the claim. The district was reorganized in 1884 to follow the 1872 federal mining laws which called for 20 acre claims with assessment work filed on September 1st of each year. The claims were now filed with the County Auditor's office in Ellensburg. Kittitas County had been formed in 1883. The miners continued to govern themselves for the most part.

Although the unpatented land in the Swauk area was set aside as part of the Rainier National Forest in 1902, and jurisdiction for its management was transferred to Washington National Forest in 1907, the first on-the-ground representative of the federal government did not arrive in Liberty until January 1908. **A. H. Sylvester** was the first Forest Supervisor of the Wenatchee National Forest and Deputy Ranger **Clyde B. Simmons** was appointed as the first representative to the Swauk District. He immediately started declaring mining claims invalid and accused residents of Meaghersville of being illegal trespassers. The miners, especially the residents of Meaghersville, wrote their Senator, **Wesley L. Jones**, in the Washington DC seeking relief. Jones in turn wrote to Chief Forester Pinchot who in turn wrote to Wenatchee Forest Supervisor, **A. H. Sylvester**, requesting an immediate investigation. In 1909 Simmons was replaced by **O. E. Kerstetter** who was a lifelong member of the Liberty community and who was trusted by the miners. The question of the legality of Meaghersville festered for another 72 years before being settled in 1980.

Although Deputy Ranger Simmons stirred up the miners with his interpretation of mining law, it was sheep and cattle grazing, not mining, that was of the greatest concern to the Forest Service at the time. Before 1907 the National Forest lands in the Swauk Basin were considered open



The Blewett Mines in 1905. Originally called the Pesbastin Mining Camp. The large building on the right was a twenty stamp mill used to process gold ore. All material needed to build the camp had to come from Ellensburg or Cle Elum over Blewett Pass.

Photo courtesy of Central Washington Historical Museum

range available to whoever got there first. Two major livestock driveways crossed the Basin. The Teanaway-Wilson driveway came off of Table Mountain, crossed between Deer Gulch and First Creek, and went up and over Teanaway Ridge. In 1916 over 45,000 sheep were counted at the Liberty Guard Station on their way to the Teanaway. The other driveway crossed Table Mountain and headed north over Swauk Pass on its way to the Blewett region. Overgrazing was severe for two or three miles on either side of the driveways. Separate allotments were established for cattle and for sheep to limit numbers and restrict them to specific areas. A fee was charged for the right to graze, either five dollars per thousand or if there was competition for an allotment, it went to the highest bidder. At its peak there were 10,000 sheep and over 1000 cattle in the Basin. Over 60,000 sheep were using the two driveways through the Basin. Today the driveways are no longer used and there are only two sheep allotments and a single cattle allotment partly within the Basin. Sheep are now trucked in and unloaded at the heliport rather than herded.



Al Nicholson's House Near Liberty. Al's wife, Frieda, in front of their house on what is now the heliport. The house has been moved and is still being used.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

There were at least four homestead entries existing within the Basin when the Wenatchee National Forest was created in 1908. They did not conflict with mining claims. However, when the Forest Service arrived they encouraged people in the Basin, especially miners, to apply for homesteads.

Homesteading Displaces Mining

(By Vic Pisoni)

After the Wenatchee National Forest was created in 1908, miners were encouraged by the Forest Service to file homestead applications for 160 acres of land. This seemed like a better idea to some than applying for patent on a mining claim of 20 acres. Besides, the Forest Service favored farming and disliked mining. The homestead issue led to a confrontation between miners who elected to become farmers and miners who wanted to be miners—on the same ground. There were few areas in the Swauk Mining District where a 160 acre homestead application could be made without staking over an existing mining claim. **Dodge Alley** was a miner who decided to try.

There was a narrow window of opportunity for filing for a homestead claim after the Wenatchee National Forest was created. A person possessing valid settlement rights upon public lands within the limits of a National Forest, by virtue of having settled prior to the creation of a National Forest does not necessarily forfeit his claims to the lands settled upon. The settler can continue to pursue that claim, making an additional entry after the land was surveyed. **Dodge Alley** made application to have a survey done, even though his original claims had been filed on as mineral in content, and the Alley tract was in the very midst of a mining



Sheep Grazing in Liberty. There are two sheep grazing allotments in the Swauk Basin. Sheep are trucked in for the summer and some landowners encourage grazing on their property to reduce noxious weed populations.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

district worked for more than 40 years by miners. He stated the land was more important for agriculture than mineral. The Forest Service hired a surveyor in 1908, named Miller to do an agricultural survey. Miller pulled a colossal boner when he mistakenly used a closing corner stake for what he said he thought was a standard corner, and made the line between sections 31 and 36 stand west of its true location nearly 1,000 feet, encroaching onto the Fire Bug and Fidelity placer claims. This was protested in a letter to the Land Office of the Department of the Interior at Yakima, Washington, and signed by **John Carse, S.I. Rhodes, E. M. Wells, Minerva Powles**, and her husband **John Powles**. These folks all suffered damage and loss because of Miller's mistake. They were never compensated.

The greater part of the Alley homestead entry in section 36 was originally obtained with a filing by **Andrew Flodin**, December 31, 1902. The Flodin family was among the Swauk Mining Districts' top gold producers. Flodin's heirs deeded Andrew's property on September 1, 1906 to **Minerva Powles** for \$500, including all improvements: ten acres under fence, a two-story seven room log house, a two-story barn, and a wagon shed. Minerva's claims plus several other miners' claims were staked prior to the date of **Dodge Alley's** homestead application. The homestead entry land was inside the boundary of a legally surveyed and registered mining district. It was mineral land. Cultivation of land within the mining district was an afterthought, not the dominant feature in the gold mining settlements of the area involved. This was the argumentative bone of contention between opposing forces in a struggle between miners within the Swauk Mining District.

Dodge Alley applied for a homestead on January 4, 1910. In a letter to Commissioner of the Department of the Interior, **Fred Dennett** (Washington, DC), **Dodge Alley** stated he and his family settled on the land in debate, in 1904. The tract of land was 65 acres, unsurveyed at the time, in Sections 31 and 36, T 21 N, R 17 and 18 E and located about 1 ½ miles northeast of what was then Meaghersville (presently the town of Liberty). Within the area was a portion of Williams Creek, and two of its tributaries, then known as Price Creek and Bullion Creek. Dodge stated in an affidavit, "I am well acquainted with the character of the land herein applied for, and within each and every legal subdivision thereof. Having personally examined same, that there is not to my knowledge within the limits thereof, any vein, or lode, or quartz, or any other rock in place bearing gold, silver, tin, lead, or copper, nor any deposit of coal, placer, cement, gravel, salt spring, or deposit of salt, nor other valuable mineral deposit; that no portion of said land is claimed for mining purposes under the local customs or rules of miners, or otherwise; that no portion of said land is worked for mineral during any part of the year by any person or persons; that said land is essentially non-mineral



Fire Lookout at Lion Rock. The lookout had an unobstructed view of the entire Swauk Basin. There was a single-wire telephone line to the Ranger Station in Liberty for communication. Only the concrete foundation remains today.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

land, and that my application therefore is not made for the purpose of fraudulently obtaining title to mineral land; that the land is not occupied and improved by any Indian.”

