Exhibit Home

Overview

Welcome to **Rust, Rot, & Ruin: Stories of Oregon Ghost Towns** — an exhibit that combines descriptions, accounts, photographs, and artifacts to explore these fascinating places. The exhibit examines why and how towns grew and what forces contributed to their decline. It also takes a closer look at selected ghost towns that illustrate larger trends.

Old buildings and equipment in the ghost town of Shaniko. **Oregon State Archives Scenic Images collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42411#lg=1&slide=0)**

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About Ghost Towns — Get context about what makes a ghost town

Mining — Look at why mining created so many ghost towns

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Agriculture — Learn about farming, ranching, and range wars

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Coastal — Check out the roles of tourism and the military

Other Selected Ghost Towns — Tour other Oregon ghost towns

Learn More — Discover related resources and see who created this exhibit

About Ghost Towns

In many ways, ghost towns are in the eye of the beholder. They can be difficult to define. And, they can be more of an idea or a feeling than a discrete set of characteristics. That being said, here are some general thoughts on Oregon ghost towns.

What is a Ghost Town?

Ghost Town Hunting

Boomtown and Bust

Storm clouds gather behind an old building in the ghost town of Kent in Sherman County.
Get a high resolution copy of this image from the Oregon Scprenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/29915#lg=1&slide=0).

Oregon Secretary of State

What is a Ghost Town?

> *"A town for which the reason for being no longer exists"* —historian T. Lindsey Baker

Ghost towns defy easy explanation. Many are abandoned villages or cities, often with substantial visible remains. Crumbling buildings, lonely cemeteries, and rusting industrial equipment mark the graves of these communities. Some have no residents besides crows, coyotes, and rattlesnakes. Others are still home to living people - thousands of them, even.

What unites these places is a shared history of decline and loss. Some towns died because the economy which supported them finished or failed. Mines are worked out, timber is cut down, wells go dry, and new routes bypass the community. Still others die from natural or manmade disasters. Floods and droughts, heavy regulation, or total lawlessness ended their share of towns. Famine, disease, pollution, and war have slain innumerable communities through history.

The state of Oregon legally calls a ghost town any incorporated city that: (1) Is on land acquired under a United States patent; (2) Does not have a sufficient number of registered electors permanently residing within the city to fill all offices provided for under its charter; and (3) Is of historic interest. **Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 221.862 (https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors221.html)** defines these characteristics and begins a discussion of the legal ramifications of ghost towns.

In the words of an old-timer from the dwindling Wheeler County village of Spray, recorded in *Ghost Towns of the Northwest*:

> *"They's just like any other town 'cept they ain't hardly no one livin' there."*

A steam donkey, or steam-powered winch used to haul logs, at the Collier Memorial State Park and Logging Museum near Chiloquin. Early logging operations extracted the timber in an area and departed in search of new forests. (Oregon State Archives, 2015)
https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/15812#lg=1&slide=0

This "Muskrat" dredge in the La Pine area in the early 1900s exemplified Oregon's extraction economy. (Oregon State Archives)

Ghost Town Hunting

Ghost towns can be hard to find. The search can lead down challenging roads that may be blocked by gates, fallen trees, or other obstacles. (**Oregon Scenic Images collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/45341#lg=1&slide=0)**)

Oregon has over 200 ghost towns across its wide territory. From the eastern deserts, to the mountain timberlands, and the windswept coast. Hunting for them can be a rewarding, but dangerous excursion into the wilderness. Explorers might well encounter unforgiving terrain, as well as natural hazards like snakes, sunstroke, and shifting sands. Manmade dangers arise too. One must look out for open mineshafts, rusted nails or other debris, and watch for signs for private property to keep from trespassing.

Ghost towns can be hard to find. Sometimes nothing is left of a whole community aside from a few rotting posts lying on the plain. Successful ghost town hunters make extensive use of records, oral histories, and map clues to find their way. Often dead-end roads and railroads, mapped mineshafts or tunnels speak to former habitation. So too are unnamed rows of buildings, often a sign of company town housing, or mineral names for towns indicating a former mining operation.

Be aware of the dangers when hunting for ghost towns. (**Oregon State Archives Scenic Image 20170927-1434, 2017 (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/32806#lg=1&slide=0)**)

Boomtown & Bust

Boomtowns attracted trades that catered to the laborers. Shown here are Maxville Bull Cooks Mr. and Mrs. MC Craven in 1925. (Courtesy of Maxville Heritage Interpretative Center)

Many Oregon ghost towns were born and died in an economic cycle called "boom and bust." When a small town "booms" it undergoes a sudden, rapid population and economic growth. Normally this follows the discovery of precious resources, or increased access to previously unreachable areas. In the 1800s, mining towns blossomed wherever gold was found.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, mill towns processing Oregon's vast timber resources emerged in the woodlands. Boomtowns weren't just filled with extraction laborers, either. Businesses catered to workers - especially hotels, saloons, brothels, and goods suppliers. These businesses employed as many (if not more) people than the town's main industry.

Boomtowns had their issues too. Such communities often struggled to accommodate new arrivals. Many also suffered from doctor shortages, poor educational facilities, inadequate housing, sewage disposal problems, and a lack of recreation. Lumber boomtowns typically only lasted around 10 years - the time it took to clear-cut an area of old-growth forest. Other boomtowns also brought about their own demise, as they were typically dependent on a single economic activity. Resource depletion created a "bust" in these places, a catastrophic price collapse that could shrink a town as fast as the "boom" grew it.

The old Four Horsemen Hotel along Forest Service road NF 42 near Big Summit Prairie in the Ochoco Mountains. was near   a mining site in boom days. (Oregon State Archives, 2017)
https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/37552#lg=1&slide=0

Mining Ghost Towns

Mining, by definition an extraction industry, created numerous ghost towns as the boom-bust economic cycle moved through southern and eastern Oregon in the 1800s and early 1900s. Several notable mining ghost towns are described and pictured in the links below.

Oregon Mining

Chinese Miners in Oregon

Bourne

Buncom

Cornucopia

Golden

Greenhorn

Jacksonville

Sumpter

A gold miner blasts rock and dirt with a powerful stream of water along a river bed near Galice, Oregon in 1910. Hydraulic mining was among the most environmentally destructive forms of mining during the 1800s and early 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Oregon Mining

"Roy Briggs has struck it rich. His tent is filled with gold in sacks, in cans, in bottles, in tin cups, and cooking utensils everywhere."
—The Rogue River Courier, 1904

Oregon's history is rich with gold. Whole towns were born, lived, and died in the search for the precious metal. The first gold nuggets were discovered in the 1850s on the Illinois River and creeks near Jacksonville. Those finds drew American miners not only from California and the Willamette Valley, but fortune seekers from around the world. Many claims were staked in the southern mountains and east of the Cascades. These mining camps grew into tent cities, and the richest among them turned into true brick and timber towns.

These communities scoured the earth for wealth. Wherever gold was extracted, environmental devastation followed. Hard rock mines honeycombed mountains while hydraulic pumps and dredges carved up hillsides, streams, and riverbeds, rendering them unusable by people or animals.

Gold strikes often followed a pattern in Oregon. First the placer miners and the panners arrived, taking the most easily reached metals from streams. Rich claims were taken up by white Americans, while poor ones were sold to Chinese mining operations. Nearly half of Southwest Oregon miners were Chinese in the 1860s. Many were pushed out of the industry by Americans as gold became harder to find. Later in the century, corporations replaced small, independent mine operations as mining company towns sprang up all over the state. The period of richest mining in Oregon was between the 1850s and 1880s. In the hundred-year period between the 1860s and 1960s, Oregon mines produced somewhere between $130 million and $215 million.

Quicksilver!

An example of cinnabar in quartz. (Wikimedia Commons)

Oregon mines also hauled tons of cinnabar from the earth - the bright red mineral from which mercury is extracted. The rocks are crushed and heated to extract the silvery liquid metal. Also called quicksilver, mercury was used with chlorine and arsenic to pull gold from ore through chemical "amalgamation."

Nineteenth century miners worked with these substances in the open air with few protections for themselves or the land. High levels of mercury and arsenic remain in the soil and water near historic mining areas. These chemicals helped make Oregon wealthy, but contribute to its ongoing environmental devastation.

More Mining Photos

A mine entrance at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center on Flagstaff Hill near Baker City. (**Oregon Scenic Images collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/27863#lg=1&slide=0)**)

Eastern Oregon miners in 1906. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

A prospector walks with his gold mining supplies near Grants Pass in 1903. (**Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a20657/)**)

Algot Sunderlin holds a 75-pound container of mercury at a Harney County pitchblende [radioactive, uranium-rich mineral and ore] plant in the mid 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Mining Artifacts

A 1900s portable scale for measuring gold and other precious metals. (Courtesy of Dani Morley)

A 1920s miner's cap with leather mounting for carbide lamp. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Onlookers stand above a hydraulic gold mining operation in the late 1800s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Chinese Miners in Oregon

Chinese immigrants have a long history of mining gold in Oregon. The earliest groups worked placer digs around Jacksonville which boasts the first Oregon Chinatown, a claim that is disputed by Baker City. Chinatown populations could swell many times over in winter, when miners left bad-weather mountain camps. In fact, Oregon had a significant 19th century Chinese population. In 1870 Grant County, for instance, nearly half the population was Chinese. Immigrants from China also made up almost 70% of all miners in the county and Chinese workers operated four out of every five placer mines in the region.

Many of these immigrants came from mining regions in China's Guangdong Province. There, Chinese mine companies trained skilled workers who then sailed to the United States. Many of these laborers were educated and came from prosperous families in south China. Most worked for companies which also owned stores, gambling halls, laundries, restaurants, and hotels. Chinese mining companies rarely paid wages like American businesses. Instead, they paid out shares of the profits based on a worker's contributions and expertise. Worker earnings were most often sent back to China.

Americans often forced Chinese miners into reworking claims abandoned by white prospectors. As the 1900s approached, harsh Asian exclusion policies meant fewer Chinese immigrants worked claims. By 1890 only 6% of Grant County's population was Chinese. At this time gold mining was also shifting to hard-rock mining, and Chinese companies could not meet the necessary startup costs. By 1902, the era of Chinese gold mining in Oregon was over. Immigrant workers could never break the racist barriers that prevented them from working alongside white American miners. The Chinese Exclusion Act became permanent that same year, ending all legal immigration from China.

The Kam Wah Chung Museum in John Day. The site is based in a rustic building that was constructed as a trading post in 1876. Here Chinese herbal doctor Ing Hay administered traditional Chinese remedies to the Chinese gold-mine workers, pioneers, and others from a wide area. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item?fulltext_search=kam%20wah

Dredges & Doodlebugs

While Chinese miners often worked abandoned claims on a small scale, another part of Oregon's gold industry saw the growth of mechanization. Gold dredges scooped tons upon tons of gravel, sand, and mud from water sources with mechanical buckets. They screened out unwanted materials, taking any gold and leaving behind gravel in piles called "tailings." Dredges required a great deal of water to operate. They were essentially landlocked boats that sat in a self-made pond that traveled with them as they scooped.

The Sumpter Dredge in Sumpter brought an industrial scale to mining and left miles of tailings as waste. (Oregon State Archives, 2012) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/53959#lg=1&slide=0)**

They appeared in the early 1900s, and some still lie abandoned in ponds across Oregon. The smaller but equally devastating "doodlebug" used a drag-line from dry land to feed a floating washing plant. It worked small deposits for operations that could not secure loans for a full-sized dredge.

This 1938 photo shows a typical waste area, or tailings, from hydraulic dredge mining operations in Grant County. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

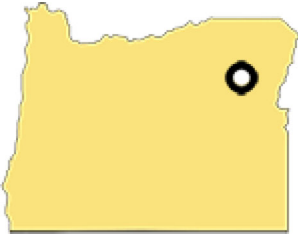Chinese miners in the late 1800s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Bourne

The strange story of Bourne begins with a town named "Cracker" or "Cracker City" a few miles north of Sumpter on Cracker Creek. The small town renamed itself after future U.S. Senator Jonathan Bourne moved to Oregon and bought the Eureka and Excelsior mines in 1899. Massive lode discoveries of gold and silver brought in $8 million from 1894 through 1916. According to many, Bourne and Sumpter sat on what was called "the great mother lode of the Blue Mountains." This was supposedly one of the largest unbroken veins of gold in the world.

As Bourne's mines rose in value, technological breakthroughs made it possible to get much more gold from a promising vein. These new tools and technologies also cost a lot of money - more than many prospectors could afford. By the 1890s, mines like Bourne's were more valuable to big industrial mining ventures than to small time owners. Mining concerns were springing up on stock exchanges all over the world at this time. Financiers in London were buying mines in Oregon, sight unseen, and making substantial profits.

