



Fallon Creamery Cheese 'Catches' the Train

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Hidden just off of Shoreline Highway, two miles north of Tomales, is the small community of Fallon. It was once a thriving town of over 500 residents whose main industries were the dairy and produce raised and grown in the area for the markets in San Francisco. Fallon takes its name from Luke and James Fallon, two Irish-born brothers who settled the area in the late 1850s. Luke Fallon and his wife Mary owned more than 270 acres just a few miles north of Tomales where they raised dairy cattle. James Fallon and his wife Delia also owned a ranch and were in the dairy business. The Fallons became leading citizens of the county with Luke and Mary's son, Thomas, appointed as Deputy-Sheriff of Marin before being elected as Treasurer of the county. A third-generation family member became County Recorder.

In 1892, Luke and Mary's other son, Lawrence, was employed as a cheese-maker at the recently opened Fallon Creamery owned by George Burbank. Lawrence may be one of the figures in the photograph above. The creamery was transporting the enormous cheese via the North Pacific Coast Railroad to the 1894 Midwinter Exposition in Golden Gate Park. The Exposition was the brainchild of Michael H. DeYoung and included many of the exhibits from the previous year's Chicago World's Fair. The Japanese Tea Garden and DeYoung Museum in Golden Gate Park are remnants of that exposition. Two years later, Fallon Creamery won first prize for a 658lb. cheddar cheese entered into competition at the annual Mechanic's Exhibition in San Francisco. Business for the creamery continued to expand in the 1890s and a *San Francisco Call* article claimed that the Fallon Creamery was, "the largest in the county." The creamery sold its butter, cheese, and milk products as far away as Sacramento and in one year alone processed over 744,000 gallons of milk which was turned into 246,000 lbs. of butter and 90,000 lbs. of cheese.

The Fallon Creamery changed owner's and was updated and modernized in 1909. Unfortunately, disaster struck in the early morning hours of August 12, 1912, when the structure caught fire and was destroyed. Also lost in the blaze was the Cornett Brothers

warehouse, the train station and an egg packing and feed warehouse belonging to creamery owners Charles Pozzi and Angelo Poncia. The fire was described by the distant Los Angeles Herald as “destroying practically the whole village.” The creamery was re-established farther south near Tomales and Fallon began its slow decline into obscurity.

Today, if you drive north from Tomales and take the left hand turn on Whitaker Bluff Rd, you will soon pass a few buildings on your left that are all that is left of Fallon. The large, wooden, two-story structure, the Cornett Brothers Grocery Store at the time, survived the conflaguration with the help of local residents fighting the flames and the old railroad depot water tank can still be seen on the hill above.

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