On July 3, 1910, Alley wrote a letter to the Acting Assistant Commissioner at the General Field Office for the Department of Interior, asking for a mineral expert to determine the character of the land embraced in his homestead entry. The Acting Assistant Commissioner refused and told Alley that would have to be accomplished via legal hearings. However, the Commissioner came back, reversed the Acting Assistant Commissioner, and hired practical miner, **W. R. Davey**, to do the examination on October 31, 1910. Davey noted the Alley tract as being “narrow and the land is cut by three deep ravines,” reported an earth movement had changed the elevation of the creek beds in the vicinity, and placed the bedrock at around 70 feet in depth. He noted some hearsay information, and saw gold washed out of the west boundary of a placer claim adjoining the Alley ground at better than five dollars a cubic yard. He wrote in his report that gold had been found above and below the homestead entry in paying quantities, and it was reasonable to expect gold to be found in the intermediate portion of the streambed. He then submitted that the land embracing the homestead entry should be classed as mineral, and the entry canceled. Chief Field Director, **L.L. Sharp**, read the report and promptly suspended the report pending further hearings.



Logging With Horses Near Liberty in the 1920's. Al Nicholson had a saw mill on his homestead and logged his land in the 1920's and 1930's. It is believed that this picture shows part of his operation. It had to be a challenge to handle such large logs with only horse power.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

In the meantime, **W. M. (Mike) Mikesell** disagreed with Dodge. Mike, along with an agitated group of fellow miners led by **A. F. York**, his attorneys, **John B. Davidson** and **John M. Rankin**, filed complaints against Dodge Alley's homestead entry. Backing them was their connection in the United States Senate, Senator **W. L. Jones**. He encouraged them to pursue a line of legal action resulting from suggestions by **R. A. Ballinger** of the Department of Agriculture, and Commissioner **Fred Dennett** of the Department of the Interior. The miners began storming the legal gates and the fur began to fly.

A.F. York vs. Dodge Alley-1910 to 1918

Witness testimony was taken on the 9th and 10th days of November, 1910, before **George Sayles**, Commissioner. Opposing lawyers were: **Irvin J. Bounds** Esq., and **H.J. Snively** attorneys for **Dodge Alley**, and **John B. Davidson**, Esq., and **John M. Rankin** attorneys for **A.F. York** et. al. Davidson had fifteen witnesses ready to go on the stand, and Bounds had six.

Davidson's witnesses were: **Aaron F. York** who had been in the Swauk since 1890 as a miner and qualified surveyor; **S.I. Rhodes** who was in the Swauk for 14 years; **Amos R. Jordin** who had been in the Swauk mining

camp for nine years; **E.J. Mathews** who was the Kittitas County Auditor; **Minerva E. Powles** who came to the area in 1901; **John Powles** who first entered the area in 1894 previous to his permanent residence in 1901; **E.M. Wells** who lived at the Liberty post office; **George Virden** whose personal mining background was preceded by an extensive farming career; **M.W. Maxwell** who was a Liberty resident and a prospector/miner for six years; **Carl Enenkel** who came to the area in 1900; **Charles Powles** who had been living with his parents in the area for nine years; **William Anderson** who was in the Swauk since 1895; **George A. Bloomquist** who also arrived in the Swauk in 1895; **John Carse** who entered the Swauk Mining District in 1892; and **Thomas F. Meagher** who came into the Swauk in 1874. All witnesses testified they had had mines, or worked in mines or saw gold from the mines on the homestead land and further, the land would not grow enough produce for a man to live on.

Bound's witnesses were: **Edmond Grady** who lived in the Swauk for eight years; **Pat Dunning** who had been a miner in the Swauk since 1895; **Eldredge Brown** (65 years old) was the brother-in-law of **Dodge Alley** and resided in Teanaway Valley, never having lived in the Swauk area; **Tom Swan** and **W. Forbes** had a placer claim since 1904 up Lion Gulch; **Louis Shirk** who had a mineral claim located on the north fork of Williams Creek and lived 18 miles away in Cle Elum and; **Dodge Alley** who had an extensive mining background before he decided he was a farmer.

At the hearings **Dodge Alley** proceeded to identify paperwork pertaining to the homestead allotment which was the survey of the land made by Forest Service employee Miller with the 1000 ft. error. Alley stated he had water to irrigate most of the 65 acres because he bought water rights from Bloomquist who had bought from Morrison. **John Davidson** brought Alley up to date by letting him know the miners down stream on Williams Creek had the water rights to the flow going through the Alley land. Dodge was not aware of that. When asked, Dodge said he could clear the remaining land for \$35 an acre. Dodge claimed he had a good market for his hay in Roslyn and Cle Elum. Alley gives accolades to farmer **McFry's** and **Pat Dunning's** produce crops, and said there is no reason why his cannot be as good which was counter to all witnesses on the subject to that point. He said he entered on to his land in December of 1904 and that he spent \$300 to \$400 per year on developments but he described the improvements that were on the property when the Powles were on their mineral claim and they had to leave behind standing structures. All he could physically account for was \$50 worth of fencing put up by him, and lumber for a log house equal to \$100. Alley's lawyer, Mr. Bounds, put up a weak offense in the form of leading softball questions and suggestions, and mostly ignores Alley's answers, if Bounds did not hear what he wanted, by quickly going to



Logging With a Tractor Near Liberty. A 1926 Fordson crawler tractor with one very large log. The tracked version of the Fordson tractor was a factory option available for a short time in 1926–27. It must have been a challenge to go down hill with the set-up above.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

another subject. Meanwhile **John Davidson**, York's attorney, remained as silent as a sheep being sheared, no objections, stricken statement requisitions or anything. Alley then had the audacity to say he knew of no mines in the vicinity, except some old abandoned ones and if there were some around, they weren't paying to his knowledge. Hard feelings were acknowledged as the dominant emotion conveyed towards Alley by the agitated and disgruntled Powles clan and their backers. Alley had not proven he could make a living by farming his land in the admission he had to work for other miners, such as on the McCualey claim, or outside the mining district for wages. The hearing ended with rights reserved to call certain witnesses at the next hearing on December 9, 1910.

At the December hearing the value of the land for mineral development was challenged as problematical and once again council for homestead entry respectfully requested that the entry be allowed. The court tug-of-war-of-words went on as reams of paper, in the form of letters and attorneys' legal pages rolled continuously under the glazed-eyed scrutiny of various governmental department heads. **A. F. York** pointed out the opposition's mocked ignorance of the character of the mineral deposits involved within the mining district, particularly the upper Williams Creek area. On April 4, 1912, the Assistant Commissioner **S.V. Proudfit** of the Department of the Interior reversed a former decision, the miners' protest was dismissed, and the homestead entry allowed. The protestants were advised of their right to appeal within thirty days. The litigation went on for two more years.



Liberty Fourth of July Celebration in 1916. The entire County was invited to a two day celebration in Liberty in 1916. The dance lasted until 4 a.m. when a case of dynamite was set off on Kingfisher Ridge to announce breakfast was being served.