People pose in front of the Raymond Hotel in Bourne in the early 1900s. (**Courtesy Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/photo/5AF6CCAF-4365-4B4E-B232-689472873460)**))

Many had dreams of striking it rich in the gold mines, and one man - F. Wallace White - took advantage of those fantasies. White moved to Bourne when the mines were already drying up. Rather than mining himself, he brought a newspaper press up the mountain. White produced not one but two newspapers out of Bourne: one a generally honest local periodical for the people of his town, and the other a flagrantly false paper for national consumption.

F. Wallace White's false paper spun convincing tales of massive gold discoveries, huge construction projects, and endless shipments of bullion. White made his money by offering readers opportunities to buy into this false investment opportunity. With a $7.5 million stock offering, White launched The Sampson Company Limited, with offices in London, New York City, and Bourne. To convince his buyers, White bought up the played-out mines in the Cracker Creek area. He then put on a show for investors at

his mansion with its formal dining room and ballroom, and at the mouths of promising-looking mines guarded by burly men with shotguns.

By the 1900s, however, investors started getting wise to White's schemes. He was not alone in his exploits, as other charlatans were at work in mines across the West. In fact, the whole mine financing industry was having trouble raising capital. Most investors at the time thought that every gold mine was inevitably crooked. After swindling millions of dollars, F. Wallace White fled town, leaving everything behind but his misbegotten money. The law eventually caught up with him though, while he was operating another mail fraud scheme in a different part of the country.

Today little remains of Bourne. Some of the mines are still producing a tiny trickle of gold, and a few residents and buildings remain. Most of Bourne, however, has disappeared back into the forest.

The F. Wallace White mansion in Bourne in 1928. (**Courtesy Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/photo/F8D0207E-5204-4588-A389-290241685533)**))

More Bourne Photos

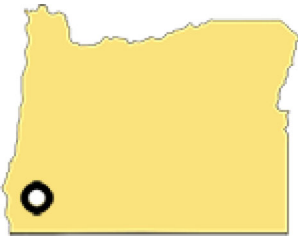A log cabin in Bourne. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images collection**

(https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42961#lg=1&slide=0)

"Dirty Little Rodney's" place in Bourne. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42962#lg=1&slide=0)**

Buncom

The tiny town of Buncom west of Ashland was settled in the 1850s by Chinese miners. Americans got wind of the find, pushed out the Chinese, and a general store, saloon, and post office were all established before the 1900s. In 1918, the region's gold dried up and the town was abandoned. Shortly thereafter, many of Buncom's remaining buildings were destroyed by a devastating fire which swept the ruins. Only three buildings survived the flames: the town post office, a wooden bunkhouse, and an old cookhouse.

Nearly a century later, the Buncom Historical Society formed in 1990. It was a body of valley residents who wished to preserve what remained. Beginning in 1993, the society organized the first "Buncom Day," an all-day annual affair that begins on a Saturday in late May. Designed to raise interest in local history, the event features live music, a barbecue, parade, family events, a petting zoo, door-prize drawings, as well as craft and food booths. Admission is free to Buncom Day and about 500 people usually attend. The event raises money for the society to preserve the buildings of the town of Buncom and promote the history of the Little Applegate Valley.

An old post office storefront building in the ghost town of Buncom. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the post office from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43565#lg=1&slide=0).**
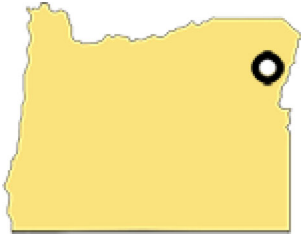
More Buncom Photos

Old buildings in Buncom. (Oregon State Archives, 2010) **Get a high resolution copy of the buildings from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/66927#lg=1&slide=0)**.

The interior of an old building in Buncom. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the building interior from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43591#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Oregon Secretary of State

Cornucopia

Cornucopia stands in the mountains of Pine Valley, east of Baker City at an elevation over 4,000 feet. This mining town was platted in 1886 following rapid growth after a gold discovery in 1884. The famous and highly profitable mine, Cornucopia, led to the name of the town. Profit brought popularity, and by 1902 Cornucopia boasted around 700 residents. At the time it was one of the ten largest mining operations in the whole country.

Rugged alpine conditions meant that the town had extremely harsh winters. Homes and other buildings were regularly buried in many feet of snowfall. The frigid winters, along with the town's isolation, old mining equipment, and reliance on horses over machines limited mine output in the town's early days. Not so by the 1920s. Massive lode discoveries in the decade brought improved technology. A railroad connected the town to the world, and shipped in parts for a twenty stamp (ore crushing hammer) mill constructed on site.

A listing old building in the ghost town of Cornucopia in the Wallowa Mountains. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the building from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection** **(https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/44128#lg=1&slide=0)**.
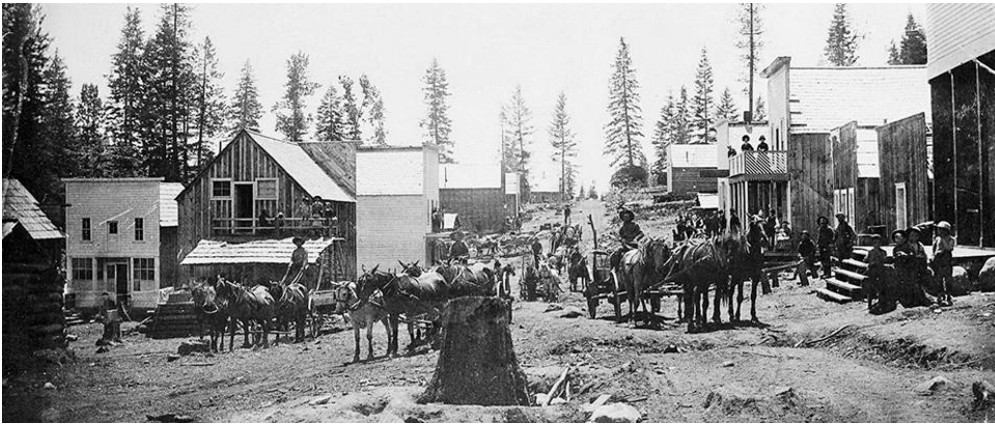
Cornucopia's decline began in 1929 when the stock market crash dropped the town's population to 10 people. The town recovered slightly in the 1930s. In fact, Cornucopia made up over 60% of state gold output in 1939. World War II tolled a death knell for the town, however. In all, an estimated $20 million in gold was extracted from thousands of feet of tunnels beneath Cornucopia. By the 1940s, production was already declining. In 1942, President Roosevelt declared gold mining non-essential to the war effort. Industry ground to a halt, the mines shut down for good, and Cornucopia never recovered.

More Cornucopia Photos

Cornucopia in 1884. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/949B00F9-57AC-46A2-99B8-732216481830#gallery)**)

Homes in Cornucopia. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the homes from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/44120#lg=1&slide=0)**.
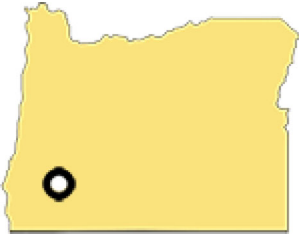
Men pose with their sleds on Main Street in Cornucopia in the 1910s. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/E8C77F45-46D3-4895-A4FD-794866127970#gallery)**)

The old jail building in Cornucopia. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the jail from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/44111#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Miners walk on a narrow road leading to the Last Chance Mine in the Cornucopia Mining District in the early 1900s. (**Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society** **(https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/234E380D-A234-4389-8982-117339722261#gallery)**)

Golden

Golden was born early in the 1840s when small placer mines established near Coyote Creek in Josephine County turned up small amounts of - you guessed it - gold. The Americans who founded this camp left it to pursue richer gold discoveries in Idaho and on nearby Salmon Creek. As was standard at the time, the old claims were taken up by Chinese miners willing to work for smaller returns. When American miners returned to the region years later, they drove out the Chinese miners and retook possession of Coyote Creek.

Panning the creek was time intensive and rarely lucrative. In the 1880s, however, hydraulic operations were set up to strip the creek beds of gold. In all, these water miners recovered some $1.5 million from the streams and hillsides. By the 1890s Golden considered itself a true town.

Unusual for mining towns, the religious residents had raised two churches but built no saloons. Supposedly, residents left town to visit a placer mine on Grave Creek for "refreshments." Like so many other Oregon towns, Golden was left abandoned and in disrepair after the 1920s with the creeks mined out and the economy turning south.

Some of its buildings were restored as film sets for television and a few western movies. Golden's few remaining structures were designated a state heritage site, drawing in a trickle of visitors to its churches and old creek beds to this day.

More Golden Photos

A school in Golden. (Oregon State Archives, 2014) **Get a high resolution copy of the school from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/18697#lg=1&slide=0).**

The interior of a church in Golden. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the interior from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/18703#lg=1&slide=0).**

The living space in the back of a store in Golden. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the living space from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43654#lg=1&slide=0).**


The interior of the front of a store in Golden. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the store interior from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43656#lg=1&slide=0).**

A church in the ghost town of   Golden, now the Golden State Heritage Site. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43621#lg=1&slide=0
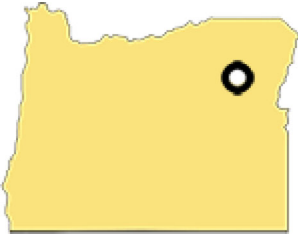
Greenhorn

In the 1860s, some of the first eastern Oregon mines opened in the Blue Mountains between Baker and Grant Counties. This period marked the start of Greenhorn, situated on rich placer and lode mining territory. The town's name is disputed, either named for a green uplift in the mountains, or for the inexperienced miners who came to strike it rich.

By the 1900s, the town was incorporated but had few residents. There were enough, however, to boast a Post office, two hotels, several stores, a brothel, and a tiny wooden jail. Like many of Oregon's other gold mining towns, Greenhorn declined to nearly nothing after the 1942 gold mining ban. Many of its wooden structures remained, rotting in the mountains.

Main Street in Greenhorn in 1915. (**Courtesy Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/photo/B673AC79-9FC3-4C4F-8969-970089855860)**)

One morning in 1963, residents of nearby Canyon City discovered that the old Greenhorn Jail, dating to 1910, was sitting mysteriously in their town. Someone had moved the entire structure, and no one knew who, when, how, or why. A court case ensued for its return. Because the city straddles the Blue Mountain ridge, the district attorneys of Baker County and Grant County could not agree in which court the case should be held. To this day, the jail remains in Canyon City. Also, to this day, Greenhorn remains the highest town in Oregon at over 6,000 feet, and has the lowest population of any incorporated community - zero.
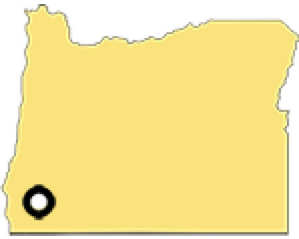
More Greenhorn Photos

A store clerk in Baker County weighs gold from a miner to pay for purchases. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/0B2BA9A7-ED00-475E-BD35-337618160880)**)

The old Greenhorn Jail now located at the Grant County Historical Museum in Canyon City. (Oregon State Archives, 2015) **Get a high resolution copy of the jail from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/13588#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Oregon Secretary of State

Jacksonville

With a population of nearly 3,000 people, many dispute Jacksonville as being a "true" ghost town. The city nearly disappeared after the 1800s. Jacksonville's story is not one of total disaster, but of a town which lived, nearly died, and then returned to life.

The city emerged as a small but important mining camp in the southern mountains during the 1800s. Gold was discovered nearby, and Jacksonville became a regional hub for the industry. In 1852, the Oregon Territorial Legislature created Jackson County, and named the young town as the county seat. It was already a vital zone of business and politics in the southern territory. This new title only cemented the town's rising status. Immigrants arrived in droves from the United States and around the world. Jacksonville had a sizeable number of Chinese gold miners, and boasted one of Oregon's earliest Chinatowns.

In the early days of statehood, no trains steamed through the region. People and goods arrived on foot, on horseback, or by stagecoach. Gold moved out of this hinterland through C.C. Beekman of Wells Fargo, and the owner of southern Oregon's only bank. Beekman sent gold shipments over the lonely stage route that linked Jacksonville with Sacramento and Portland. The Civil War also broke out this decade, and though Oregon was a Union state, Jacksonville was home to Confederate sympathizers. A great many Jackson County residents hailed from southern states such as Kentucky and Missouri. Most of the town also voted Democrat, were partial to Jacksonian style democracy and favored states' rights over federal rule.

