

## HISTORY QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Just as wild fires are a threat today to those living adjacent to our national forests and undeveloped lands, the early settlers in our area were also faced with the threat of wild fires. What were some of the results of these fires?

### ANSWER

Wild fires were common in the early days of our community, and like today were caused by humans and nature. Farmers burning ditch banks and weeds were the causes of many fires that got out of control. It was common for farmers in the area when seeing smoke from a fire, to grab their shovel and gunny sacks and head in the direction of the smoke. On one occasion, a resident of Danish Town was burning a patch of June grass when a gust of wind quickly spread the flames. There were no telephones to call for help, but neighbors and strangers showed up with shovels and gunny sacks and extinguished the fire before it reached any of the buildings on the property.

The Alvin and Annie Green House, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, shows the result of a wild fire that was started by sparks from a train going up to Granite. Lumber for the floor joists of the house was stacked in the yard. The fire, started by sparks from the train was whipped by the south wind and burned rapidly northward. The fire burned over the pile of the lumber charring the edges. Since there wasn't money to replace the burned lumber it was used in the construction of the house and is visible from cellar of the home.

In 1921, three brush fires broke out at the same time, one in Big Cottonwood Canyon, one in Little Cottonwood Canyon and one in Emigration Canyon. One of the fires burned over 1300 acres between Butlerville and Granite and required starting a back fire to protect Granite, before the fire was brought under control. With the number of men necessary to fight this fire, it left the fire in Emigration Canyon to be fought by sheriff deputies. That fire burned 3 miles up the canyon before being extinguished.

In 1942, boys playing with matches, started a fire, that required 200 men from the Sandy and the Murray fire departments and crews from the Wasatch National Forest, to bring under control. The fire raged along the entire area fronting Big Cottonwood Canyon, from Butlerville to 62<sup>nd</sup> South, destroying over 800 acres of thick brush, one summer cottage and threatening many other homes. One fire fighter was injured. During the time crews were fighting this fire, several other grass and brush fires were reported. Thanks to volunteers, they were all extinguished without any appreciable damage.

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