A Pautske print in the Wes Engstrom collection

In March of 1914, a letter was drafted by the Swauk miners, and presented to Forest Ranger **O. E. (Earl) Kerstetter** asking him to do a private mineral examination. He refused on the premise of treating all parties equal. He did offer to make an affidavit allowing that the land was indeed better suited for mining of minerals than the propagation of agriculture, but he wouldn't place a projected value on available gold. His was an awkward situation. On the one hand the Forest Service was generally sympathetic to the farmer/rancher, while in Kerstetter's, mining background in particular, was a quartz claim in 1904, called the Ben Hurr. He obviously didn't want to make bold statements that would put any government agency in an embarrassing position.

A.F. York, et. al., appealed, and the decision was reversed once more by **A.A. Jones**, April of 1914. A review showed a preponderance of the testimony that said the land will grow no crops except hay, and only in limited amounts, and a man could not make a living depending on that alone. The only tract of land to support an agricultural living, was that of Mr. Virden. This was because it was located seven miles south of the Swauk Mining District, in Swauk Prairie, a valley, or bottomland. Minerals win again, but the fact is not many were making a living mining

at this time, and none had made a living at agriculture in the district. Some of the agriculture group was shown to be assisting their livelihood with gold mining. What judgment would come from such a convoluted mess?

Heated points of view escalated to a near melt down. With the physical overlapping of mine claim lines and the land tract dispute, it was no surprise when considerable trouble would arise between the two parties, and State Officials had to intervene to stop physical fights between the miners and the sod-busters. This was brought to the attention of Secretary of the Interior, **Franklin M. Lane**. He was told in no uncertain terms, to take care of a situation that had been pushed to the back burner, because if it boiled over, he'd have a very messy political kitchen to clean up. An out of court, physical Swauk miner vs. farmer face-off was a possibility.

Alley's Attorney, **H. J. Snively**, wrote a rather well worded appeal letter to **A. A. Jones** of the Interior Department. The wording was an attack on the six-point correction of errors document made by the York party. The letter worked, and everything past and present would be held in review, pending a forthcoming mineral report.

On July 10, 1914, the Department of the Interior sent an urgent request to the General Land Office to do a mineral examination of the Alley entry as soon as possible. **Edmond Grady** had filed for a homestead entry on an adjacent tract to the Alley entry. Grady's tract would also be examined for minerals. **W. A. Wells** was challenging the Grady entry in court. All court action was suspended, and the mineral examination took place on October 30th and November 1, 1914. **Frank Farmer** was the mineral examiner. The examiner first tested a 150-foot tunnel on the Fidelity Mining claim. One sample was taken from the face of the tunnel; it gave one color of gold. A pan from the tunnel dump gave three colors. Several colors were taken near the mouth of the tunnel. The mine had good discovery gold on it, but its future value was deemed merely conjectural. All the other claims failed to meet qualifying standards as paying gold claims. It appeared the Alley homestead application would go ahead.

Court records remain mute, until January 1915, when **A. F. York** dusted off his typewriter to send a request for another reversal. It basically hashed over the same information, but the past sense of urgency seemed diminished. **Ben Killson** submitted a written protest of the homestead entry acceptance, but it too seemed half hearted. The miners appeared to be stymied by the official mineral examiner's report. Fewer people rallied around those who remained involved in the case. By 1917, Judge **Edward Pruyn** and **E.K. (Sonny) Brown**, the two attorneys now representing the miners, were unavailable. **E. K. Brown** was in France, involved in the First World War, and **E. Pruyn** was U.S. Commissioner, and was no



The Community Hall in Liberty in 1916. The hall was temporarily named the "Wildcat Dance Hall" for the occasion which was a Fourth of July celebration. Cascade Pride was a nonalcoholic beer made by the Roslyn Brewery during prohibition in the County. Moon shiners in the woods supplied the real stuff.

A Pautske print from the Wes Engstrom collection

longer qualified to be the miners' lawyer. **Minerva Powles'** husband was too ill to attend, and she wanted to have the long awaited hearing put off to a later date. That only caused more frustration and perpetrated more disinterest.

A. F. York tried once more to set up a hearing with a letter to the Department of the Interior. The Portland Field Division of the Department of the Interior, that sent the mineral examiner, Mr. Farmer, was at that point nonplused, and even reluctant to send Farmer as a representative. It was now obvious the case was losing momentum. An out of court meeting was set for May 28, 1918. The hearing was to be held, not for all the claims, as before, but for a decision as to the validity of the one claim that showed gold, the Fidelity. May 28th came, the Mineral Examiner and a Special Agent from the same agency showed up, as did the homestead claimants and their witnesses, but no appearance was made on behalf of the mineral protestants, and no evidence submitted by them. With no evidence available to introduce for impeachment and correction of the mineral examiner's report, the miners' mineral protest was dismissed.



*Loading Logs Near Liberty in the 1930's.
Cascade Lumber Company built railroad spurs
up all the main drainages and logged the Swauk
Basin during the 1930's and 1940's. They then
traded most of their land with the Forest Service
for other timber land elsewhere.*

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

Dodge Alley, Edmond Grady, and the Price family were granted homesteads. Thus, there are homesteads in a mining district that were granted years after the area was set aside as a National Forest and not open to homestead application. The animosity between the miners and the homesteaders continued for two generations until those involved died or moved away. Today all is forgotten as the property in question is neither mined nor farmed.

Logging Becomes the Major Industry

Gold mining and logging have been the two main activities in the Swauk Basin until recent years when both have declined being replaced by outdoor recreation as the main activity. Gold mining and logging coexisted in a complementary fashion. Early logging and saw milling was done to support the mining operations. Some timber being used for shoring in the mines but most being used for homes and other structures. Little product was exported from the immediate area except over Blewett Pass to build the Blewett mining camp. In the late 1930's and early 1940's the Cascade Lumber Company, which owned 43 percent of the land in the Swauk Basin, built railroad lines up each of the main creeks and selectively logged the large Ponderosa pines that could be skidded to the rail lines. In the 1930's miners were glad to get the logging jobs to supplement their earnings from gold mining. The headquarters camp was at Lauderdale where First Creek joins the Swauk.

In the Swauk Basin almost all of the logging was done by "gyppo" loggers under contract to Cascade Lumber Company. **E. Wm (Bud)**

Hughes logged First Creek in 1934-36, Baker Creek in 1936, Deer Gulch in 1936-37, Pine Gulch in 1937, Williams Creek in 1938-39, Lion Gulch in 1940-41, upper Swauk Creek in 1941 and Hurley Creek in 1944. **Archie Kennedy** logged Mill Creek, Medicine Creek, Blue Creek, Durst Creek, Hovey Creek and Iron Creek. **Dominick Contratto** logged the area west of Swauk Creek opposite First Creek. The Hurley Creek operation in 1944 was the last of the railroad logging in the Basin.

Logging continued on Forest Service land after the 1940's using military surplus D7 and D8 cats with arches. Skyline operations were introduced in the 1970's and helicopter logging in the 1980's. All logging stopped in 1994 when President Clinton's forest plan designated the entire Swauk Basin as wildlife sanctuary (late successional reserve) to protect spotted owl habitat. U. S. Timberlands has been logging on their private property using skidding operation and thinning their stands of trees rather than clear cutting. Their private lands now have the same "park like" look the entire Basin had in 1900. There are still many National Forest lands within the Basin that have never been logged. The old trees are now completely surrounded by smaller trees providing a "ladder" for a fire to reach the crowns.