After the war, Jacksonville began its slow decline as gold began running out in the 1870s. As rails began connecting Oregon to the rest of the country, Jacksonville looked forward to the arrival of the Oregon and California Railroad. Residents invested in new homes and businesses. They even constructed a new county courthouse. The line finally reached the Rogue Valley in 1883, but in a great upset the railroad bypassed the town. Jacksonville's officials believed that the railroad could not survive without the town. With this mind they declined to purchase a right-of-way or to donate toward building expenses. Instead, the railroad laid track to the east at Medford.

As Medford waxed, Jacksonville's wealth and power waned. The old gold town's fate was sealed after Medford was renamed the new seat of Jackson County. The town's slowing economy had a side-effect of preserving dozens of historic structures. With little investment, many of the town's original buildings are still intact - like a time capsule from the 1880s.

In the 1900s, residents took advantage of their unique town. Downtown Jacksonville was designated as a national historic district in 1966. Now, more than 50 years later, Jacksonville is thriving again. The city is a growing center for tourism, arts, and culture in southern Oregon. It boasts a yearly music festival and several historic museums.

More Jacksonville Photos

The Jacksonville Presbyterian Church. (**Oregon State Archives, 2014 (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/55627#lg=1&slide=0)**)

The historic Nunan House in Jacksonville. (**Oregon State Archives, 2014 (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/55653#lg=1&slide=0)**)
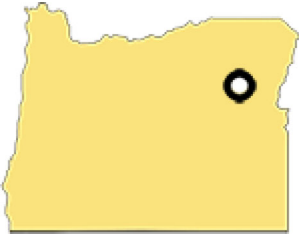
Downtown Jacksonville. (Oregon State Archives, 2014) **Get a high resolution copy of this building in the Oregon Scenic Images collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/18788#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Backyard mining in Jacksonville in the 1930s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Sumpter

According to local legend, Sumpter's early settlers found a large, round stone which reminded them of a cannonball and, inexplicably, Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Regardless of its origins, Sumpter with a "p" was platted in 1898 and became a gold mining boomtown in less than a decade. In the early 1900s and for many years after, the narrow-gauge Sumpter Valley Railway moved people and goods from Baker City through Sumpter and on to Prairie City.

A circa 1900 view of the north end of Mill Street in Sumpter. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/6408C0C5-A38C-47D5-BAB7-977328264016#gallery)**)

After the railroad arrived, the city expanded nearby deep shaft gold mines into a combined 12 miles of tunnels. The population grew to more than 2,000 people almost overnight. Sumpter had become a truly modern town, with churches, saloons, a brewery, sidewalks, three newspapers, and an opera house. It even had electric lighting. By this point, almost $9 million in gold had been drawn from the area's 35 mines. Sumpter was known locally and promoted nationally for its central role in the mining region.

Tragedy struck in 1917. As the mines were playing out, the city witnessed a devastating fire. The flames likely began in the Capitol Hotel and burned nearly 100 buildings over 12 town blocks. Dynamite was needed to put out the fire and only a few fireproof buildings remained, including the brick vault of the local bank. Since the mines were already going bust, few people had any incentive to stay and rebuild. Most former residents simply moved on.

Sumpter's gold dredges, however, continued on for decades. Several of these mining boats began operating in the 1910s. The last and largest still survives as a historic tourism destination. The dredge was a 72-bucket monster that processed nine cubic feet of material per minute. The dredge filtered out the gold and deposited gravel from a 96-foot conveyor, leaving neat piles of tailings up and down the valley. It operated 24 hours a day from 1934 to 1954, only stopping on Christmas, the 4th of July, and for three years during World War II.

In all, the Sumpter dredge extracted some $4.5 million in gold from the valley and left a wake of devastation visible from space. With the creek unusable for farming or husbandry, the dredge and surrounding lands are now an Oregon state park. A few of Sumpter's surviving structures remain and are
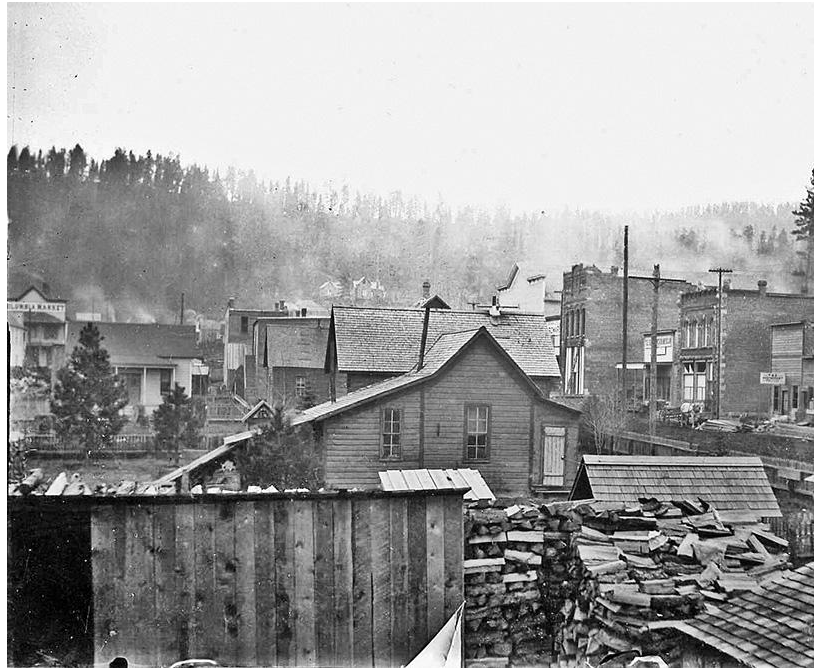
now occupied by retail shops for tourists. Recently, six miles of the Sumpter Valley Railway (now Railroad) were repaired, and the line runs an excursion train between Sumpter and McEwen.

More Sumpter Photos

Sumpter in ruins after a 1917 fire. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/DDC1A486-4F50-4AC7-9646-361365864264#gallery)**)

The old Sumpter Store building. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the Sumpter Store in the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42987#lg=1&slide=0).**

An old building in Sumpter repurposed as a bed and breakfast. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of this building from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42999#lg=1&slide=0)**.

One of many old buildings in Sumpter. (Oregon State Archives, 2019)
https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42974#lg=1&slide=0

Sumpter

Boosterism!

"The town is literally built on golden rock. It is walled in by mountains of gold-seamed quartz, and all its streams roll over golden sands. It is the center and supply and distribution point of hundreds, if not thousands, of square miles of gold-bearing territory, whose riches pass all ordinary computation. Immediately around it and tributary to it, 296 stamps are pounding out over $2,000,000 a year in gold bricks and concentrates, and every day is adding to the number of the mines and mills, and the amount of the yield."

An example of gold in quartz. (Wikimedia Commons)

-promotional flyer by the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company of Portland, Oregon

Logging Ghost Towns

Logging played a key role in Oregon's economy and cultural identity beginning in the 1800s. Old growth trees provided plenty of logs and jobs for local lumber mills and a growing American population. But in the days before forest replanting, trees were often stripped from an area, leaving abandoned mills and towns. This section explores how logging often resulted in ghost towns.

Oregon Logging in the 1800s

Oregon Logging in the 1900s

Company Town

Steam Donkeys and Lumberjack Food

Bridal Veil

Maxville

Valsetz

An old shack is surrounded by sagebrush in the Baker County logging ghost town of Whitney. (Oregon State Archives, 2016)

https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/29225#lg=1&slide=0

Oregon Logging in the 1800s

> *"Uncle Sam is not often called a fool in business matters, yet he has sold millions of acres of timber land at two dollars and a half an acre on which a single tree was worth more than a hundred dollars."* —John Muir, Our National Parks, 1901

In 1827, the Hudson's Bay Company built the first sawmill in the Oregon Territory at Fort Vancouver. Five decades later, new railroads turned the state into a massive timber kingdom. At the beginning of the 1900s, Oregon mills produced lumber for hungry markets in California and Asia. By 1938, 60 years after the first rail lines reached the state, Oregon became the leading U.S. wood producer.

Timber interests had a strong and sometimes illegal hand in state politics which is illustrated by the Oregon Land Fraud Scandal. Early 1900s timber speculators and corrupt public officials illegally transferred thousands of acres of public forest land to private companies. This led to thousands of indictments including nearly all of Oregon's U.S. congressional delegation.

Oregon's logging industry and the towns that supplied it were at the forefront of technological change. Advances in science and industry saw direct increases in felled and recovered timber. The region's first lumberjacks felled old-growth trees with little more than single-bit axes. These gave way to the double-head axe, then to the crosscut saw known as "the misery whip," and finally to the gas-powered chainsaw of the 1900s.

More 1800s Oregon Logging Photos

Horses pull a huge sled of logs in late 1800s Oregon. (Oregon State Archives)

Men stand at a logging site along the Columbia River in the 1890s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

1800s Oregon Logging Artifacts

An 1880s logging jack used for lifting logs to be cut. (Artifact courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

A timber scribe for marking logs and lumber in the late 1800s. (Artifact courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

An oxen team pulls logs to a mill pond in 1890s Oregon. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Three Oregon loggers pose with tools of their trade in the late 1800s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Oregon Logging in the 1900s

Timber had its ups and downs in Oregon history. Though a roaring industry through the 1920s, the Great Depression hit logging hard. By 1931, most mills operated at less than half capacity. The war economy of the 1940s increased both demand and production in the middle of a wartime labor shortage. Women worked sawmills in great numbers during World War II, and the postwar construction boom kept jobs plentiful.

Environmental devastation followed logging operations. By the 1950s, timber companies promoted the "conversion" of old-growth forest into fast-growing stands. They sold the idea of clear-cutting whole regions as a "scientifically sound" practice. Companies at the time also dramatically increased the use of chemicals to control brush and undergrowth. Weak state and federal laws left forests open to exploitation. Strong laws protecting Oregon's forests began in the 1970s with a ban on DDT and herbicides 2, 4, 5-T.

Major regulations did not come into effect until wildlife protections in 1991 slowed timber cutting on federal land. Today the industry is in decline, with private harvests down 20% from pre-1990s levels. On federal lands, Forest Service harvests fell over 90% from 2 billion board feet in 1990, to 245 million in 2000, and down to around 55 million in 2015.

Not only regulations but also the trend of replacing workers with machines have cut logging jobs since the 1980s. In the 1970s, timber employed over 80,000 Oregonians. This accounted for roughly 1 in 10 private sector jobs, 12% of Oregon's Gross Domestic Product, and 13% of private sector wages. By 2019, Oregon's logging industry amounted to only 30,000 employees, closer to 1 in 50 private sector jobs.

More 1900s Oregon Logging Photos

Market changes and environmental restrictions reduced the importance of logging to the Oregon economy in the late 1900s. Shown above is the Hampton Lumber Mill in Tillamook. (Oregon State Archives, 2012) **Get a high resolution copy of this image in the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/55362#lg=1&slide=0).**

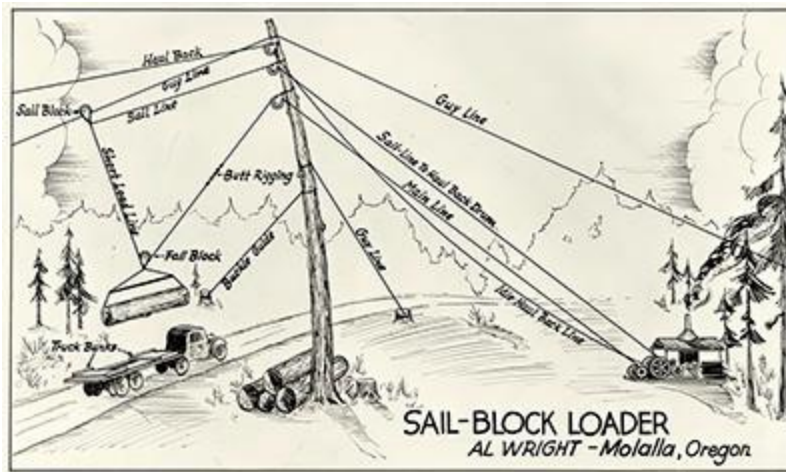
Men use long poles in 1951 to maneuver logs into rafts to float on the Umpqua River to a mill for processing.

