

THE TOWN OF BASIN

South 4th Street
Basin, Wyoming 82410

Incorporated August 6, 1902

P.O. Box 599
(307) 568-3331

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History

The Town of "Basin City" was founded in 1896 by Winfield S. Collins expressly to be the county seat of newly created Big Horn County. The Town of Otto on the Greybull River to the west of the site of Basin was a well established village and first was considered by Collins, but he could not come to terms with Frank Woods the owner of most of the lots, so Collins selected a site for his town on the bluffs west of the Big Horn River, a sagebrush flat covered with ant hills and prairie dog holes. When the election was held in the vast county (the entire Big Horn Basin) in November of 1896, Basin won the race by 44 votes. There were only 33 voters living on the townsite, most of whom were living in dugouts. One of the first houses in Basin was that of Collins, which was moved from Bonanza.

The town's first building housed the "Basin City Herald" a newspaper run by Tom Gebhart and Tom Magill and they used much imagination and later admitted that they told many lies in describing the new townsite.

Zane and Richardson started a general store, there was a building known as a hotel and restaurant, a barn and a building west of the courthouse square which was used for the county offices.

In January of 1899, after an open winter, a blizzard roared in from the north and the only thermometer in town dropped to 50 below zero and remained there for several weeks. By the time the supply wagons were able to make it to Billings, Montana (north 130 miles) and back, through the snowdrifts, the residents of Basin were almost out of food. They no longer wrote their friends in the east about living in the "banana belt" of Wyoming.

The editor of Volume 1 of the "Basin City Herald" wrote on August 26, 1896 the following: "Basin City - founded by the people and for the people." Basin was known as "the Gem of the Plains, a charming location with glorious scenery with beautiful surroundings, queen city of the state nearest the center of population, easiest approach, accessible at all times, the center of a rich farming section. The townsite being on the eastern slope, is bathed in sunshine. It may be truly said of Basin City that the splendor of dawn and the glories of sunshine caress the spot."

The Town grew fast in its first years. It was incorporated in 1902 and the "City" was dropped from the name by the government. Basin's first Mayor was W.S. Collins.

The year of 1910 was one of much building in Basin: the Basin Hospital was built in the north part of town, the Markham Hotel, the Catholic Church, a brick building used for county offices and jail along with a Carnegie Library was built on the county square, a large two story brick grade school in the west part of town was built with bricks made at a kiln site north of Basin, canals were being dug and a number of elegant two story houses were build around this time.

History Continued

In 1909 a newspaper correspondent from the Denver Post wrote: "The Town of Basin is an anomaly in the otherwise wild setting of Big Horn County. It has a population of about 1,000 and in no place in the west, and in few places in the east of its size, are seen so many evidences of civic development. The Town has splendid water and sewage systems, municipally owned, a telephone system, a natural gas plant which furnishes heat and light and an electric lighting system will be acquired soon."

Oil and natural gas had been discovered a year or so earlier in what is known as the "torchlight" field in the barren hills east of town.

Basin was always a town of many lodges and clubs with a large percentage of very well educated people. It never went through the stage of being a "wild cow town" as did the towns closer to the cattle ranches at the foot of the mountains. By 1904, the citizens had built a two story building on fourth street where lodges met, the Militia held its meetings, court and dances were held.

The raid on the jail in 1903, in which two prisoners and a deputy sheriff were killed, was one of the most sensational occurrences, but no one was indicted during a Grand Jury hearing although everyone in the county knew who the perpetrators were.

The focal point to this day is the town's beautiful courthouse square, upon which are the courthouse, built in 1918, the post office, and a library. When the town crew strings colored lights from the top of the courthouse to the sidewalk each Christmas, it is a spectacular scene. There is a free tourist camping park behind the post office and a large park behind the library.

The Town of Basin has a future ahead of it with the oil beds and major coal deposits surrounding it.

Location

The Town of Basin is located in the heart of Big Horn County, in the north central part of the State of Wyoming. Yellowstone Park is 113 miles west of Basin. The Big Horn mountains are located about 25 miles to the east. Basin is located along the Big Horn River and highway 20 and 16 runs through Basin in a north/south manner. The town is 132 miles south of Billings and 194 miles north of Casper, which is the largest commercial and retail area available to the area.

Housing

Basin has a predominant amount of retired persons and the work force is of middle income families. There is a large quantity of homes on the market in Town with the average sold in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range. There are mobile home courts with spaces available.

There is adequate financing available for the purchase of homes, with several State supported type loans plus the normal conventional forms of loans which are tied to the national market.

Population

One of Basin's assets is its stability. Since Basin's incorporation in 1902, the community has maintained a constant population. Currently the population is 1,349.

