

Story of Burnt Acres Summerville, Oregon

Once upon a time there was a community called Winterville just a couple miles north of Summerville. This is where the property now known as Burnt Acres lays. Back then it was a small part of a large working farm and timber operation. Some water diversion ditches were dug on the property and a working water wheel was used off of a parallelogram shaped building just south of the existing residence. The channels are still visible from the house. The sawmill was just across the field to the east, where a water flume came down off the hillside on what is called Mill Creek.

The house that existed at the end of the 1900s at Burnt Acres was a two story home with several gables. The owners hosted gatherings in the beautiful home that was known for having white carpet. The place fell into disrepair over time. It was owned by a lady notorious for animal neglect, as the court records show. The animals did not react well to their treatment. One local high school student recounts visiting her house and seeing she had a scar the shape of a mule hoof on her forehead. Another malnourished horse ate a tree which fell on him and he died. This owner theorized the government was flying over and dropping exfoliant to kill trees on the property. Her or her brother were living in the home when there was a fire and significant damage.

The home operated off a shallow 15 foot well that dried up each fall when Dry Creek dried up. Water barrels could be seen around the home in the 2000s to get by during the dry months.

In 2012 a neighbor bought the property and began fixing it up. In the process of cleaning, he was burning railroad ties and went home to take a shower. No sooner than he got out, the fire department called with the news his barn was on fire. The fire took the barn and burnt his tractor, along with some other damage to outbuildings. The home was saved by the firefighters unfortunately, as later he decided it was unsalvageable due to smell and previous fire damage. He had the local undertaker demolish the house, but they left the 2 car attached garage with a loft standing.

Soon a building contractor became a tenant and revamped the loft into an apartment with rooms. The existing entry stairs were the stairs to the old house and a 3rd story loft was added in the process. A new barn was built. The shop is still the existing shop from the old property.

In 2017 a snowmobile buddy of the owner, broached the subject of building mountain bike trails on the property. He was an avid trail enthusiast that had been denied trail building requests several times by area land owners. When he heard “yes” he immediately began flagging a trail and drove his tractor down to etch it in. Both families and friends got enthused about the trail and within 3 weeks a 2 mile trail was built and beat in with a lot of ATV and motorcycle riding. By that summer 3 miles of trail existed. It was around this time the owner and others started referring to the place as Burnt Acres.

In February of 2020, a warm front came through that dropped a lot of snow in the mountains and then rained for several days. It caused widespread flooding on both sides of the Blue Mountains. Area streams were the highest that long time residents had ever seen. A log jam on Dry Creek at the bridge on the north side of the property caused the creek to overflow and run across the field where the old Dry Creek Schoolhouse is, flowing across to Mill Creek. The county workers cleared the log jam which caused a surge of water to erode the banks through the Burnt Acres property. It broke a footbridge and sent it downstream. It also re-diverted the main channel to the east channel instead of west, just past the house.

When the owner announced to friends that he was selling the property, the trail builder couldn't resist the opportunity to own this choice piece of land with all the recreation opportunities it afforded. A purchase was worked out at the end of 2020, and several more recreation plans and cleanup projects are underway.

While it is called Burnt Acres, there is no known event of the acreage ever burning, just some building fires. In summer 2020 a lightning strike caused a fire on the ridge immediately to the east of the house, just above Mill Creek. It was called the Midnight Fire because that is when it started. It was quickly put out in the middle of the night. After daily checking of the fire by crews that called it “out”, it suddenly came back to

life a week later and required a helicopter with a bucket, a dozer, and several fire engines to finally put it to rest.