



## City of Sisters

### **SISTERS COUNTRY OVERVIEW**

Captain Charles Le Follette led a Company A detachment of United States volunteers from the Willamette Valley over the Santiam Pass in 1865. Although their trip to Central Oregon was meant to last only until some Native American raids could be eliminated, winter delayed their return home until spring of 1866. They named their place of forced wintering “Camp Polk” after Polk County, the Captain’s home county.

During the next two decades, a number of settlers established a store, post office, and various ranches in the area, including Alfred Cobb’s Lazy Z Ranch, now a landmark immediately east of the town of Sisters. In July 1888 the nearby Camp Polk Post Office moved three miles south to the newly developing town with about twenty families, naming it “Sisters”.

Sheep and, later, cattle ranching and lumber were the main industries of the town for most of the next century, following the usual boom and bust cycles of those occupations. Several fires destroyed most of the original buildings. A “near cyclone” blew down structures, trees, and telephone lines in 1928.

By the early 1970s resorts in the area encouraged residents to focus on tourism as a means of saving the beleaguered town. The lumber industry was in steep decline and agriculture had always been tenuous in Sisters’ high desert location. Town leaders decided to return Sisters to its roots, by establishing a building-code requirement of 1880s design. Soon the town was transformed and, since that time, Sisters has become a magnet for tourists from all over the world.

*Provided by the Friends of the Sisters Library and the Deschutes County Historical Society*