Most Land in the Basin Becomes Public

When the Wenatchee National Forest was created in 1908 only 40% of the land in the Swauk Basin belonged to the Forest Service. The balance was private.

Some private land within the Basin was acquired by the County in the 1930's for unpaid taxes and was turned over to the Forest Service. Cascade Lumber Company exchanged 18,500 acres of its land with the Forest Service in 1942 and another 4,300 acres in 1946, retaining just over 1000 acres at First Creek. Cascade Lumber Company merged with Boise Payette Lumber Company in 1957 and became the Boise Cascade Corporation. Their First Creek land was sold to U. S. Timberlands in 2000.

After an exchange of 1,400 acres with Washington State Department of Natural Resources in 1986, the Forest Service now controls 90 percent of the land within the Swauk Basin.

Almost all of the private property that started out as patented mining claims or homestead claims has been divided into smaller units. There are 280 tax parcels of which about 168 have homes built on them. Only about 49 of the homes are occupied full time, the rest are weekend and summer homes.



Sulphur Springs Ranger Station in the Early 1900's. Sulphur Springs was a popular camping area and it actually had a mineral spring used by many people for healing purposes. It is now called Mineral Springs and the spring has dried up.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

A Mining Company Threatens Liberty

(By Henrietta Fackler)

On March 29, 1963, the Golden Thunderbird Mining Company (later the name was changed to Gold Placers Inc.) with **Virgil Hiner** as general manager bought the holdings of Nugget Properties, Inc. There were patented and unpatented claims included in the sale. These claims were situated along Williams and Boulder Creeks beginning near Deer Gulch. Among the unpatented claims was the New Discovery, and it was occupied by the Liberty townspeople. Gold miners and families began settling along Williams Creek in 1883. By 1890 the surface of the New Discovery was measured out into town lots and residences and business buildings were constructed. This settlement was recognized as a town called Meaghersville (pronounced Mearsville) by Washington State and Kittitas County.



Gold Mining in Liberty in the 1960's. Gold Placers Inc. conducted the last large scale mining operation in Liberty. They attempted to also mine the town site but were stopped by a lawsuit brought by the residents and finally settled in the State Supreme Court.

Photo from the Wes Engstrom collection

Trouble for the town residents and property owners began to surface soon after the sale of the mining properties. **Virgil Hiner** tacked up notices on all the town buildings which stated: "In compliance with Forest Service regulations prohibiting the use of unpatented mining claims for cabin and home sites, this structure must be moved from this claim immediately." He drove through the town using a loud speaker demanding that the people vacate the claim because it now belonged to the Thunderbird Mining Company. The mining company and the residents alike appealed to the Forest Service for help, but they adopted a hands off policy. Personnel of the mining company continued to display a belligerent attitude toward the townspeople and it soon became apparent they would use any means at their command to assert what they believed to be their right of ownership to the Liberty town site, the New Discovery claim.

In the meantime the company began work on the Bigney claim that lay adjacent to the Liberty town site. Noise from their machinery droned incessantly through the pine studded valley and the great iron jaws of their equipment tore viciously into the overburden of the Bigney. As they worked they heaped huge piles of tailings and debris onto a portion of the town, and rocks and dirt soon begin to slide into the clear mountain waters of Williams Creek.

When the townspeople of Liberty made no effort to vacate their properties, **Virgil Hiner** and his cohorts burned down the town hall and a log cabin that at an earlier time served the community as a United States Post Office. The residents were highly incensed by this hostile act and mourned the loss of these historical buildings. It was learned later that District Ranger **Warren Drake** was in favor of the burning. The buildings were burned during the day, while the men were away at work. The women in town were intimidated by this aggressive action

and were at a loss as to what they should do. One of the women climbed the hillside and helplessly watched the act of desecration, while her tears coursed down both sides of her cheeks. The town hall was a former school house built in 1904 and attended by children of the district up until 1939, when Liberty School District 44 was consolidated with the Cle Elum School District.

When the school house was vacated the residents bought the building from County School Officials and converted it into the town hall. This was done as a replacement of the original hall built in 1892 and was torn down in 1944 because it had deteriorated to such a degree that town citizens felt it was no longer safe to use. The community hall had always been the central gathering place for the people in the town and the whole of the surrounding community, and was used for multi-purposes, such as, Swauk Mining District miner's meeting; church and Sunday school services; weddings and receptions, bridal and baby showers; Saturday night dances, where gold nuggets were given away as door prizes; a poling place for the Swauk Precinct from 1892 until 1961; the Women's Literary Society organized in 1904; and occasionally a theatrical presentation performed by traveling actors groups.

Hiner's animosity toward the people grew in intensity and he continued with any means at hand to try and drive them out of their homes. His next venture was an attempt to divert all of Williams Creek into the town ditch. Fearing that the town would be washed out by this action two of the town's women stopped Hiner and his co-workers. Elsie Hale held a rifle on the culprits, while **Henrietta Fackler** contacted the local State Game Department Warden to alert him of the infraction of state game laws about to take place. The warden soon arrived upon the scene and advised Hiner of the regulations of the game department that did not allow hydraulic projects such as, diverting a creek from its natural stream bed. He further stated, "That if Hiner attempted to continue with the violation he would be arrested on the spot."

The next move made by Hiner to intimidate the townspeople was an attempt to cross the creek for the purpose of dumping huge loads of tailings separated as residue from the gold ore into the middle of the town. On the day this was to take place, **Graham Thorne**, a resident and World War II veteran patrolled the creek bank carrying a rifle that he was prepared to use if the occasion should arise. He was a very credible threat as it was known to all he was dying of cancer. Fortunately, the game warden arrived in time to settle the matter (while protecting the creek waters from the trucks that would have driven through the creek).

It was not long before a serious assault occurred, **Clarence Jordin Jr.** was attacked by **Virgil Hiner** and his brother while working in his yard. **Clarence Jordin Jr.** said he was hit on the head by one of the men's



The Chic Cafe in Old Liberty. The building was the first post office, the first school and the first Ranger Station in Liberty. It later became a cafe and store in the 1920's.

Photo from the Wes Engstrom collection

pocket knife. There also was a third man present with the Hiner brothers. Jordin's stepfather came to his defense, and between the two of them they fought off the onslaught perpetrated by the Hiner brothers and their friend. Jordin sued the Hiner brothers. He won the court decision and received a rather sizable sum to compensate for his injuries.

After the assault on **Clarence Jordin Jr.** several of the miners started packing their guns. The County Sheriff became fearful that there would be a loss of life, and made the remark that the Liberty area was a powder keg ready to explode. Hiner began to complain that he was unable to carry on with his legitimate mining operations, because of the Liberty occupants. He blamed the Forest Service for its refusal to prosecute what he felt was trespassers upon the land. He soon filed suit against the Liberty homeowners in an effort to evict them.



Liberty School House in 1914. Liberty had a school from 1895 to 1939. The first school was in the store and post office building in Old Liberty. This school house was built in 1904 in Meaghersville (present Liberty) and later in the early 1940's it was used as a community hall replacing the old 1890's hall.

