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Sauk and Sauk City Disappear Over Years

Ghost towns are frequent in the desert mining country, but in the Skagit valley only one thriving community vanished completely from the map over the past fifty years. This was Sauk – a bustling little community at the junction of the Sauk and Skagit rivers. In 1884, a post office was established there and a town grew up around it – today you would be hard pressed to show a person where the town had been.

It was fire, the greatest enemy of the pioneers that caused Sauk most of its trouble. After the town had grown to a sizeable place for the first time, a fire in January of 1889 burned down all but the store of George Perrault. Some of the residences were rebuilt and the following November forty acres were platted into two lots and offered for sale. The big boom failed to develop but the Sauk Shingle Mill was started and soon the town had a fair population and was as busy as any town in the upper valley. Shingle bolts were piled higher than the surrounding buildings much of the time as the mill crew strove to cut them into shingles for loading on the railway that passed through the town.

In 1906 the town boasted of the Sauk Mercantile Co., two hotels, two saloons, a butcher shop, tailor shop, post office and the ever needed school. Harry Wainright ran one of the hotels, C. B. Mason had a confectionery store.

The town suffered with the fortunes of the mill for some years, then in 1924 the mill,

store and several buildings burned to the ground. The store was rebuilt further down river (present McGovern store), the river made inroads on the town site and finally the last person moved away, leaving only a few shacks which eventually disappeared.

Another similar town of a similar name “Sauk City” was started on the south bank of the Skagit and was reached by a ferry from old Sauk. This was in 1890 when Thomas Moody of Hamilton and J. W. Sutherland of Fairhaven bought 260 acres and began to build a city from the ground up. A sawmill was erected to furnish the lumber – homes and business houses were built. This was the landing for the river boats which unloaded supplies for the “tote road” up the Sauk River to the Monte Cristo mines. Al von Presentin had a hotel there, as did Bill Byers. There was a general store and the usual saloons. It was to be a big city when the railroad came in from Darrington way. It never came and in 1899 the town burned down and was never rebuilt. The changes in the river have since obliterated the site entirely.

In 1891 a promotion was under way to form a new county from the portion of Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish lying east of the Baker River. Sauk City was to be the county seat.

There are no more Sauk cities in the upper valley.