Employment

The radius of labor is about 30 miles. The major occupational groups deal with State, County and local government. There is much agriculture in the area and oil production employs some of the work force. There is a potential of mining coal and other minerals in this area, but this is relatively untouched at this time.

Banking Facilities

Security State Bank is the only bank operating in Basin at this time.

Union Activities

The Basin area is unique in that it has very little union activities. Wyoming is a "Right to Work" state with labor and management working for the common goal of good productivity.

School and Education

Basin has one high school and one grade school which offers its students a well rounded and quality education.

Utilities

Water: The water works system is owned, controlled and maintained by the Town of Basin. Application for water is made with the Town Treasurer. There is a moderate charge for new main taps. Two types of billing are used for the following: users with a 3/4" meter have a charge of \$6.50 and users with over 3/4" meters charged \$15.00 on a monthly basis. All users then are charged 75¢ for every 1,000 gallons used. Basin is unique in that from November 16th to March 15th of each year all customers go on a winter rate charge and are not billed for the usage. This winter rate charge is to encourage customers to run water continuously during the colder months of the year which reduces water line freezing and breaks.

The new water plant was built in 1983, which helped to make operations more cost efficient. The water quality is the best available and is considered safe from a bacterial standpoint; chemically safe within quality standards of the Department of Environmental Quality and Environmental Protection Agency. The water's total dissolved solids are moderately hard. Basin is currently receiving water from the Big Horn River but during high turbid times of the year the supply of water comes from the Big Horn Canal which runs less turbid water and comes from the west side of town. This change in operations is designed to extend the life of the plant. This new supply source is scheduled to start in May of 1987.

The Town of Basin has had an open ditch system running through town which was designed to allow residents to flood irrigate their gardens and lawns. In the past three years a Raw Water Project has been developed to convert open ditches to a pressurized irrigation system. The charges for raw water are determined by the size of tap installed at the owner's property line and range from \$30.00 per year for a 3/4" tap to \$300.00 per year for a 3" tap.

Raw Water Project

The Raw Water system (RW) will be capable of providing irrigation water at an

Raw Water Project Continued

estimated cost of \$.06 to \$.08 per 1,000 gallons used compared to the treated water which costs the Town residents \$.75 per 1,000 gallons. The RW is being placed 3 feet below the ground and will be drained each fall to allow lower costs to maintain the system. The system was designed to expand for future needs.

Other concerns that the Town may see in the near future are as follows: the lowering of the water table during the summer, better streets with less maintenance, better looking lots as the weed problem goes out of control along the open ditches and less maintenance on the purified water lines and sewer lines.

Electric Power

The Town of Basin currently purchases wholesale power from Pacific Power and Light at a 38.958 mil rate. In April of 1988 the Town will be purchasing power from Rocky Mountain Generation Cooperative, Inc. for a wholesale cost of 31.0 mils. The Basin residents may see a 15% rate reduction at that time.

There are two companies serving the area surrounding Basin. These are Pacific Power and Light and a smaller locally owned cooperative called the Big Horn Rural Electric Association.

Fossil Fuels (Natural Gas)

General gas service is supplied by the Wyoming Gas Company which is controlled by the Public Service Commission of Wyoming. Natural gas may be used for all purposes except re-sale.

Municipal Sewer System

Sewage in Basin is collected by the Municipal Sewer System and flows by gravity to a sewer lagoon. This is an oxidation pond that is located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of the Town which discharges the water into the Big Horn River. At the time of this investigation, no odors were noticed in the vicinity of the lagoon and the effluent appears to be clean year around.

The Town of Basin maintains a monthly sewer service charge of \$3.50 per month for up to a 3/4" water meter and \$10.00 per month for all water meters over 3/4".

Garbage Removal

The Town of Basin requires that each occupied dwelling unit subscribe to the garbage collection service provided by the Town. The charge is based on the number of pick-ups required per week as follows: 1 collection per week=\$5.00 a month, 2 collections per week=\$10.00 a month and 3 collections per week=\$15.00 a month.

Twice a year the Town sponsors a clean-up week. At these times any excessive garbage will be picked up without any additional charge. During these same periods burning is usually permitted by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality.

Mosquito Control

Mosquitos have been a serious problem in the past, but the Town is now containing the problem through baiting ponds and spraying. All residents within the corporate limits of the Town are required to pay \$1.00 per month for mosquito control.

Communication

Telephone: Mountain Bell services the Basin area which is in the Northwestern Wyoming region of the Mountain Bell system. The Wyoming area code is 307 and the Basin prefix number is 568.

Two-Way Radio: Timberline Electronics of Cody services the radio system for the County Sheriff's office. This office handles their calls, local police department calls, fire department, ambulance service and the area's emergency management agency calls. Bill Cowan's Radio Service maintains repeaters on Cedar Mountain, Copper Mountain and the Medicine Wheel which serves the public communication needs between base and mobil units, oil field and contractor users and private individuals.