Photo from the Wes Engstrom collection

The Liberty residents hired **Jack McSherry**, a Cle Elum attorney, to defend them in the Kittitas County Superior Court. The decision made by Judge Cole was in favor of the residents and based on the testimony of **Amos Jordin**, a long time resident in Liberty, that in an earlier time it was first named New Yakima, then Meaghersville. He testified to assisting **Thomas Meagher** and one **David Long** in surveying and dividing up the town site into 100 foot frontage lots in the year 1885. **Virgil Hiner** and company immediately filed an appeal to the State Supreme Court, but to no avail. The State Supreme Court handed down a decision in favor of the residents on August 10, 1967.

Jack McSherry set a precedent in securing the decision in favor of the Liberty residents. Ordinarily cases concerning mining properties are held in the federal courts. The decision was made in State Court and was based on the precept of estoppel and laches, with the explanation that various mining claimants spent years of acquiescence and silence while the Liberty inhabitants continued to live on the property they regarded as their own. However the Judge had stated: As against the United States, residents are squatters or mere occupiers of the land. It will avail them nothing to show that the buildings were built 10, 20, 50 or even 80 years ago, for no one can acquire by holding adversely to the United States.

Hiner and company did make one last appeal to the United States Supreme Court, but lack of support from the Forest Service and the length of time it would take to get their case before the court, more than likely discouraged them and they withdrew their appeal.

Forest Service Challenges Liberty's Existence

(By Henrietta Fackler)

In January of 1971, members of the Ellensburg Ranger District, United States Forest Service, appeared in Liberty unexpectedly one day.

They brought with them restrictive use-permits (an instrument allowing the residents to continue to live there under rigid terms conforming to Forest Service policy), and told the people that they had no alternative but to accept the use-permits or face eventual eviction from their homes. These agents of the Forest Service said, “You people in our opinion are considered to be squatters residing upon public lands, but because of your long tenure upon the land we have decided to try to resolve your occupancy problem by means of a use-permit.”

The people felt that the use permit was merely a sham offering and its only purpose was to coerce them into relinquishing all legal rights to their property. They refused to accept the permits, because they felt they had legal rights and title to their properties.

The people knew that their historic mining town would be destroyed by fire if they were evicted, because **Andrew Wright**, Supervisor, Wenatchee National Forest, told them so. From that day forward American flags flew day and night over the Liberty town site; a constant reminder of the imminent danger that threatened the town and its citizens. The people rallied from the initial shock of the Forest Service proposal, and began to explore all available resources and possible support that would be of benefit to them.

Attorney **Jack McSherry** was engaged to represent the Liberty residents and property owners. **Jack McSherry** had been a champion of the people for over 25 years. He outlined a plan of action for the people to take under consideration. He said, “Taking a government bureau into court and expecting to win is like butting your head against a stone wall.” He continued, “The better way to handle the situation would be to gain public interest and support by airing the problem through the news media and seeking political help.”

Letters were mailed to state and federal legislators and local and state newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations were contacted. The people were overwhelmed by the response from the news media. The news items were eventually picked up and aired by the Associated Press, New York Times and French National News. Repeat TV specials were shown throughout the United States. Some of the local television stations that helped were: KOMO Channel 4 and KING Channel 5 in Seattle and KAPP TV and KIMA TV in Yakima. Local newspapers involved were: Grange News, Seattle PI, Tacoma Tribune, Daily Record, Northern Upper County Tribune, Yakima Herald and Wenatchee Daily World.

Petitions were circulated throughout Kittitas County and Washington State describing the perilous situation the Liberty citizens were faced with and the necessary support they must engender in order to save their homes and historic town site. Many signatures of those offering



Al Nicholson in the Early 1900's. Al Nicholson was a miner in Liberty in the 1890's. He also homesteaded Liberty Mountain and ran a dairy on what is now the heliport at Liberty. His brother, Clarence, ran a store and gas station in Liberty. Al was a very good amateur photographer and many of his negatives have survived.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

support were collected by means of the petitions, and later in time, were included in the packet of legal documents sent to U.S. Representative **Mike McCormack** and Senators **Henry M. Jackson** and **Warren G. Magnuson**.

The Liberty Coalition was organized as a non profit corporation and proved to be a formidable force in the on-going controversy with the Forest Service. The Liberty Coalition held monthly meetings within the town. They were attended by local officials, members of the State Parks and Recreation Board, Vista representatives, local historians, concerned citizens, old timers having once lived in Liberty, and state and federal legislators and congressmen. Coalition members carried on a low key campaign and never hesitated to invite the local forest ranger to their meetings and kept him informed of activities relating to the Liberty crisis.



Hydraulic Mining in Liberty in the Early 1900's. High pressure water is being used to wash overburden away to get to placer gold. Hydraulic mining was not successful in Liberty because there was no place for large boulders to go once they were on bedrock and the material above bedrock did not carry much gold.

Photo from the Wes Engstrom collection

Vista representatives, **Tom** and **Julie Ahern**, joined the coalition members and lent invaluable assistance to the cause. They helped to organize Liberty research materials, designed and printed “Save Liberty” bumper stickers, and printed brochures (material written and researched by **Henrietta Fackler**). The brochures called attention to the struggle the Liberty people were involved in to save their properties. Inserted within the brochures were cards addressed to Legislators appealing to them to help save the Liberty town site. Later it was learned that hundreds of these cards found their way into the offices of Representative **Mike McCormack**, Senators **Henry M. Jackson** and **Warren G. Magnuson**. **Tom Ahern** wrote the application to the State Parks and Recreation Board for the placement of Liberty on the national roll of historic places. Dr. **Earl Glauert** and **Henrietta Fackler** furnished advice and material for the application.

The residents revived the early custom of holding a Fourth of July celebration. Many interested people came from throughout the county and state to partake of a pot-luck picnic and to join the celebrations. There was fun for all; horse shoe pitching, gold panning contests, exhibitions by the Legendary Gun Fighters (a group who donated their services to the Liberty campaign), three legged races, bingo and pie auctions. The auctions and bingo games helped finance the campaign to further the cause, and the guests upon leaving were resolved to join in the efforts to save Liberty.

Things seemed to be going well for the campaign to save the town and properties when the Forest Service issued an ultimatum—Sign use-permits or move out! Immediately telephone calls and telegrams went into the legislators. At the advice of their attorney the residents barred themselves inside their houses. They suspected that U.S. Marshals might appear at any time to evict them. Friends and old timers in the area received word of the eviction notice and were all fired up and ready to

come to Liberty and build barricades on the road and defend them with rifles. The people refused the offer not wanting to place these good friends in jeopardy. At the last minute legislators intervened and told the Forest Service to back off and give the people ample time to research the records they needed to establish the legal claim to their properties.

The Forest Service Becomes a Friend

The Forest Service gave the residents a number of extensions and in the end helped the residents get clear title to their property. The paper establishing a mining town site was never found. Enough information was found however to create the Liberty Historic District. When that happened the Forest Service decided the best way to resolve the conflict was to have the residents submit a new application for a town site under the 1866 town site laws. The Forest Service helped the residents submit such an application. Symbolically it was submitted on July 4, 1976, the day of the U.S. Bicentennial Celebration. Things looked good for the residents.