Logs clog a streambed awaiting a spring flood to carry them to the Columbia River in the early 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

A 1950s graphic shows a complex system of cables used to load large logs onto log trucks for transport to wood products mills. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Oregon loggers pose on a massive tree stump in the early 1900s. (Courtesy Oregon Historical Society)

A man is suspended high in the air on a cable during early 1900s Oregon logging operations. (Oregon State Archives)

Company Town

Many of Oregon's ghost towns were "company towns" - communities where housing and most or all businesses are owned by a single company. The company is also the town's main (if not only) employer. Popular in the 1800s, these pre-planned communities housed workers in hard-to-reach locations. They were typified by extraction industries, especially lumber, mines, and manufacturing. Companies tended to run their towns as monopolies and tolerated no competition.

While most were simply residences and a mill, they often featured schools and amenities like churches or recreation centers. Some grew and became regular towns, while others died when the company closed shop. Most of these towns benefited from "corporate paternalism." In this system, business owners provided a standard of living for their workers. In exchange, owners demanded hard work, general sobriety, and the promise of not unionizing. The system had its drawbacks, and many company towns suffered from a history of worker exploitation and a severe lack of democratic representation.

By the 1920s, most company towns were either gone or in decline. Car ownership in particular ended the isolation of most company towns, as workers no longer needed to live on-site. Americans also began to see paternalistic "welfare capitalism" as demeaning. In the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal dealt a major blow to these companies by raising the minimum wage and pushing hard for working-class home ownership.

At their peak around the beginning of the 1900s, over 2,000 company towns housed around 3% of the U.S. population. Over 30 of these towns operated in Oregon, mostly east of the Cascades. Nearly all were centered on logging or lumber production. As they disappeared, most were replaced by tree farms growing new acres of Douglas firs.

The smokestack at the old Edward Hines Lumber Company mill in Hines. The company established several Oregon lumber towns, including Westfir, Dee, and Seneca. Oregon Scenic Images collection: https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/18239#lg=1&slide=0

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The Company Store

A logging company store circa 1895. (Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society)

"You load sixteen tons, what do you get?

Another day older and deeper in debt

Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go

I owe my soul to the company store"

—Tennessee Ernie Ford, "16 tons

A 1900s one dollar Kinzua Pine Mill company town coin. (Courtesy of Oregon Department of Forestry)

Steam Donkeys and Lumberjack Food

Steam Donkeys

In the early days of logging, teams of men and oxen dragged trees along skid rows to rivers, flumes, and collecting ponds. This was a massive undertaking, as old growth Douglas firs were often over 200 feet tall, five or six feet in diameter, and could weigh as much as 30 pounds per cubic foot. In the 1880s, this process became faster and more dangerous with the invention of the steam donkey designed to pull logs or lift them over brush and uneven terrain. The machine had a smoking engine powered by wood or coal, and gearing which turned drums or winches containing wire rope.

As more railroads opened eastern Oregon to logging, the steam donkey became indispensable to timber operations without access to rivers. It was designed to move logs from stump to flume or railcar. The steam donkey was replaced by gas powered yarding machines after World War II. The railroads they serviced were soon phased out by heavy-duty logging trucks.

Lumberjack Food

Cutting and hauling timber is hard work. Before the logging industry was mechanized, lumberjacks did much of the work by hand. This was so physically demanding that such woodsmen needed to eat between six and eight thousand calories a day!

At the beginning of the 1900s, this meant that every logger's daily ration consisted of close to one lb fresh meat, 1/5 lb smoked meat, two lbs fresh fruit and vegetables, 9/10 lb flour, 6/10 lb sugar, 1/5 lb butter, three eggs, and 1/5 lb dry coffee or tea.

Staples were beans, pork, and biscuits. In Oregon, loggers ate as locally as possible for freshness. By 1900, most loggers in the state had access to all of these foods, depending on the season:

PROTEINS
-fresh beef, codfish, fresh pork, ham, bacon, salt beef, corned beef, pickled beef, sowbelly, fresh fish, partridge, sausage, chops, steaks, hamburger, oysters, chicken, clam chowder, cold cuts, eggs
STARCHES
-potatoes, rice, barley, macaroni, boiled oats
VEGETABLES
-carrots, beets, cabbage, sauerkraut, pickles, rutabagas, turnips, beans
FRUITS
-raisins, currants, figs, berries, fresh fruits
PROCESSED FOODS
-jellies and jams, dried and canned fruit, condensed milk, coffee, tea, chocolate
BAKED GOODS

-biscuits, breads, pies, cakes, doughnuts, puddings, custards

Men eat a meal at a Stimson Lumber Company mess hall in the mid 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)
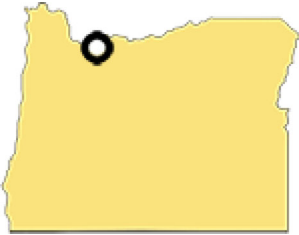
Loggers pose by a locomotive steam donkey in the 1890s. The machinery typically hauled heavy logs from the stump to a flume or railcar. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Bridal Veil

Bridal Veil was a small company mill town on the Columbia River. It took advantage of the great trees on the steep banks of the river, and took its name from the nearby Bridal Veil Falls. Along with the milling buildings, the company provided homes, a post office, a combination church and community center, as well as a cemetery.

The town was established in 1886 by the Bridal Veil Lumber Company on Larch Mountain. The site operated continuously for over 100 years. It had one of the longest runs for a company timber town west of the Mississippi River.

The town did not stand alone, but worked in concert with a nearby company town named Palmer. Felled timber was rough-cut at Palmer, then sent down a one-and-a-half-mile log flume to the finishing mills and railroad at Bridal Veil.

Palmer closed down in 1936, putting Bridal Veil's future into question. The town was saved the next year when it was bought by the Kraft Food Company. The mills were retooled to manufacture wooden cheese boxes. They ran for over 50 years, closing in 1988 after timber resources began to dwindle. The whole town left shortly thereafter. Today, only the post office and cemetery remain.

 Some years after its closing, the Bridal Veil Historic Preservation Society acquired the deed to the cemetery from heirs of the founders of the lumber company. This nonprofit works to keep the history of the site available to visitors. They work alongside the tiny old post office. Without residents, the office is able to stay in business as part of the wedding industry. Brides and grooms have made a tradition of sending their invitations through the office so it bears the unique "Bridal Veil" postmark.

A lumber flume at Bridal Veil in the early 1900s.
(**Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lumber_flume_at_Bridal_Veil_Oregon.jpg)**)

More Bridal Veil Photos

The crew of the Bridal Veil Lumber Company, 1885-1919. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Bridal Veil Post Office continued to operate in 2019. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Get a high resolution copy of the post office from the Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42612#lg=1&slide=0).**

Dinner time at the Bridal Veil Lumbering Company logging camp in the 1930s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

The mill town of Bridal Veil with a log flume shown to the right. (Wikimedia Commons)

The teacher and students stand in front of Bridal Veil School in 1894. (Wikimedia Commons)

Maxville

The extraordinary logging town of Maxville was created in 1923 by the Bowman-Hicks Lumber Company out of Missouri. Originally known as Logging Camp #5 near Wallowa, it gained new titles as the camp grew. Called Mac's Town after the first camp boss, it grew to a small town and renamed itself Maxville. Rather than draw workers from the Pacific Northwest, this southern company recruited loggers from the South. Unusual for the times, many of these timber workers were African Americans, even though state law excluded many people of color from living in Oregon.

Maxville was the most populous town in Wallowa County in 1923. It had a whopping 400 people - some 40 to 60 of whom were African Americans. The town was racially mixed but certainly not racially integrated. Maxville was a heavily segregated town in the southern Jim Crow style. Residents were mandated to live in separate parts of town, divided by race and marital status.

Logging jobs were also split up by worker ethnicity. African Americans felled trees with crosscut saws, worked as log loaders, log cutters, railroad builders, tong hookers and Black section foremen. A population of Greek immigrants built railroads for the town, while native born Anglo-Americans served as white section foremen, tree toppers, saw filers, truck drivers, and bridge builders.

In keeping with Jim Crow standards, Maxville educated its children separately. The town had two schoolhouses at either end. One was for white students, and the other for Black students. Maxville also boasted two racially segregated baseball teams. These two normally played against each other but combined for tournaments with other towns.

Maxville's sudden creation proved a boon for farmers and other northeast country-dwelling Oregonians. The needs of the town, especially for food, brought a number of extra jobs for locals and fresh goods for Maxville. Unfortunately, the jobs did not last. When the Great Depression hit and lumber sales fell, the Bowman-Hicks Lumber Company cut its losses and closed the town in 1933. After the town shut down, its African American families dispersed. Some sought other manual labor jobs in Oregon, others went south to
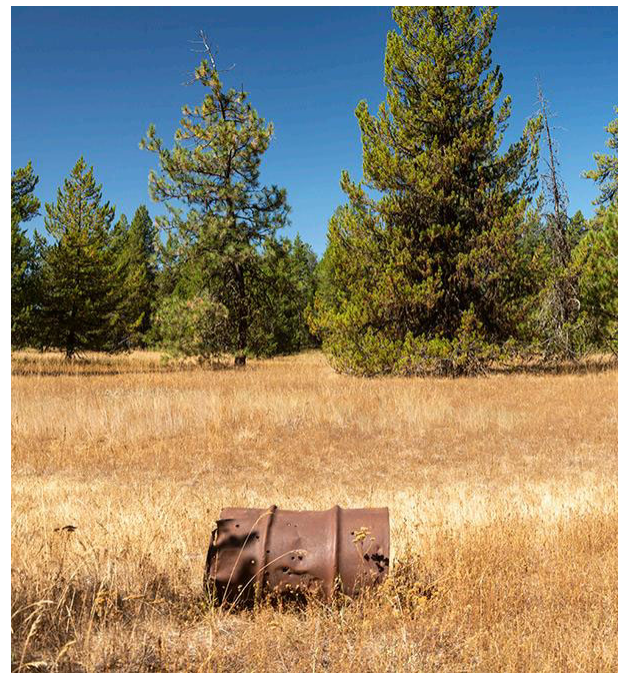
This rusted barrel is one of the few possible remnants of the community of Maxville in remote Wallowa County. The Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center in Joseph has artifacts and much more information. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43924#lg=1&slide=0)**

take logging jobs in California. Today, virtually nothing survives from this once thriving community.

More Maxville Photos

Maxville loggers pose for a company photo in 1926.
Courtesy of Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center (https://maxville.squarespace.com/timber-culture-gallery/5pqmxu2iu90w0jm486mg6w04oiost2).

Black and white residents of Maxville pose for a photo. **Courtesy of Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center** (https://maxville.squarespace.com/timber-culture-gallery/1mz6bcjea78rvjn8aou0yn80e0fnmc).

The Logger's Daughter

Oregon Public Broadcasting's Oregon Experience television program explores the experiences of hundreds of loggers and their families who trekked from Missouri and Arkansas to a logging camp in the remote hills of Wallowa County in the 1920s.

Dozens of the new Maxville citizens were African-American. The community had the only segregated school in Oregon and the Black residents lived across the railroad tracks from the white residents.

By the early 1930s, the Bowman-Hicks Lumber Company officially closed the camp but some residents stayed on into the 1940s.

Watch *The Logger's Daughter* documentary (https://www.pbs.org/video/oregon-experience-the-loggers-daughter/)

Students and teachers stand in front of a Maxville school circa 1926. **"Maxville's Segregated Schools, C. 1926" image courtesy of Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center (https://maxville.squarespace.com/timber-culture-gallery/tk11l6oby6yte5w8hkrlrmkathkkt8)**.
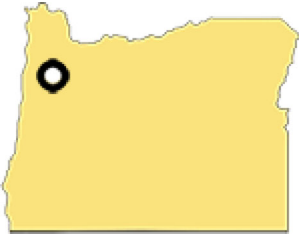
Valsetz

A 1910 forest fire in the Coast Range set the stage for the logging company town of Valsetz. Created in 1919 to harvest charred trees, early Valsetz was little more than a sawmill and company housing. It built a post office a year later and needed a name. The town was connected to the state by the Valley and Siletz Railroad, supposedly the inspiration for its unusual name.

Valsetz grew fast, and in a few years the town boasted not only dorms for single male loggers and mill workers, but also simple homes for families. Far from a ramshackle town, many buildings were crafted with skill and care. The company headquarters and company store were built in the Tudor Revival style popular at the time.

Valsetz workers did not live on the jobsite like many others in squalid backwoods logging camps. Instead, company workers commuted into the forest on a narrow-gauge train that ran from the town into the woods.

Valsetz's most famous resident was its preteen editor of *The Valsetz Star* newspaper, a girl named Dorothy Anne Hobson. In 1937, nine-year-old Hobson determined she would create a newspaper for the people of Valsetz. She wrote the articles in pencil and handed off scripts to a family friend who then sent them to Portland for publishing. The papers were typed as received – misspellings and all – and printed on eight and a half by fourteen-inch mimeographed pages.