Newspaper: The Basin Republican Rustler is a weekly publication which is published on Thursdays. This newspaper has a circulation of 1,000 which goes to various subscribers throughout the United States and overseas.

Radio: Two stations within the Basin area have been broadcasting since 1986. One FM and one AM, both with the call sign of "KMMZ." Thomas Curtis of Montana and Danile Coon of Washington own both stations.

Television: Basin has no local television station. Televents of Powder River supplies and operates the local cable system under a franchise agreement with the Town of Basin.

Post Office: Basin has a First Class Post Office with rural routes outside of Basin. Incoming mail is received daily going to SCF Center at Worland. Outgoing mail leaves Basin once daily at about 6:00 p.m.

Humanitarian Services

Basin has many churches within the Town limits, as well as various social, fraternal and civic organizations. There is one hotel and one motel to service the area. High standards of health care and personal services are available.

Government

The Town of Basin is governed by an elected Mayor and four-member Council. These officials are elected by Town residents. General Town operations are overseen by the Mayor.

Big Horn County is governed by a three-member Board of Commissioners that is elected by Big Horn County residents. Other elected officials in the Big Horn County government include the sheriff, clerk, treasurer, assessor, clerk of court, attorney and judge.

Police

Police protection in Basin is handled by the Basin Police Department which consists of a chief, sergeant and patrolman all of whom are certified with the State of Wyoming. This department handles patrol, communications, if necessary, civil investigations, warrants, animal control and records. The policemen also work with the County Sheriff's office when necessary.

Fire

South Big Horn County Fire District #2 takes care of all calls in Basin and the surrounding area. This is a volunteer force, which shows that our residents care about the community they live in and around. The current insurance fire rating in the Basin area is "Class 6."

Recreation

The Basin Recreation District #4 Board is comprised of members of the Town Council, School Board and the public. All board members volunteer their time to achieve a well-rounded and successful summer program. Activities include swimming, softball, baseball, basketball, soccer, gymnastics and golf.

During the winter, the Town of Basin opens an ice skating pond with a warming hut close by. The pond has supervision and has presented hockey workshops in the past.

Library

Basin is the home of the Big Horn County Library which can assist residents with any need that may exist.

Transportation

Motor Freight Lines: The Town of Basin has access to all freight lines which operate within the County, upon demand. These freight lines deal with government agencies at all levels, agriculture, construction, mining and livestock.

United Parcel Service has daily receiving and shipping. Federal Express is only upon demand.

Bus service is currently handled by Trailways Bus lines of Denver and travels through this area going north and south, to and from Billings.

Industrial Development

The Town of Basin is currently involved with the Wyoming Economic Development and Stabilization Board as well as the Big Horn Industrial Development Corporation. Basin is actively seeking businesses to come into the area whether it be small or large business.

Bonds/Public Financing

Wyoming Economic Development Block Grant (EDBG) is available to provide low interest subordinated loans for low to moderate job creation and retention.

The United States Small Business Administration 503 program (SBA) is available for long term subordinated fixed rate financing, for fixed assets have at least 15 years of useful life.

The Industrial Revenue Bonds have been issued to: Larchick Enterprises in 1981 for \$100,000.00 for the purpose of financing the acquisition, construction, improvement and equipment of a business and commercial project and to the Russell Building Project in 1980 for \$125,000.00 for the purpose of constructing a building for a business project.

The Town of Basin assisted in bringing a new business to the area by a new financing method not used before by the Town. This took place February 18, 1987 when the Town purchased a building and assigned it over to NAPA. The interest on the purchase was 7.5 percent granted to municipalities versus a commercial 12 or 13 percent, thus lowering substantially the cost of purchasing the building. The purchase price was \$54,000.00, the improvements to the building were \$11,000.00 for a total cost of \$65,000.00 for a term of 20 years. First Interstate Bank from Greybull then signed an agreement indemnifying the Town from any possible loss by agreeing to take over the payment if NAPA becomes delinquent.

Conclusion

Although the Town of Basin does not currently have a local committee dealing with Economic Development, the Mayor and Town Council have shown much interest in promoting development within the Town by attempting to lower utility bills for consumers with the soon to be completed Raw Water Project and soon to be lowered electric rates. The officials have supported efforts to start a Class A Book Bindery, which is currently in a study stage. The Mayor has written letters to businesses looking for a place to expand inviting them to visit our attractive, personable community. Basin is currently one of the lowest cost of living areas in the State of Wyoming, therefore the hopes are to entice business to take a serious look at our community. Our active involvement with the 200th Anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, as well as the Wyoming Centennial for Wyoming's 100 years of statehood will hopefully make people look into this small community as a place to call home for a business.