However, that fall the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 was passed by Congress and became law. It repealed homestead and town site laws, including the 1866 law the Liberty resident had filed under. The new law did not have a provision for creating a new town site on federal land. It looked like Liberty residents had won the battle with the Forest Service but lost the war with the U.S. Government.

The Forest Service came to the rescue and suggested a special interest bill be passed by Congress saying Liberty could be an exception to the new law. There was a provision in the law that provided for the transfer of federal land to a town that needed to expand but was completely surrounded by federal land. That didn't exactly apply to Liberty as the town site didn't legally exist and hence there was no political entity for the U.S. government to transfer the land to. The special interest bill said that in our case the land could be transferred to the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners. The Commissioners in turn could transfer the land to the residents. Again the residents used all the political influence they could muster to get the entire Washington State delegation in Congress to support the bill. It worked. The bill was passed by Congress and signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1978. Victory at last. However, the celebration was short lived.

Additional Roadblocks Appear

Two additional obstacles would have to be overcome. There is a Washington State law that says property cannot be disposed of by County Commissioners except at auction to the highest bidder. The second law, The Federal Historical Preservation Act, says property of historical



Liberty Historic District Plaque. The Liberty Historic District was created in 1974. The district is a "living ghost town" where the spirit of the early miners lives on.

A Roy Mayo photo from the Wes Engstrom collection

significance cannot be disposed of by the Federal government without the approval of the Historic Preservation Commission.

The first roadblock was removed by getting a special interest bill passed by the Washington State Legislature and signed by Governor **Dixie Lee Ray**. It sounds easy to say but it never would have happened without a special effort by Senator **Frank “Tub” Hanson**, a friend of Liberty. The Legislative session in 1980 was supposed to be “bare bones” with no special interest bills. Senator Hanson managed to pull it off anyway and Liberty became an exception to the State law.

The concern of the Office of Historical Preservation took more intricate negotiations but was finally resolved by proposing a county zoning ordinance to preserve the character of the Liberty Historic District. Back to lobbying. This time lobbying the County Commissioners. Compared to the U.S. Congress and the Washington State Legislature, the County Commissioners were softies as they were already on our side. The “Liberty Historical Zone” was added to the county zoning code. Any new structure would have the look of the old; board and batten or log exteriors, plain galvanized roofing, wood windows, no paint and wooden fences. When the historic district was created it was not the architecture that was stressed as important to preserve but instead the independent spirit of a mining community. It was based on the Liberty sign, “You Have Just Visited The Living Remains of a Ghost Town.” The spirit of the miner is still here. You just can’t see a spirit. The county zoning would assure that the look of a ghost town would also be preserved. Again the residents celebrated. And again the celebration was short lived.

Liberty Becomes More Costly

The next roadblock showed up when the Forest Service appraiser came to place a “fair market value” on the Liberty property. The original 1866 town site laws provided for the federal land to be sold for a town-site at \$2.50 an acre. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 specified land to be sold at fair market value. The special interest bill passed by Congress was silent on the subject of price. The appraiser decided fair market value was \$2,500 per acre, the going price of recreation land.

The residents hadn’t expected to pay that much for land they already owned. Another special interest bill was considered. However, Senator Jackson had died and a new slate of Representatives was in office. It would be another huge effort to solicit political support for another special interest bill. More importantly, what looked easy to the politically naive residents the first time was now recognized as a truly heroic, or lucky, effort. A special interest bill was truly “special” and not easy to do.



Swauk Gold Dredge in 1926. This large gold dredge, the Powder River Gold Dredge No. 2, was brought in from Sumpter, Oregon, in 1925. It started working in the Swauk at the big rock outcrop north of Liberty Cafe and got just up Deer Gulch before being stranded. It could not handle the hard, shallow bedrock. The dredge was dismantled and shipped to Alaska, the barge it sat on still rots in the dredge pond in Deer Gulch.

From an Al Nicholson negative in the Wes Engstrom collection

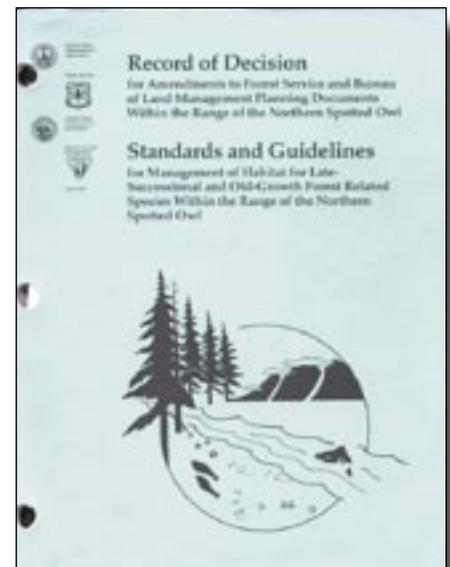
It was decided to pay the U.S. government their asking price. One small concession was won. The original price included the county road. The residents told the Forest Service that if they had to buy the county road they were going to erect a toll gate and recoup their money. The county road was removed from the deal.

Raising the money was not easy because some residents simply did not have it. However, friends and family did come through for those in need and \$39,650 was deposited with the County Board of Commissioners. The process of title transfer started. In December 1981 the residents finally received clear title to their property. The mining camp of Liberty, which once had 200 to 300 miners spread over many square miles, is now precisely defined as 15.94 acres. There are 18 houses and 15 full time residents. It is on the state and national historical registers as a place where the independent miner's traditions still exists. Miners are still working in the surrounding hills in search of that elusive gold.

Land Use Changed Drastically by President Clinton

Land use on federal land within the Basin changed drastically in the 1990's. Under President Clinton's Forest Plan, the entire Basin was set aside as wildlife preserve to protect spotted owl habitat. The plan refers to the designation as "late successional reserve" rather than a wildlife preserve but the effect is the same. All logging stopped. Firewood gathering stopped. If a tree died it was left standing and if a tree fell it was left on the forest floor for cavity dwellers. Roads were closed to discourage activity that would disturb wildlife within the Basin. All of this was done in the belief that if nothing was done to the forest it would eventually become old growth habitat. The fatal flaw in this thinking was ignoring the tremendous fuel buildup that occurred because of fire suppression for the last one hundred years. If the fuel buildup were allowed to increase, there would be a wildfire that would kill all trees, young as well as old. The entire forest would have to start over and may never attain old growth status. The change in land use essentially eliminated the logging industry in the County.

The outbreak of wildfires in the West in the 2000's demonstrated what was going to happen in the Swauk Basin as well. If the old growth within the forest is going to be preserved for wildlife, the excessive fuels loading must be reduced and wildfires limited. There have been two areas of federal forest in the Swauk Basin that have received fuels reduction treatment. The Sno-Bowl project demonstrated the fuels reduction concept and the Fawn Thin winter project created shaded buffers to limit wildfire potential in a critical spotted owl habitat. It is a start.



President Clinton's Record of Decision of 1994. President Clinton's forest plan drastically changed the management of the Swauk Basin. The entire federal portion was set aside as wildlife refuge to protect the spotted owl.