According to Hobson in 1937, "We want to stand for something, so we had a meeting and we will stand for kindness. Also, we are a Republican paper, but we will not charge Democrats any more for a copy than a Republican...The Republicans are very sensible, but the Democrats are lots of fun."

Over a dozen major publications carried excerpts from *The Valsetz Star*. Some were notable, including the Portland *Oregonian*, Denver *Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, New York *Herald-Tribune*, and the Washington DC *Post*. She received mail from celebrities and politicians like Shirley Temple and Herbert Hoover.

Hobson published *The Valsetz Star* every month for four years – her final edition was in December of 1941. Afterward she moved with her family to Salem and attended Parrish junior high school. Hobson aimed to "improve her education, take music and vocal lessons, and have her teeth straightened, with no time left for anything except the Parrish Pep Club."

In the 1950s the town had reached its zenith with 125 loggers, 260 mill employees, and a total population of over 1,000 people. The company town's slow decline began in the next decade. By the 1970s, timber

reserves were cut down and the railroads were abandoned. Officially closed in 1984, Valsetz's many fine buildings were bulldozed and set ablaze. Decades of history and generations of memories burned along with them.

Dorothy Anne Hobson, when she was the editor of *The Valsetz Star*, in the early 1940s. (Courtesy of Oregon State Library)
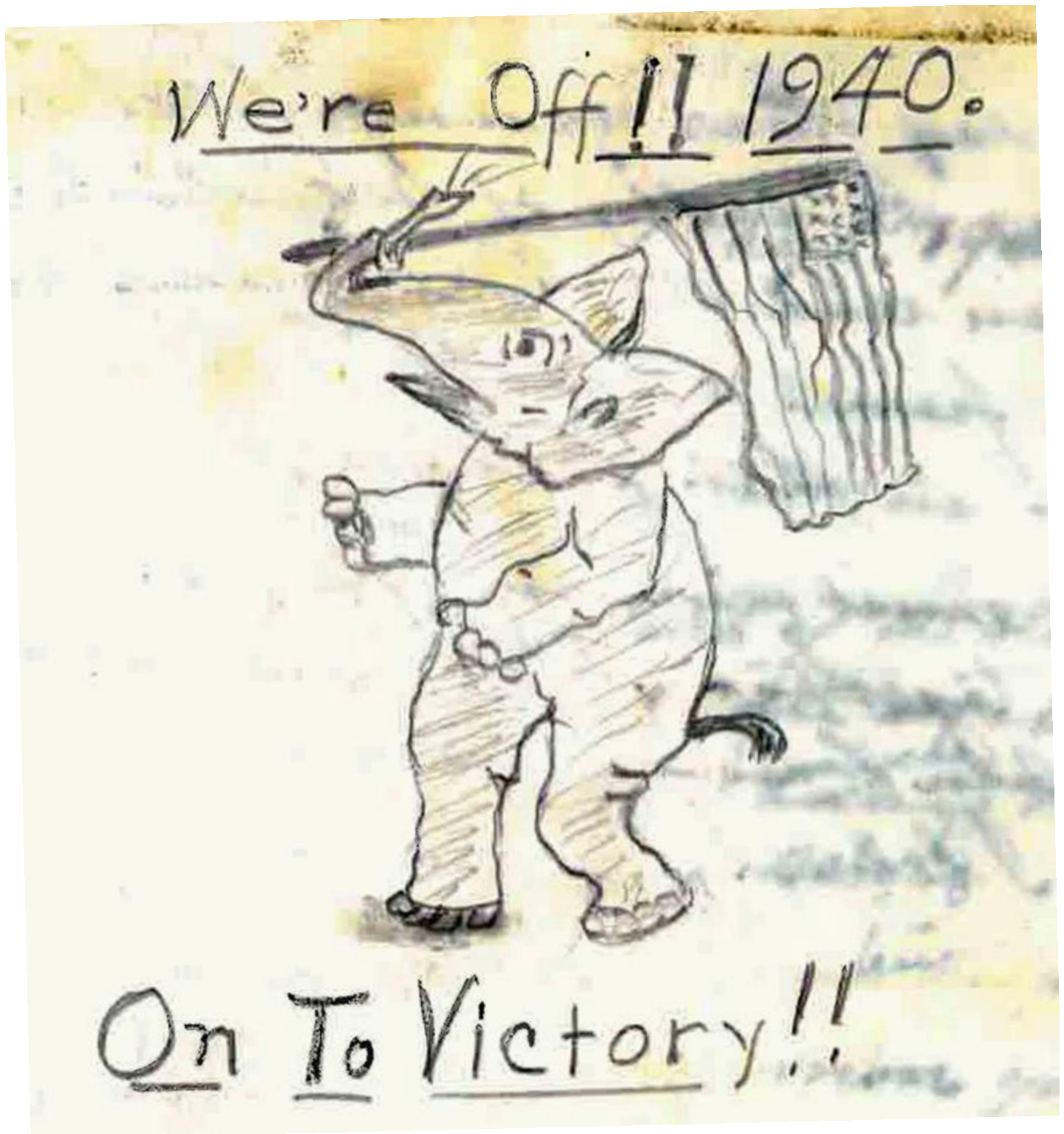
The Valley and Siletz Railroad followed the Luckiamute River to connect the city of Independence along the Willamette River to Valsetz. Courtesy of Oregon State University, Special Collections and Archives, Gerald W. Williams Collection. https://oregondigital.org/concern/images/df66tv89g

The Valsetz Railroad Station in Valsetz in 1958. Image courtesy of Ben Maxwell Collection. https://www.salemhistory.net/digital/collection/max/id/2427/rec/19

April 5, 1939

My dear Dorothy Ann Hobson:

Mrs. Roosevelt is so busy that
she cannot write you personally, but she
asks me to send you the enclosed autographed
card. She was interested to see your paper
and sends her best wishes to you.

Very sincerely yours,

Malvina C. Thompson

Secretary to
Mrs. Roosevelt

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Eleanor Roosevelt

☆THE VALSETZ STAR☆

Valsetz, Oregon

THANKSGIVING EDITION
November, 1938.

SPECIAL EDITOR'S NOTE

We are extra special glad and thankful this month on account of Mr. Sprague being elected our next governor of Oregon.

We worked hard for him and he even won in Valsetz.

***

He wrote us a nice letter some time ago, and we put it in a vault in the bank.   Franklin and I celebrated his winning by taking ten cents each of The Valsetz Star money and buying an extra large icecream cone.

***

Franklin wont write the terrible article about Hitler this month on account of it being Thanksgiving and we can't say anything mean about anybody. But we wont say anything nice either, because we don't like him on account of the thorn he got in his cheek from the bouquet of roses, so he ordered all flowers stopped along the parade. If President Roosevelt got a thorn in his cheek he would just laugh. He would never stop the bouquets.

***

There was a picture in 'Life' Magazine of some republicans, and they were all laughing. Seems good.

***

Grandpa Hobson, over in Salem, how did you like the election ? We haven't seen him yet, but we bet he is smiling. He has been a republican for eighty-nine years.

***

We bow our heads this Thanksgiving time, and give thanks,

For republicans getting back into office, and having their pictures in the paper again, --

For all the kind people in the world, --

For Cobbs & Mitchell's nice smooth lumber, --

And for the strike being over so we can have turkey for Thanksgiving dinner, instead of the beef stew with carrots we had planned on if we hadn't been working.

***

Mrs. Roosevelt said on her trip out west that there would be a woman president of the United States some day, and I think so too, but Franklin thinks a woman's place is in the home.

***

Daddy doesn't have to send his old gray felt hat to the cleaners any more. The republicans are coming into office and he can get a new one.

***

Franklin said he would never marry Greta Garbo because her hair is too straight, and he doesn't like her heavy stockings with the ribs.

LOCAL NEWS

Mr. W. T. O'Brien, of Portland, has been visiting in Valsetz the past three weeks at the Thomas' home. He is Franklin's grandfather, and a very good democrat.

***

Franklin doesn't like the new upsweep coiffures.   He doesn't care for cars.

***

Mrs. Ann Heydon made a business trip to Portland last week.   She brought back her fur coat and four new dresses.

***

They are beginning to quarrel over in Europe again.   It is nice to live in Valsetz. Nobody quarrels since the strike.

***

The bridge club met at Mrs. Fraser's.   Mrs. West was high, and Mrs. Thomas was second.   .
Mother was high once.

***

The school improvement club would like to call the soup kitchen something nicer.
The 'Star' thinks "School Recreation Room" sounds dignified.

---O---

Agricultural Ghost Towns

The story of farming ghost towns in Oregon often began with promoters describing the desert as a fertile paradise. Fueled by land grants, the boom usually ended with a very dry bust. Meanwhile, many early ranchers helped feed hungry miners who were following gold rushes around the state. Cattle barons later consolidated countless smaller ranches, thus controlling vast stretches of eastern Oregon. And, conflicts arose between cattle and sheep ranchers as the range wars common to the West heated up in Oregon.

Farming the Desert

Dead Ox Flat

Oregon Ranching History

Range Wars

Antelope

An old truck in a field on Lawen-Harney Road in Harney County. (Oregon State Archives, 2014) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/18303#lg=1&slide=0)**

Farming the Desert

> *"I will say that this part of Oregon is the most fertile for rocks and sagebrush of any part of the world that I have ever seen."* -Charlotte Stearns Pengra, August 22, 1853

In the fifteen years between 1905 and 1920, thousands of people moved to Southeast Oregon claiming free public land through the Homestead Act. This wave of migration was spurred to the West by optimism, a few years of unusually wet weather, and high grain prices during the First World War. Most of these settlers lived in and around tiny hamlets with little more than a primary school and post office. Unusual for the time, around one in six of these dry-farm homesteaders were young, single women who struck out west to claim farms of their own.

Ultimately, very few homestead farms survived the return of drought and frost to the desert. Those that remained prospered mainly from access to federal construction projects like highways and canals. The rest moved away, looking for work in mills and cities, while others simply stopped trying to farm and turned to ranching instead.

Farming Photos

Franklin Schroeder gives boys the "last watermelon of the season" at Dead Ox Flat in 1939. **Large image of**

Ray Halstead changes a flat tire at Dead Ox Flat in 1941.

Mr. Browning prepares to mow hay in his field at Dead Ox Flat in 1941. (**Courtesy of Library of Congress** **(https://www.loc.gov/item/2017773595/)**)

A pipe at Bully Creek Road carries water to farm irrigators in Malheur County. (**Oregon Scenic Images collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/28054#lg=1&slide=0)**)
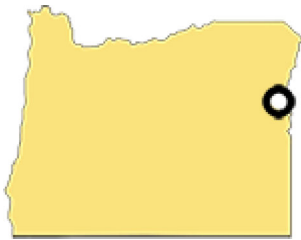
Jordan Valley in the 1920s. (Oregon State Archives)

Dead Ox Flat

Ray Halstead harrows his irrigated field at Dead Ox Flat in Malheur County in 1941. (**Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c01074/)**)

Little remains of Dead Ox Flats, a tiny town out on the sagebrush prairie just outside of Ontario. It was a tiny farming community born from practically nothing but a will to settle the arid West and make the land productive. In the early 1900s, local governments and private corporations tried building pumps strong enough to bring water into the desolate valley. The town owes its origin to the Dead Ox Flat water district. This amounted to a pumping station, canals, and a miles-long water pipeline built in 1937 by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Few records of this short-lived town exist, other than the photos taken by Dorothea Lange. Lange is now famous for her depression era photographs and her work for the Farm Security Administration (FSA). President Roosevelt created the FSA in 1937 to aid poor farmers, sharecroppers, and migrant workers. It promoted government planning and intervention to improve living conditions in rural America.

Mr. Browning's son plays with his pet goat at Dead Ox Flat in 1941. **Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c01050/)**.

The FSA was one of the New Deal's most progressive and controversial agencies. It moved poor farmers onto more productive land, promoted soil conservation, provided emergency relief, and loaned money to small farmers. In so doing, Dead Ox Flat was born. Practically nothing is left of the town today. The dugout homes and sagebrush hay barns are all gone. The only things still standing are the old water pipes and ancient pump building.

More Dead Ox Flat Photos

A man exits the basement house of Mrs. White in Dead Ox Flat in 1941. **Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c01134/).**

Dead Ox Flat from the head of Rattlesnake Grade in 1914. (Oregon State Archives)

The Schroeder Family stands by a strawberry patch in front of their Dead Ox Flat house in 1939. **Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b35121/).**

Mr. and Mrs. Wardlow stand at the entrance of their dugout basement home in Dead Ox Flat in 1939. **Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b35208/).**

Members of the Friends Church (Quaker) pose for a
photo in Dead Ox Flat in 1939. **Courtesy of Library
of Congress**
(https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b35186/).

