

City of Hines History



The Edward Hines Lumber Company became the major force in the lumber industry and economy of Harney County in June 1928, buying the 67,400-acre Bear Valley Timber Sale on the Malheur National Forest. The new Hines mill was completed on January 27, 1930, with an investment of \$7 million dollars, just before the Great Depression. A town named “Hines” was born.

World War II created a need for an increase in lumber products. Many Hines employees joined the armed forces and the women left at home filled the positions. They also planted victory gardens and purchased war bonds.

In 1945, the Hines mill experienced its first strike, but 10 years later, expanded to Baker, Bates and Dee, Oregon, adding to the Hines and Seneca operations. USFS contracts required roads and bridges be built on timber sales, and cattle guards installed where needed. Referred to as “Hines logging roads”, they have historically provided access for the public into camping, fishing and hunting sites.

In the early 1960s, the operation at Baker was phased out and many employees transferred to the Hines plant. Lumber was trucked from Bates to Hines and a dry sorter was revised to handle the additional volume. In 1965, a new plywood plant and stud mill were built for increasing volume of Douglas fir, white fir and larch.

Workers struck three times in two years, during the late 1960s. The Hines mill continued to modernize and add computerization to the process. The Oregon & Northwest Railroad hauled the finished products. The Seneca shops to the north were closed and all woods repair work moved to Hines.

Soaring timber prices, high wages and a deteriorating market in the late 1970s led to a depression in the lumber industry. Continued depressed conditions in 1980 caused a complete shut-down of operations. The plywood and factory operations were discontinued and a new sawmill was built.

In 1981, the old sawmill was dismantled and a new sawmill was constructed. With many changes implemented, production and profits improved. But after 90 years in the Oregon lumber business, the Hines Company divested itself of all interests in Oregon. On May 8, 1983, the Ponderosa Pine Division and the Oregon & Northwest Railroad were sold to Snow Mountain

Pine Company.

Mill operations in Hines have ceased and the railroad tracks were removed. Many of the historic buildings have been dismantled or converted to other uses.