Document Courtesy of the Forest Service

Recreational Use Has Been Continuous

The Swauk Basin has been a popular camping area since anyone can remember. Indians had campsites along their trails and in their hunting grounds. The main trail being from the Ellensburg area through Green Canyon, down Deer Gulch to Liberty, up Lion Gulch and over a low saddle to Hurley Creek, down Hurley Creek to Mountain Home and then up Park Creek to the summit at old Blewett Pass and on to the Lake Wenatchee area. Green Canyon, Liberty and Mountain Home were camping spots along the trail as well as summer and fall berry picking and deer hunting camps. The Indians also managed the forest by burning out the underbrush every year or so improving berry production and deer habitat. They also used fire to herd deer into areas where they could be killed.

Early pioneers in the Kittitas Valley used the Swauk Basin extensively for summer camping to escape the heat in the valley. Families would spend weeks at a time in the woods at their summer camps. With a horse and buggy one could go almost anywhere in the open park-like forest of that time. The automobile made for even easier and faster access to the forest camping and picnic sites.



Mineral Springs Restaurant on Highway 97. The restaurant is on land leased from the Forest Service. The building is the old Swauk Recreation Lodge built in 1940 and later moved to its present location.

Photo by Wes Engstrom

One of the favorite sites was the Swauk Recreation Lodge, one and a half miles above Mountain Home. (Mountain Home was at the intersection of the old Blewett Pass turnoff from Highway 97). The Swauk Recreation Lodge area was very popular in the 1930's and 1940's. A community lodge sponsored by Kittitas County was dedicated on the site June 9, 1940, with 2000 people attending. The lodge was 36 feet wide and 76 feet long. The main room had one of the largest open fireplaces in America, seven feet deep, twenty feet wide and eight feet high. The lodge was complete with dormitory room for fifty people, rest rooms and showers, clothes drying room, photography dark room and parking space for 800 vehicles. There was running water throughout the lodge, and for fire protection there were two fire hydrants with 300 feet of 1 ½ inch hose. Natural pressure would send a stream of water over the roof with ease. The lodge was used mostly in the summer, but it also had a 1000 ft. long rope tow to the summit for skiers to use for winter recreation.

The lodge was used until 1957. In 1963 it was cut into three sections, moved to Mineral Springs and reassembled. It is now used as a restaurant— with a much smaller fireplace, however. The Swauk Recreation Lodge was able to accommodate large groups. The Liberty campground and heliport is the only area left in the Swauk Basin that can accommodate large groups. The Liberty campground is undeveloped and for the most part, groups bring their own water and toilets. The Bureau of

Crossroads at Lauderdale Junction

The present junction of Highways 97 and 970 was at one time the crossroads of wagon traffic in the upper county. There have been businesses at that junction serving the traveling public from the 1880's to the 1970's. The location was originally called McCallum on early maps. It then became known as Virden and later as Lauderdale. On today's maps it does not have a name, it is just the junction of two highways.

During the era of wagon roads in the 1880's and 1890's the area was the crossroads for traffic between Cle Elum, Thorp and Ellensburg and the gold mines at Liberty and Blewett. Wagons could not make it through the Yakima River canyon between Cle Elum and Ellensburg nor could wagons make it through the Peshastin River gorge between the old gold mining camp of Blewett and Wenatchee. All supplies for both the Liberty and the Blewett mining camps had to come from Ellensburg or Cle Elum through the junction at McCallum. The wagon road south from McCallum went through Horse Canyon and then split, one branch going down Dry Creek to Ellensburg and the other over Hayward Hill to Thorp.

To Liberty
and the
Peshastin Mines
↑

To "Cle Ellam" ←

Today's Hwy 970



A Portion of an 1894 Map. A portion of an 1894 General Land Office map showing "P. McCullum's" store. Peter McCullum homesteaded at the head of Horse Canyon and opened a store and post office on Swauk Creek to supply local farmers and the miners at Liberty. His place was a stage stop for wagon traffic between Cle Elum, Ellensburg, Thorp and the mines at Liberty and Peshastin (later called Blewett). Wagons could not follow the Yakima River between Cle Elum and Ellensburg and thus McCullum was on the main road between the two towns. The mines at Blewett were supplied from Cle Elum and Ellensburg because wagons were blocked to Wenatchee by a narrow canyon on the Peshastin River above Ingalls Creek. Present Highway 97 and 970 have been added for reference.

Map from the Bureau of Land Management (formerly the General Land Office) archives courtesy of the Forest Service

Today's Highway 97

To Thorp To Ellensburg

Peter McCallum was the first to have a commercial business at the Lauderdale Junction. The traveler of the day used horses and horses require a “stage stop.” **Peter McCallum’s** descendents have described his pioneering effort in the book *A History of Kittitas County Washington*, 1989, Page 638. A portion of the description is as follows:

*In the spring of 1882, **Peter (McCallum)** and two friends hiked across Snoqualmie Pass via a narrow Indian trail, leading a horse packed with equipment to sell to miners in the Swauk camps, and to search for land. Peter homesteaded 160 acres in Horse Canyon in August, 1882. He built a log cellar where Sarah and his three children joined him in October, 1883. He purchased 320 acres of railroad land that joined the homestead, 160 acres of it in 1891. He sold vegetables, beef, chicken, eggs, milk, cream, butter, cheese, pigs, cured hams and bacon to the camp of miners on the Swauk. He opened McCallum post office and store in his home, which was also used as a land office. He freighted goods from the Dalles, Oregon, to Liberty, and hauled much gold from the mines to Ellensburg, which he sent to the U.S. Mint. He opened a larger store and post office on the Swauk Creek. He gave land above the road from where Virden School now stands for McCallum School (District 15).*

The McCallum Post Office is described in the book *Postmarked Washington, Chelan, Douglas and Kittitas Counties* by **Guy Reed Ramsey**, page 53.



Lauderdale Lodge in 1921. The lodge had cabins for travelers and a dining room. It became a favorite Saturday night outing for people from Ellensburg and Cle Elum. Luella Pappé lives in the lodge now. Al Nicholson is on the left and it is unknown who the person is on the right. The white cat's name was Peggy.

Al Nicholson picture from the Wes and Carole Engstrom collection.

***Peter McCallum** and his wife **Sarah (Harrison)** were among the first farmers to homestead just south of the Swauk Mining District. In August 1882 they filed a homestead on 160 acres and immediately began to develop a farm. Other settlers followed suit, and McCallum saw an opportunity to serve both farmers and miners with a grocery and post office. His post office, established in 1884, was the first post office in the Kittitas Valley proper west of Ellensburg and north of the Yakima River. In 1892 Postmaster McCallum was elected County Commissioner on the Democratic ticket. He served in that capacity for two terms. In that same year the Liberty post office was established just four miles to the north and soon Liberty became a thriving town. Cle Elum and Teanaway had been established to the southwest. As a result the McCallum office was no longer needed to serve the area. **Peter McCallum** opened a grocery business in Seattle in 1897 and soon afterwards his post office was discontinued. He retained ownership of his farm lands, however, and in 1902 he returned to Cle Elum.*

In the 1920's the method of travel was changing to the automobile. The Lauderdale family responded to that need with a new lodge for people and “service station” for the cars. **Charles (Frank) Lauderdale** came to the area in 1893 when he bought a store in Liberty from **Dexter Shoudy**, son of **John Shoudy**, the founder of Ellensburg. In 1921 his son, Henry, built the Lauderdale Lodge and a service station next to it. The lodge building still stands today. **Luella Pappé** owns it and it is now her home. Frank Lauderdale's granddaughter, **Judith Peters Falk**, supplied the following history of the service station from her family records.