This 1941 view shows the Owyhee River Valley, which
supplied irrigation water to Dead Ox Flat. **Courtesy of
Library of Congress**
(https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c01055/).

Oregon Ranching History

Oregon's rangelands to the east were prime grazing country for cattle, sheep, and horses. The state's ranching traditions were brought north by Californian vaqueros, called "buckaroos" by the Americans they worked with. The late 1800s saw the rise of massive ranches in the Southeast Oregon-Idaho-Nevada area. In these great ranges thousands of heads of livestock were raised on ranches many tens of thousands of acres in size.

Cattle and sheep had different needs and benefits to the people who ranched them. Cattle grazed the open plains while sheep summered high in the mountains and wintered at lower elevations. In addition, cattle could be driven to market, but lambs and wool needed mechanized transport before they could be sold.

Over time, the ranching economy altered the demographics of people living in Eastern Oregon. Early on, forced resettlement of natives to reservations opened central and eastern Oregon to occupation by settlers. Ranching was one of the first means for Euro-American settlers to sustain their families in the inhospitable eastern regions.

Men drive sheep to a shearing pen in 1941. **Courtesy of Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8a30035/)**.

Over time, the small homestead ranches of the settlers gave way to massive commercial operations. These huge ranches functioned as the modern fiefs of neo-feudal cattle barons. The buckaroos and shepherds who worked them were overwhelmingly young, single, white men. Some Chinese laborers were hired as range cooks and for domestic labor. The region's Latino influence dwindled by 1900. Around the same time, however, American women began making themselves vital to the growing range economy.

Sheep in Malheur County. **Courtesy of Library of Congress** (https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8c01115/).

More Oregon Ranching Photos

Workers count off sheep in 1941. **Courtesy of Library of Congress** (https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8c01145/).

Livestock drives continue in eastern Oregon. This 2014 sheep drive is along Highway 244 in Umatilla County. (Oregon State Archives, 2014) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/17117#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Cowboys herd cattle on the Oregon range in the 1900s. (Oregon State Archives)

Range Wars

Oregon's range wars are rooted in land disputes between cattlemen and shepherds at the turn of the 20th century. Tensions boiled over on the use of public land for ranching in central and eastern Oregon. Cattle ranchers were angry that sheep overgrazed low-elevation cattle land. This made the range unsuitable for cattle. Shepherds, on the other hand, accused cattlemen of buying up water resources and fencing the range - which they regarded as public land.

Cultural friction was a major component of the conflict. Oregon's cattlemen were largely Anglo-American, Californian, and Mexican. The shepherds were largely Irish and Basque nationals or their descendants. Additionally, horse mounted cattle workers looked at the pedestrian shepherds with disdain.

It was the cattle ranchers who proved the most belligerent. Cattlemen threatened shepherds and killed sheep for around three years along the Crooked River. Even though there was only one official murder, many shepherds lost their livelihoods as cowboys left thousands of sheep slaughtered on the plain. The wars only ended with the regulation of public lands after 1906. Rather than share the range, both sides bought land and created new businesses for intensive livestock production.

These sheep were casualties of 1904 range wars in Lake County. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Antelope
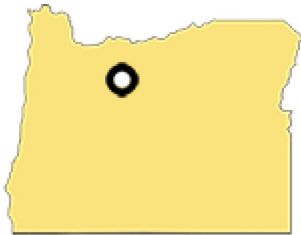
The subject of much fame, the tiny town of Antelope had obscure beginnings. The origin of its name is unclear, though it likely comes from the early 1800s. Supposedly, American explorers and settlers encountered a large population of pronghorns, also called antelope, in the green creek valley. True or not, sometime later a settlement bearing the name Antelope appeared on local records.

By the 1870s, the small town lay along the Dalles Military Road. This stagecoach route connected The Dalles on the Columbia to gold mines in Canyon City. Antelope served as a coach and freight stop, on the way to Sherar's Bridge over the Deschutes River. Shortly thereafter, its name was cemented as a post office was established, and Antelope was incorporated as a town in 1901. Around the same time the Columbia Southern Railroad connected towns on the Columbia to nearby Shaniko, a few miles north of Antelope. The town's population boomed, and then deflated over time. Antelope became a quiet ranching town for eight decades, home to no more than a few dozen people.

The situation changed dramatically in 1981 when the Rajneesh Movement arrived in town. Devotees of the Indian mystic Shree Rajneesh were recognizable by their orange, red, maroon, and pink clothes. It was an international movement based on positivity, joy, free love, and a valuation of science and mysticism over religious dogma. The group had a sizeable cash flow since the teachings of the Bhagwan were recorded in record-selling books. With these deep pockets the Rajneesh Movement bought the 64,000-acre Big Muddy Ranch just outside of Antelope. They also began buying up lots in the town proper. The movement aimed to create a utopia in the desert.

Within a year the ambitions of the movement became visible to all. Over 7,000 people moved to the Big Muddy Ranch, including the Bhagwan himself. It was renamed Rajneeshpuram Commune and incorporated as a separate community. As more Rajneeshees moved to Antelope, more of the town's original residents sold their lots and left. The old-timers panicked, and held a vote to disincorporate. This would have prevented the town, including its school, from being taken over by the movement. By the time of the vote, however, too many Rajneeshees had moved in and the measure failed. The movement then held another vote to change the name of Antelope to something with clearer origins: the town of Rajneesh.

The movement thrived for a few years, but in 1985 it fell apart after criminal revelations. Leaders of Rajneeshpuram were arrested for attempted murder in one of the United States' first bio-terror attacks. Salmonella was used to infect salad bars in The Dalles restaurants. Aiming to influence a local election in their favor, the movement had poisoned hundreds of people. The Bhagwan was deported in 1985 after the convictions of his staff, who were found guilty of the attack. The Oregon commune was destroyed in September of that year.

Soon after, the remaining residents of Rajneesh voted 34-0 to return the town's name to Antelope. Rajneeshpuram fell into disrepair after the movement left. In the 1990s the commune reverted to ownership of the state. Oregon sold the land to a Montana billionaire who then donated it to a Christian parachurch organization. Many of the commune's structures remain on the site, reused by a new group of devotees.

More Antelope Photos

Sannyasins meditate in Rajneeshpuram in the early 1980s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

An old garage in Antelope. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42464#lg=1&slide=0).**

The old Antelope School later became a community center. (Oregon State Archives, 2009) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/61011#lg=1&slide=0).**

Rajneeshees line up outside of a building in the 1980s. The movement created upheaval in the sleepy town of Antelope, which they renamed Rajneesh. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

A street view of Antelope in 1961. Courtesy of Ben Maxwell Collection: https://www.salemhistory.net/digital/collection/max/id/2558/rec/4

Transportation Ghost Towns

Location, location, location are said to be the top three factors in the real estate market. This cliché could be true in the making of ghost towns too. Towns often boomed because of some transportation location advantage only to die off when railroad or highway routes later bypassed the area. Isolated communities along highways also could be dangerous places as the story of a murder in Millican proves.

Railroads

Highways and Canals

Millican

Shaniko

An old tractor in Shaniko. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42430#lg=1&slide=0)**

Railroads

Prior to the arrival of railroads, freight was first transported to Portland by river-steamer. Ships then transported Oregon goods to U.S. and world markets. Many routes for rail were proposed in Oregon's early days. Few were funded and fewer still were actually built.

First was the Oregon Portage Railroad in the 1850s which ran 45 miles from the Bonneville Dam area to the Cascade Locks. After the Civil War and through the 1880s, the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company laid over 600 miles of track across the state. These projects connected Oregon to the rest of the nation through the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad.

Railroad companies typically followed frontier roads and trails when surveying routes. This was in part because existing routes offered a path of least resistance through the wilderness. This is also because railroads were fantastically expensive to build. However, these high start-up costs could also lead to dramatic financial gains. Railroads offered low-cost, year-round transportation for goods, livestock, and people.

Oregon's farmers responded to this new market access by upping production and land-use for agriculture. Rails also brought heavy equipment out west, helping farmers transition from subsistence to intensive agriculture. Manufacturing exploded as well. Lumber mills were built to supply new lines. Repair shops, as well as wool and flour mills, popped up alongside the railroads they relied on. The state's population boomed after rails arrived, growing from 90,000 people in 1870 to over 400,000 in 1900.

Railroads brought prosperity for some towns, but spelled doom for those the rail bypassed. Some prosperous towns shriveled up and disappeared after railroads were laid just a few miles away. This often resulted in the drawing of people and businesses to the new rail junctions. By the beginning of the 1900s, small farmers and businesses suffered too, as they were increasingly gouged by powerful railroad monopolies. Only large corporations had the capital to afford the mounting fees of doing business by rail.

Decisions about where to route railroads through remote places could make or break towns. Shown here are railroad tracks crossing Warnock Road in Wallowa County. (Oregon State Archives, 2016)
https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/30501#lg=1&slide=0

Highways and Canals

> *"We have good roads comparatively. We mean good roads if the sloughs are not belly deep and the hills not right straight up and down and not rock enough to turn the wagon over."* —Henry Allyn, August 11, 1852

Highways

Through the 1800s a network of unpaved roads linked Oregon. The routes of the Oregon Trail wound from the east, and a network of farm roads crisscrossed the state. In the west, the state's beaches served as a common transit route, useful as the region's unpaved roads turned to mud in the winter. The State Highway Commission was created in the 1910s to build a road system that would offer easy transit across the state, and connect Oregon's farmers to markets. These new roads would also provide access to hard-to-reach scenic areas, encouraging tourism spending.

The state's first scenic highway was completed in 1922 in the Columbia River Gorge. Tourism promotion was wildly successful, and by World War II it was the third largest business in the state. During this time, the new Oregon Coast Highway, now known as Highway 101, made traveling along the coast much more efficient. This also spurred the the construction of connecting highways to inland population centers, thus satisfying a growing interest by tourists to travel by auto.

Originally ferries brought highway traffic across the bays and estuaries. As car ownership and road traffic increased, the boats would eventually become roadblocks. Vehicles backed up on the highways waiting for a turn on the ferry. The state ultimately replaced them with a system of scenic bridges designed by Conde B. McCullough, Oregon's bridge engineer from 1919 to 1935.

Canals

Oregon's eastern regions would never have flourished as agricultural zones were it not for their miles of canals. These were built using federal funds in the first half of the 1900s. Manmade-waterway engineers aimed to turn the high desert and sagebrush prairie into irrigated dryland farms. In all, there are over 6,000 canals across the state. This amounts to more than 700 miles of inland waterways used for drainage, irrigation, mining, and water power.

The first vehicles cross the new Siuslaw River Bridge in Florence in 1936. This was one of several coastal bridges designed by Conde B. McCullough. (Courtesy of Siuslaw Pioneer Museum)
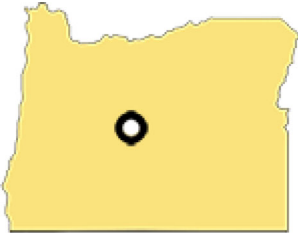
The Harper Southside Canal near Harper in Malheur County. (Oregon State Archives, 2011)
https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/50945#lg=1&slide=0

Millican

The strange story of Millican began in the 1880s, when George Millican carved out a ranch 25 miles east of Bend. With little else nearby, a small township bearing his name grew up around it. By 1913, Millican's Post Office was established, making it an official town. The population grew but never climbed above 100 people.

In the 1930s, U.S. Highway 20 cut its own path through the nearby country. Much of the town moved out, interested in the new life that such a road could provide. This dropped Millican's population to one man: Billy Rahn who ran the Post Office and retired in 1942 when it closed.

After World War II, a businessman named Bill Mellin bought and ran the old gas station, store, and post office. Mellin worked the town alone for forty years, until 1988, when he was murdered by his only employee. The one-man ghost town left no one behind. Mellin's family was already dead: his children in a car accident and plane crash, and his wife by heart attack. The town's population dropped to zero again.

A 1940 cartoon of Billy Rahn. (*The Sunday Oregonian*)

Millican is a truly unlucky place. For the past 30 years, several families and businesses have bought and then quickly sold the town again. All had high hopes, but none kept the land for long. If you've always wanted to own a ghost town just wait a while, Millican should be up for sale again soon.

