A History of Toponis

(1883 - 1907)

Compiled by Shirley Hill
from the Gooding Leader 50th Ann. Edition - 1958
and Misc. Records

Wide open spaces, sagebrush, rabbits, rattlesnakes and a railroad stop halfway between two rivers - Big Wood and Little Wood Rivers - that was Toponis in the late 1880's and early 1900's. Until one man decided his ranch was a good place for a town.

Toponis Station was established by the Oregon Short line Railroad in 1883 - as a railroad stop in Alturus County. This County was established in 1864 - in the heart of gold and silver mining in the Idaho Territory, with the County Seat at Rocky Bar. The legislature, in 1889, divided Alturus County into three counties, creating Alturus, Logan and Elmore Counties. Toponis was in Logan County. Later Logan and Alturus counties were abolished. Alta and Blaine Counties were created from the territory of these two counties. The lines were changed at this time, so that Toponis was left in Blaine County. (Note: Some of our records can still be found today in Blaine County Records.) The Supreme Count then ruled that the bill which created Alta and Blaine Counties was illegally passed, changing them back to Alturus and Logan Counties (Note: Alta was, evidently never in existence long enough to have been included on the maps.) The next legislature abolished Alturus and Logan Counties, creating the counties of Blaine and Lincoln. This time Toponis was included in Lincoln County. (Note: Lincoln County was established in 1895, Idaho became a state in 1890.)

The first school in Toponis was a tent and served as a dwelling place for the teacher. Later the tent school was replaced by a new school house. Built about one and one-half miles west of Toponis by the railroad bridge which crossed Little Wood River. The first teacher in that new building was R.J. McMahon of Shoshone, who trapped wild cats and taught school. Afterwards the school house was moved back to Toponis and was located at the north end of what is now Oregon St. This school was used as a dance hall, church, opera house and election hall. Toponis was the center of attraction, for people came from the distance of 80 miles for the entertainment. During vacations the school house was used as a store house, and a hobo jungle. The school building remained until the districts #1, 6 and 10 were consolidated. The school district extended over all of what is Gooding County, and a small portion of Lincoln County.

While still in Toponis, the Oregon Short line Railroad built a section house, located on the north of what is now Nebraska St., for Martin Johnson who served as section foreman and postmaster, flagging down the mail train at 2:00 am. Records indicate the first post office was established at Toponis in 1887 - at 210 Main St. (Note: Present day location of the Gooding County Museum.)

Toponis became Gooding on 14 November 1907. The Toponis Post Office name was not changed until some years later. Most of this information comes from page 27 of the 50th Anniversary Edition of the Gooding

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