If you look close you can still readily see the grade of the old original Blewett Road running between **Luella Pappé's** garage and her satellite dish. The earliest Virden Junction of two dirt and gravel roads, 12 miles from Cle Elum and 18 miles from Ellensburg in those days, was on that spot. This gravel Blewett Pass road ambled back and across a one lane bridge over Swauk Creek behind Lauderdale Lodge. It snaked its way towards Wenatchee. The road had turnouts in the event you met another car coming from the opposite direction and was open from late spring until early fall, closing for the winter months. Car traffic was light and truck traffic had not developed yet as most things were still shipped by rail.

At the junction, about where Lue's white garage sits today, the very first service station at Lauderdale opened in summer 1921. It consisted of a new five-gallon gas pump bought in May 1921 for \$389.50! The gas pump was positioned next to a shed, actually a barn, with a posted sign stating "MECHANIC ON DUTY." This first service station was owned by **Henry "Lloyd" Lauderdale** and his wife Pearl. Henry was known in the Virden area as "Lloyd" or "H.L." (my uncle). North and adjacent to this service station, was the alfalfa field owned by the widow, Mrs. **Caterina Bettas**.

The following year, 1922, a new Blewett double lane gravel road from Cle Elum to Wenatchee was put in, thus replacing the old one-lane. The State changed the lay of the road locating it ¼ mile north on the other side of **Caterina Bettas'** alfalfa field. Undaunted, **Lloyd Lauderdale** relocated his service station north of this new Blewett road to accommodate the tourists and passerby. He had a "new on the market" 10-gallon glass bowl pump installed, erected a small storage shed alongside to hold related items such as oil, and opened for business with his young brother-in-law, **Glen Shimmons**, pumping Shell gasoline.

This service station existed until 1928, when it was relocated from the north side of the Blewett highway to the south side of the Blewett highway. By this point in time **Lloyd and Pearl Lauderdale** had moved on and Lloyd's father **Charles "Frank" Lauderdale** and Lloyd's brother-in-law, **Ed Snell**, were in the area (June 1925), living and working in the Lauderdale Lodge.

A 5-year lease between **Caterina Bettas** as leaseholder and Lauderdale Lodge, with **"Frank" Lauderdale** and **Ed Snell** as copartners, was drawn up in March 1928. It involved two acres, more or less, of land bordering the south side of the Blewett highway that I referred to earlier as the **Caterina Bettas** alfalfa field. The lease gave the copartners of Lauderdale Lodge the privilege of erecting a building. With a renewable option, this agreement was secured for \$50.00 in gold coin and paid, in advance, each subsequent year by the first day of March.

Frank Lauderdale and **Ed Snell** erected a new Lauderdale service station on the leased alfalfa field bordering the south side of the Blewett road, referred to on maps of the day as the Sunset Highway. Initially the station had one 5-gallon, self-measuring, gravity fed gasoline pump. A second 5-gallon glass domed gas pump was added later which held high octane "ethyl." Each pump had its own storage tank. The men built the station with living quarters in the back and a small convenience store up front. Later a covered carport was added and a vehicle could gas up from either side. The Lauderdale and Snell families lived



Lauderdale Lodge Service Station in 1926. The first service station was built beside the Lauderdale Lodge in 1921. It was relocated to the north side of the Blewett highway when the road was realigned in 1922 and is shown in the picture as it looked in 1926. Frank Lauderdale is on the left and Ed Snell on the right. The five-gallon gas pump was bought in May 1921 for \$389.50.

Photo from the Judith Falk collection

at Lauderdale Lodge summer months, with **Frank** and **Nona Lauderdale** wintering at the service station. In 1933 **Frank Lauderdale** and **Ed Snell** families moved on. From 1933 until late summer 1936 **Clarence "Ted"** and **Norene Hopper** leased the service station. Norene was the daughter of Frank and Nona Lauderdale.

The Gault family ran the station from 1936 to 1941. **C.P.** and **Elma Arrowsmith** bought the buildings and leased the land from 1941 until 1961, **Joe Micheletto** from 1961 to 1968, **Ralph** and **Henrietta Fackler** from 1968 to 1971 and **Bill** and **Jerry Snyder** from 1971 to 1973 at which time the State Highway Department realigned the highway again and eliminated the station. Since 1973 the only business left at Lauderdale was a rock shop run by **E. Benish** until his death in 2002.

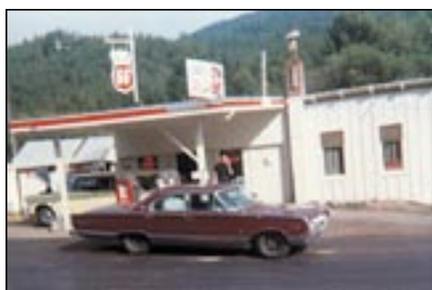
Pioneers Shared a Cemetery

The Swauk Cemetery was started in 1884 when **Mary Evans** was buried on a gentle wooded slope in Swauk Prairie. There has never been a formal cemetery association formed for the cemetery; it was just an area set aside for pioneer families from Liberty, Lauderdale and Swauk Prairie to be buried. The only other cemetery in the area is the one acre, three grave, family cemetery of **Peter McCallum** in Horse Canyon (now Bettas Road). The Northern Pacific Railroad was granted the section of land containing the Swauk Cemetery, with about 30 graves, in 1896 as part of their land grant. Two pioneers, **Wm Kinney** and **Abe Wright**, bought the cemetery land back from the railroad in 1902 and it has continued as a private cemetery ever since. Permission to be buried is not based on how much money you have but, instead, on who you are or what contribution you have made to the community during your life. There are now about 300 graves on the five-acre site, the exact number is uncertain because early records were lost. It is thought there are about two dozen unmarked or unidentified graves. The Kittitas County Genealogical Society has published a document, *The Rural Cemeteries of Kittitas County*, including the Swauk Cemetery.

Christine Bettas, late of Lauderdale, wrote in *A History of Kittitas County Washington – 1989* the following about the cemetery.

This quiet spot, gives one a feeling of serenity. The presence of the pioneers of this area, whose hardships, joys and heartaches could well fill a book, can almost be felt. It is good to know, that in the turmoil of today's fast-moving world and changing patterns of society, there still exists areas such as this which are the essence of peace and tranquility.

The same can be said of the entire Swauk Basin, which makes it important for the present keepers of the land to preserve it from wildfire for future generations.



The Lauderdale Gas Station in the early 1970s. The hand operated gas pump is now gone. Joe Micheletto owned the station from 1961 to 1968 and Ralph and Henrietta Fackler from 1968 to 1971. Bill and Jerry Snyder bought the station in 1971 and ran it until 1973 when the State Department of Transportation relocated Highway 97 to go right over the site. Now when you stop at the stop sign you are on the spot of the old Lauderdale Gas Station.

Photo from the Wes and Carole Engstrom Collection