The old Millican Store along Highway 20. (Oregon State Archives, 2014)
https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/17751#lg=1&slide=0
View the Millican Store in 1963. (Courtesy of Ben Maxwell Collection)
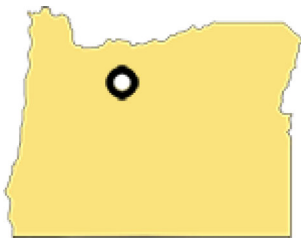https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ghost/PublishingImages/transportation-millican-SPL6480.jpg

Oregon Secretary of State

Shaniko

Shaniko celebrates the Fourth of July in 1895. (Courtesy of Oregon State Library)

The formerly famous Shaniko was originally called Cross Hollow. A post office by that name opened in 1879 with August Scherneckau as postmaster. A few years later in 1887, the Cross Hollow post office closed, then the "Shaniko" post office reopened in 1900.

In the early 1900s, Shaniko served as a transit hub for the Columbia Southern Railway. At the time, the town lay at the center of 20,000 square miles of wool and wheat land. By 1901, Shaniko was Wasco County's fifth largest city. It had the largest wool warehouse in the state, in which 4 million pounds were stored and sold. It was 1903 when Shaniko gained the nickname "Wool Capital of the World." That year the town shipped over 1 million bushels of wheat and over 2,000 tons of wool. This amounted to some $3 million in wool sales alone. A year later in 1904, the wool sales were up to $5 million. Shaniko saw conflict in Oregon's Range Wars, and was one of the rare places where shepherds fended off the cattlemen.

The Shaniko Hotel. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42422#lg=1&slide=0)**.

View the Shaniko Hotel in the 1960s (/archives/exhibits/ghost/PublishingImages/transportation-shaniko-SPL-6759-Shaniko-hotel.jpg). (Courtesy of Ben Maxwell Collection)

The good times wouldn't last, however. In 1911, the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company opened a route linking Portland to Bend through the Deschutes River canyon. The new line

diverted traffic from the Columbia Southern, and Shaniko began its decline. Passenger service to Shaniko ended in the early 1930s, and the entire line stopped running in 1966.

Shaniko won a few short reprieves in its story. It housed workers and their families during the construction of Highway 97. The town's businesses benefited from the grading and improving of roads in Wasco County in the 1920s and 1930s, and the building of a gas pipeline in the 1950s. Finally, in 1959 the Oregon Centennial Commission awarded Shaniko with the odd title: "Oregon's Ghost Town of the Year." The population dwindled after this to a few dozen people.

In the 1980s a developer tried to restore the Shaniko Hotel but later sold the property to Oregon businessman Robert B. Pamplin Jr. He purchased the hotel as well as a few small businesses and city lots in 2000. Pamplin renovated some buildings and planned to build new houses for workers who would cater to tourists. But in 2008, the Shaniko City Council and the state of Oregon denied Pamplin an easement from a well on one of his lots to supply water to the hotel and restaurant. He shut down the hotel and cafe, capped off the well, and closed shop.

Shaniko attracts ghost town tourists every year, but water issues prevent large scale tourism. A few structures still stand, like the old wooden water tower, city hall complete with an old jail, the school, and the old post office. Local businesses operate from April to September for what tourists they receive. Each year in August, an event known as "Shaniko Days" attracts hundreds of people. The Shaniko Preservation Guild, organized in 2004, operates a museum, hosts an annual wool gathering, and sponsors the yearly Tygh Valley Bluegrass Jamboree as well as The Ragtime & Vintage Music Festival.

The Shaniko School. (Oregon State Archives, 2013) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/22559#lg=1&slide=0).**

View the Shaniko School in 1954 (/archives/exhibits/ghost/PublishingImages/transportation

More Shaniko Photos

An old house in Shaniko. (Oregon State Archives, 2019)
Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42434#lg=1&slide=0).

Old cars in Shaniko. (Oregon State Archives, 2019)
Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42428#lg=1&slide=0).

Coastal Ghost Towns

The Oregon coast has been populated since prehistoric times by native groups such as the Alsea, Clatsop, Coos, Coquille, Siuslaw, and Tillamook peoples. These groups lived in permanent coastal settlements and ate a diet rich in clams, salmon, and seals. European powers did not set eyes on the emerald coast until the 1700s. Lewis and Clark were the first Americans to spend time on the Oregon coast in the early 1800s. This action was aimed at negating British and other colonial claims to the territory.

By the era of statehood in 1859, coastal towns were emerging as hubs for fishing and logging. With few roads in or out, Oregon's many bays and estuaries were only reachable by boat. Seeing the potential for tourism, the Oregon State Land Board began selling public tidelands for private resorts. This trend only increased as new railroads brought tourists from the Willamette Valley to the sleepy, inaccessible coastal towns. Tourism exploded and extraction industries declined in the 1900s. This largely followed the completion of the coastal highway and its 36 state parks as well as roads linking the coast to the inland population centers. Many coastal communities still depended heavily on the timber industry well into the 1970s.

An old artillery gun at Fort Stevens State Park near where the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean. The location was seen as strategically important for defense before modern warfare advances made the fort obsolete. The site is now the military equivalent of a ghost town. (Oregon State Archives, 2015) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/14830#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Bayocean and Fort Stevens offer two very different examples of the creation of coastal ghost towns. One speaks to the power of both tourism and nature while the other shows how advances in military strategy and technology can leave an aftermath of defense ghost towns.

Bayocean

Fort Stevens

Native American woman, Annie Ditallo, gathers oysters at Newport circa 1900. (Lincoln County Historical Society, LCHS #1195)
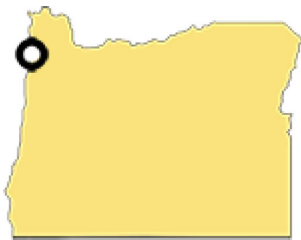
Bayocean

The Bayocean Railroad carries building supplies in the early 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

The town that fell into the sea was planned in 1906 as a resort community on Tillamook Spit. It was a sandy strip of land on the ocean side of Tillamook Bay. Its post office was established in 1909, and by 1914 the resort town had a population of over 2,000 people.

Bayocean's named derived from views of Tillamook Bay and the ocean on either side. From the outset it was intended as the "Atlantic City of the West." The town had a dance hall, hotel with an orchestra, 1,000-seat movie theater, shooting range, bowling alley, tennis courts, a rail system, and four miles of paved streets. Bayocean's crown jewel was a heated natatorium with wave generators and a bandstand for live music while guests swam. Even though Bayocean's economy was based on tourism, it was far from a company town. There were several other businesses, including a cannery, tin shop, machine shop, and a Texaco gas station.

Tillamook Bay from Bayocean Spit. (Oregon State Archives, 2012) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/55177#lg=1&slide=0)**.

At a time when many other towns did not have high tech infrastructure like electricity or paved roads, Bayocean boasted a water system, telephone system, and a diesel-driven power plant. Infrastructure and construction were aided by a small railroad called "The Dinky." This tiny train had portable tracks that

could be moved according to the building destination. The Dinky ran from a pier standing in the sea, as Bayocean was not connected by road or rail to the rest of the country until the 1920s.

Most residents and tourists arrived via T. B. Potter's steamship, the S.S. Bayocean. She was the largest yacht on the coast, and took three days to make the trip from Portland. The final leg of the journey entered the unprotected mouth of Tillamook Bay and proved a rough and often frightening experience. Eventually Bayocean's residents asked the Army Corps of Engineers for a protective jetty to reduce the waves. The Army studied the location and suggested that two jetties be built, one on each side of the bay's mouth, at an estimated cost of $2.2 million. The Army Corps would secure funding for half the cost, but the other half was required to come from local residents. With the multimillion-dollar price considered unaffordable, Bayocean's residents only built a single jetty for a little over $800,000.

The single jetty worked for a time, and made for a much smoother journey into the bay. An issue arose when the one-sided change to the coastline began a process of erosion that ate away Bayocean's beaches. They narrowed for a time, before the sea completely overtook them. It was the beginning of the end.

In 1932, waves from a massive storm finally crossed the beach and destroyed the natatorium. The spit itself was further damaged by several winter storms, and by 1952 what was left of Bayocean had become an island. Bayocean's post office closed in 1953. What little remained of the town was demolished during the reclamation and dike-building project of 1956.

Saving the town now meant saving the buildings from the sea. Several of the original buildings from Bayocean were moved to Cape Meares, including the school house, which is now a community center. In 1960, Bayocean's last house was washed away, and in 1971 the last remaining building, a garage, finally fell into the ocean.

A second jetty was built in the 1970s and sand began to reaccumulate on the spit. The site is now the location of Bayocean Peninsula County Park and virtually all traces of the town are gone beneath the sand and surf. All that remains is a commemorative sign at the south end of the park.

More Bayocean Photos

People stand along a Bungalow City walkway at Bayocean in the early 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

The natatorium at Bayocean circa 1915. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)
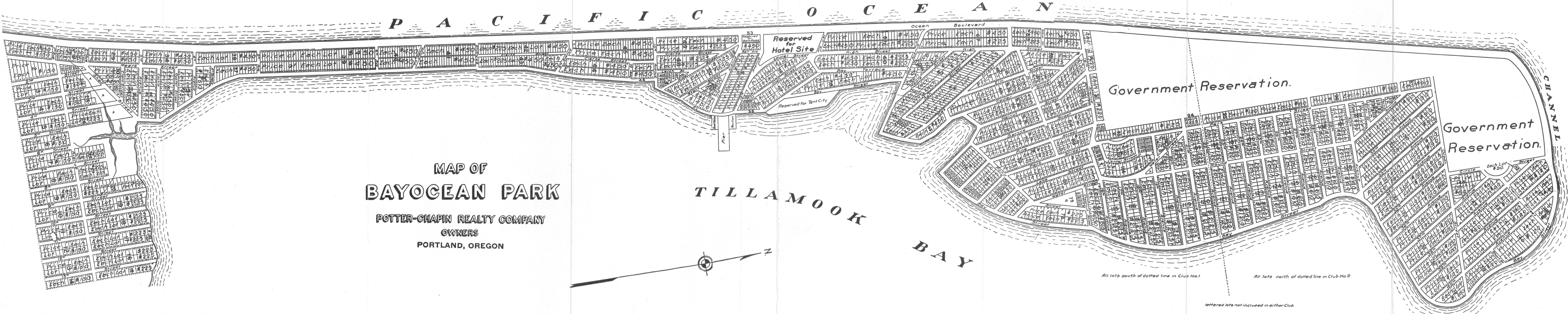
A person looks up at one of the last remaining Bayocean buildings in 1947. **Image courtesy of Ben Maxwell Collection (https://www.salemhistory.net/digital/collection/max/id/2142/rec/5).**

Top: A narrow gauge, private railroad on the beach at Bayocean carried building supplies such as concrete and lumber for the construction of various buildings at the real estate development. The portable tracks could be moved depending on need. Shown above is a group of potential buyers or investors in 1910.

Bottom: The Bayocean Natatorium was built on the edge of the sand in 1914. It was part of a larger, ill-fated resort community that the town founder hoped would become the "Atlantic City of the West." (**Courtesy PDXHistory.com** **(http://pdxhistory.com/html/bayocean.html)**)

World champion swimmer Richmond Cavill prepares to dive at Bayocean in the early 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

Bayocean Tent City in the early 1900s. (Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society)

P A C I F I C   O C E A N

Ocean Boulevard

Reserved for Hotel Site.

Reserved for Tent City

Government Reservation.

Government Reservation.

CHANNEL

MAP OF
BAYOCEAN PARK

POTTER-CHAPIN REALTY COMPANY
OWNERS
PORTLAND, OREGON

T I L L A M O O K   B A Y

N

All lots south of dotted line in Club No.1

All lots north of dotted line in Club No.2

lettered lots not included in either Club

Map of Bayocean Park, Showing All Streets, Blocks, Lots and Prices.

Fort Stevens
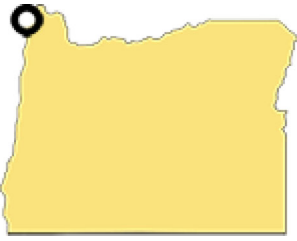
At the height of the Civil War, the Union constructed an earthwork battery on the shore of the Columbia called the Fort at Point Adams. It was renamed Fort Stevens after the slain general and former Washington Territory Governor, Isaac Stevens. The fort was originally part of the Three-Fort Harbor Defenses of the Columbia River. Fort Stevens sat across the river's mouth from Fort Columbia and Fort Canby on the Washington side.

The battery was built to defend against a possible British attack. It marked a period of high tension between the United States and Great Britain after years of territorial disputes in the region. At the time, there was a very real threat of Britain siding with the Confederate States to keep its economy flush with American cotton and tobacco.

