

Bedford

Bedford was a small town located on the Warm Springs near Springville (Hog'em). The story of the town of Bedford is really the story of the Bedford Mill.

Early homesteader William Vantilburg first conceived the idea of running a conduit from the head of the Warm Springs to a location about a mile east to run a flour mill. In 1873 Vantilburg build the mill at a location across the highway from where the Cook Mansion is now. The mill was the seventh flour mill built in Montana Territory and was of great importance to the first wheat growers in the area. The first run on January 24, 1874 was a success with 22 bags of high-grade flour produced. The mill was named the Springville Mill.

Vantilburg only owned the mill for one year when it was sold at public auction for an unknown reason in Radersburg (then the County Seat for Jefferson County). John C. Black of Bozeman bought the mill and in 1876 the Bozeman Times reported that Black had hired Gavin Johnson to operate the Springville Mill.

Johnson renamed the mill to the Bedford Mill (named for Bedford Maxwell, an early settler that built a ferry where Indian Creek ran into the Missouri River) and created the town of Bedford. Bedford Mill produced the "Triple XXX Vermillion Red" and "Double XXX Prussian Blue" brands of flour.

The mill operated until 1886. The mill never kept up with new technology and was soon "outclassed" by more modern mills. Court Sheriff of Canyon Ferry (there is a bay near the dam named for Court Sheriff) owned the mill at the time it closed.

The flour sacks from the mill were saved and used to make clothing. One amusing story that has persisted from the town of Bedford relates that at a dance it looked like a fight might break out. One woman trying to escape being involved in the fight fell down and her skirts came up. In full view of everyone was the seat of her panties with the brand "Triple XXX Vermillion Flour" printed in red!

Bedford was always a small town but a busy town – the town was on the stage route from Helena to Bozeman, near two ferries across the Missouri and there

were 2 freighting companies quartered at Bedford. In 1880 William Sutherlin wrote in the Rocky Mountain Husbandman newspaper that "Bedford reminds me of a large depot in an eastern city so many people passing through".

As is often the case, Progress creates and Progress destroys. Bedford was a busy small town when the stage line ran through the town. However, when the Northern Pacific Rail Road came through, the NPRR created Townsend. Many people moved from Bedford to the newly created town a few miles away. The last stage run ended in Bedford on June 22, 1883; the first train arrived on September 8, 1883.

The old mill building stood until the highway was built through the valley and the mill was demolished.

The information about Bedford is from the Broadwater Bygones which is available at the Broadwater County Museum.