

The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

Fire season has hit Utah and surrounding states with a vengeance this summer. Enormous fires have surged through our beautiful scenery and towns with amazing destructive power. We find ourselves wondering how many years it will take for areas to recover. Foremost, we reach out with empathy to those who have had homes and cabins become just a memory. We worry about those evacuating whose homes are in danger and especially those fighting the flames.

Looking back through history, we find there have been prominent buildings lost to the fires like the lodge this year at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Despite valiant efforts, the lodge and other historic buildings were lost. Pictures of the ruins of the building are still used regularly on the news, a reminder of the power of nature.

Years earlier on Sept. 7, 1988, the North Fork Fire in Yellowstone National Park approached the Old Faithful area. High winds and dry conditions propelled the flames toward the geyser basin, "tossing out embers the size of fists as it went."

One of the biggest concerns that day was one of the park's main hotels — the Old Faithful Inn. Bob Barbee, park superintendent at the time, said: "You know, there's a lot of things that can burn in Yellowstone, but the Old Faithful Inn is the Sistine Chapel and we don't lose the Old Faithful Inn." With the use of interior sprinkler systems, helicopters flying overhead dropping water and an enormous effort from all the firefighters, the building was saved.

Closer to home we look back at a fire 117 years ago in a spot we often see every summer. As you drive down into the basin a Fish Lake, the first buildings you pass are the ones at Lakeside Resort. We have stayed at a cabin there numerous times through the years and consider it home.

Lakeside did not begin as a resort. In the early years of the twentieth century, the original building was built by Dr. John St. John as a sanatorium. The large building much resembled the Fish Lake Lodge a few miles down the road. It was built of spruce trees harvested on the east side of the lake

and put together with ten-penny nails. (According to a book by that name written by Revo M. Young.)

The sanatorium was begun as a hospital for those convalescing or those who had chronic illnesses. Dr. St. John was the director.

In 1908, the hospital burned to the ground. The cause of the fire was undetermined as far as I could tell, but one can only imagine how quickly the huge spruce structure would have been consumed by the flames

The property was purchased by a W L. "Doc" Easton around 1922, who then turned it into a recreational resort.