The Civil War ended without incident at the fort, which remained a quiet military installation until the 1900s. In 1906, the now famous British Bark Peter Iredale ran aground on Clatsop Spit. She hit land so hard that three of her four masts snapped from the impact. The wreck became a tourist attraction overnight. The very next day the *Oregon Journal* reported that "in spite of the gale that was raging scores flocked to the scene of the disaster."

It was not until World War II, however, that the fort saw any combat action. Out of the darkness, one night in 1942, the Imperial Japanese submarine I-25 had followed Allied fishing boats through the nearby offshore minefield. She fired 17 shells from her 14cm deck gun directly at the fort. This attack made Fort Stevens the only military installation in the continental U.S. to be attacked by the Axis during World War II. Fortunately, there were no casualties and only minimal damage was sustained in the attack. Japanese shells destroyed the backstop of the baseball field and downed several telephone cables.

Most rounds landed far afield in a nearby swamp. Much devastation was averted by the fort's commander, who ordered lights out across the fort, and kept 12-inch mortars and 10-inch cannons from returning fire. The fort was effectively hidden from the submarine which could make out no targets without the fort's lights or the muzzle flares from its guns.

The attack fueled a west coast invasion scare. Both the fort and the 1906 shipwreck were wreathed in barbed wire barricades until the end of the war. In 1947, Fort Stevens was decommissioned and transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps then transferred the site to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Fort Stevens remains open to all as a 4,000-acre state park, and has been a hub for tourism for over a century.

Fort Stevens Photos

Shadows dominate the corridors of the batteries at Fort Stevens. (Oregon State Archives, 2010) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/66297#lg=1&slide=0)**.

A cannon fires at Fort Stevens during a 1971 demonstration. (Oregon State Archives)

The Columbia River flows behind a battery at Fort Stevens. (Oregon State Archives, 2015) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/14835#lg=1&slide=0)**.

The breech of an artillery gun ready for loading at Fort Stevens. (Oregon State Archives, 2015) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/14842#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Sinks at Fort Stevens. Oregon State Archives, 2010)

Overhead rails helped transport heavy munitions through the fortified West Battery at Fort Stevens. (Oregon State Archives, 2010)

Oregon Secretary of State

Other Selected Ghost Towns

Depending on your definition, there may be over 200 ghost towns in Oregon. Some of these are virtually nonexistent now. Others have recovered from their decline and are now bustling communities, often based economically on something completely different from their original boom. Here are glimpses of just a few more of them. We'll leave the rest for you to find and explore!

Granite

Hardman

Kent

Mayville

Whitney

"Frank's Place" in the ghost town of Granite in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43005#lg=1&slide=0)**.

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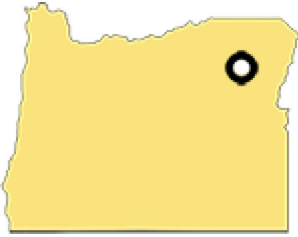
Granite

Granite was once a prosperous gold mining town. However, in 1942 the government shut down gold and other non-essential mines to focus the nation's efforts on World War II. The town's economy collapsed and never recovered while its population fell to one person in the 1960s. In 1990, eight residents called Granite home. In recent years, more retired people moved there and the population rose to 40 in 2018.

People stand in front of the Niven & Ditmars General Merchandise store in Granite in the late 1800s. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/photo/9CCB3776-85AC-46D3-8A7C-846393800924)**)

Allen Hall in Granite has been the city hall and was signed as a museum in 2019. (Oregon State Archives, 2012) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/54010#lg=1&slide=0)**.

The old general store building in Granite. (Oregon State Archives, 2012) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/54005#lg=1&slide=0)**.

The cemetery in Granite includes wooden grave markers. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/43026#lg=1&slide=0)**.
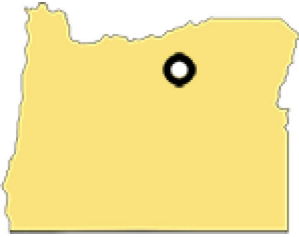
Hardman

Hardman, first called "Rawdog," was once a center of commerce for farms in southern Morrow County. The town prospered with schools, stores, hotels, a newspaper, and even a telephone office. However, Hardman declined after the 1920s when a railroad ran through nearby Heppner, 20 miles to the northeast. One of the last commercial buildings standing from the town's heyday is the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) hall, which was built in 1900.

A cattle drive moves down Main Street in Hardman in 1962. **Ben Maxwell Collection (https://www.salemhistory.net/digital/collection/max/id/3341/rec/5).**

Old buildings in Hardman. (Oregon State Archives, 2007) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/5078#lg=1&slide=0)**.


The old Hardman IOOF Lodge Hall in Hardman. (**Ian Poellet, Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hardman_Community_Center_-_Hardman_Oregon.jpg)**)

Lumber helps brace the front porch of a house in Hardman. (**Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hardman%2c_Oregon%2c_collapsing_house.jpg)**)

Oregon Secretary of State
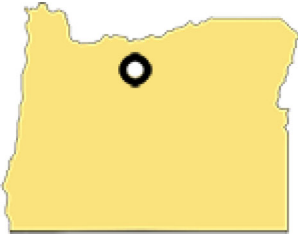
Kent

Situated amid the rolling grain fields of southern Sherman County, Kent is another Oregon community profoundly affected by railroads. When the Columbia Southern Railroad branch line reached Kent and Shaniko in 1900, residents moved the town and post office from its original town site to meet the rail line. By 1905, the population reached 250. Over the decades, Kent has kept its post office and zip code but has lost most of its population, which sat at 67 in 2018.

A grain elevator in the ghost town of Kent. (Oregon State Archives, 2016) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/29925#lg=1&slide=0).**

An old cafe building in Kent along Highway 97. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/45945#lg=1&slide=0)**.

An old gas station along Highway 97 in Kent. (Oregon State Archives, 2016) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/29932#lg=1&slide=0)**.

The entrance to the Kent Cemetery. (Oregon State Archives, 2011) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/50816#lg=1&slide=0).**

Oregon Secretary of State
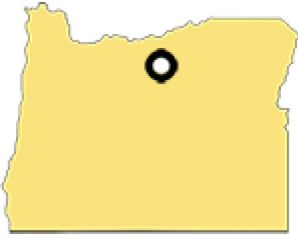
Mayville

Originally called Clyde, the community of Mayville on Highway 19 south of Condon grew by offering services to stage coaches and freight haulers in the late 1800s. Residents hoped to make Mayville the county seat of Gilliam County, which was created from Wasco County in 1885, but county voters finally chose Condon in 1890. Undaunted, citizens built a large Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) hall, church, grange hall, mercantile, and other buildings. But a fire later destroyed the hotel while a newly paved Highway 19 allowed motorists to speed through Mayville without stopping, thus sealing its fate as a ghost town.

One of many old buildings in Mayville. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/45112#lg=1&slide=0).**

The Mayville Cemetery. (Oregon State Archives,
2014) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection**
(https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-
archives/item/17317#lg=1&slide=0).

A hay field outside of Mayville. (Oregon State Archives,
2014) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection**
(https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-
archives/item/17527#lg=1&slide=0).

The Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) building still stands in Mayville. (Oregon State Archives, 2012) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/53257#lg=1&slide=0).**
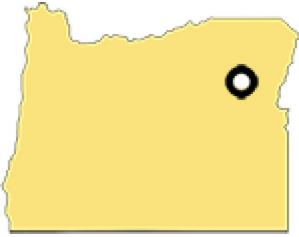
Whitney

A logging town near the Burnt River in gold mine country, Whitney was founded and platted in 1900. The community thrived along the narrow gauge Sumpter Valley Railway, which reached the area in 1901. The Oregon Lumber Company built the first sawmill in the area but it was devastated by a fire in 1918 and never fully rebuilt by the time the industry declined in the 1940s. At one time the town was home to over 150 people, but after the railway was abandoned in 1947, it has dwindled to a few residents.

A wagon sits in front of the Whitney Post Office in the early 1900s. (**Courtesy of Baker County Library District (https://bakerlib.pastperfectonline.com/photo/07D488B8-F016-4E86-852D-835946784200)**))

A cow skull hangs over the entrance to a house in Whitney. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42941#lg=1&slide=0)**.

Old buildings in Whitney. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42916#lg=1&slide=0)**.

A barn in Whitney. (Oregon State Archives, 2019) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection**

https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/42937#lg=1&slide=0

Learn More

Continue Exploring Ghost Towns

Books

A Compendium of Oregon Ghost Towns (https://books.google.com/books?id=hLmExgEACAAJ&dq=oregon+ghost+towns&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjg94jJ9_blAhUkHjQIHSM0AbkQ6AEwBHoECAMQAQ) by Steve Arndt (2019)

Ghost Towns of the Northwest (https://books.google.com/books?id=L3--mBLmzREC&pg=PR14&dq=oregon+ghost+towns&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwitoq7n-vblAhVBj54KHaNyDiA4ChDrATAIegQIAxAB#v=onepage&q=oregon%20ghost%20towns&f=false) by Norman D. Weis (2006)

Ghost Towns of the Pacific Northwest (https://books.google.com/books?id=CE70AwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=oregon+ghost+towns&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjg94jJ9_blAhUkHjQIHSM0AbkQ6AEwAXoECAYQAg#v=onepage&q=oregon%20ghost%20towns&f=false) by Phil Varney (2013)

Oregon Ghost Towns, A to Z (https://books.google.com/books?id=CMxovQEACAAJ&dq=oregon+ghost+towns&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwitoq7n-vblAhVBj54KHaNyDiA4ChDoATADegQIABAB) by Steve Arndt (2018)

A grease pump to lubricate the massive equipment used to operate the Sumpter Dredge in Sumpter. The dredge brought industrial methods to gold mining and left environmental damage in its wake. (Oregon State Archives, 2017) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection** (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/33945#lg=1&slide=0).

Websites

Abandoned Oregon Facebook Group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/AbandonedOregon/) (includes ghost towns)

Abandoned Oregon Flickr Group (https://www.flickr.com/groups/78812837%40N00/pool/) (includes ghost towns)

Credits and Acknowledgements

Gallery Exhibit

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Baker County Library District (https://www.bakerlib.org/)

Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/)

Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center (https://www.maxvilleheritage.org/)

Oregon Department of Forestry (https://www.oregon.gov/odf/Pages/index.aspx)

Oregon Historical Society (https://www.ohs.org/)

Oregon State Library (https://www.oregon.gov/library/Pages/default.aspx)

Salem Public Library (https://www.cityofsalem.net/community/library)

Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Web Exhibit

Gary Halvorson
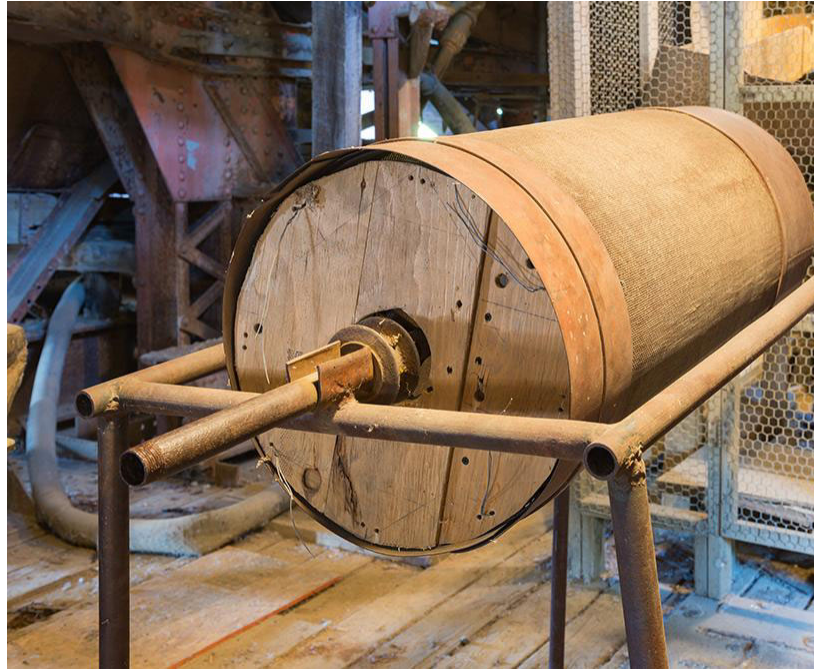
Equipment at the Sumpter Dredge in Sumpter. The dredge is a **State Heritage Area** (https://stateparks.oregon.gov/index.cfm?do=park.profile&parkId=174) operated by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. (Oregon State Archives, 2017) **Oregon Scenic Images Collection** (https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/oregon-state-archives/item/33934#lg=1&slide=0).