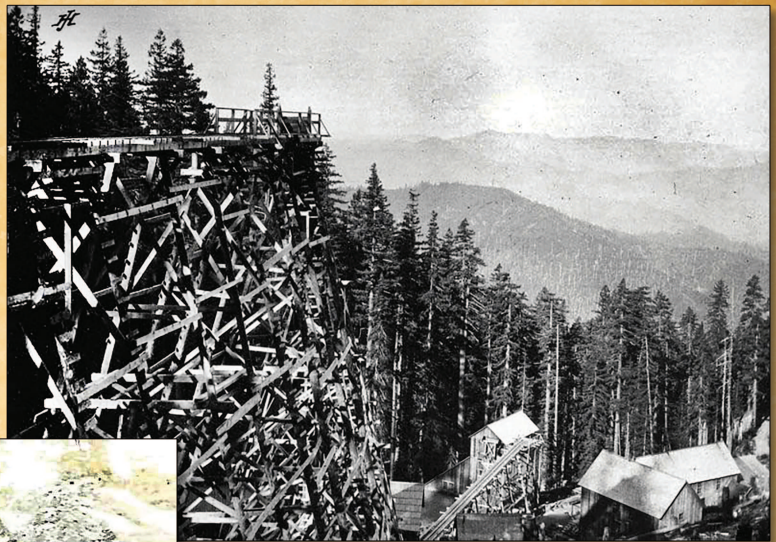
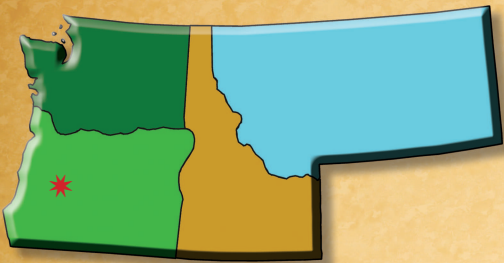


# OREGON COUNTRY

## BOHEMIA MINING DISTRICT

by Larry Maddux

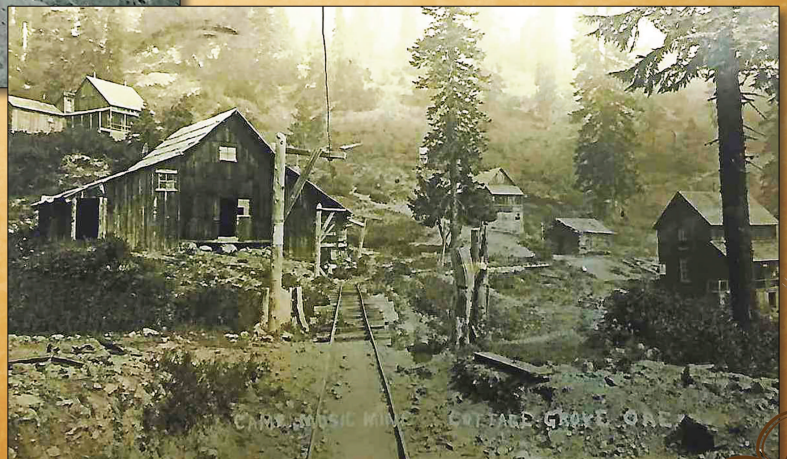


Trestle work at the Vesuvius mine.



Musick mine at Bohemia City.

Bohemia District mine camp



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## From your editor

**Alan H. Patera**

**P.O. Box 2093**

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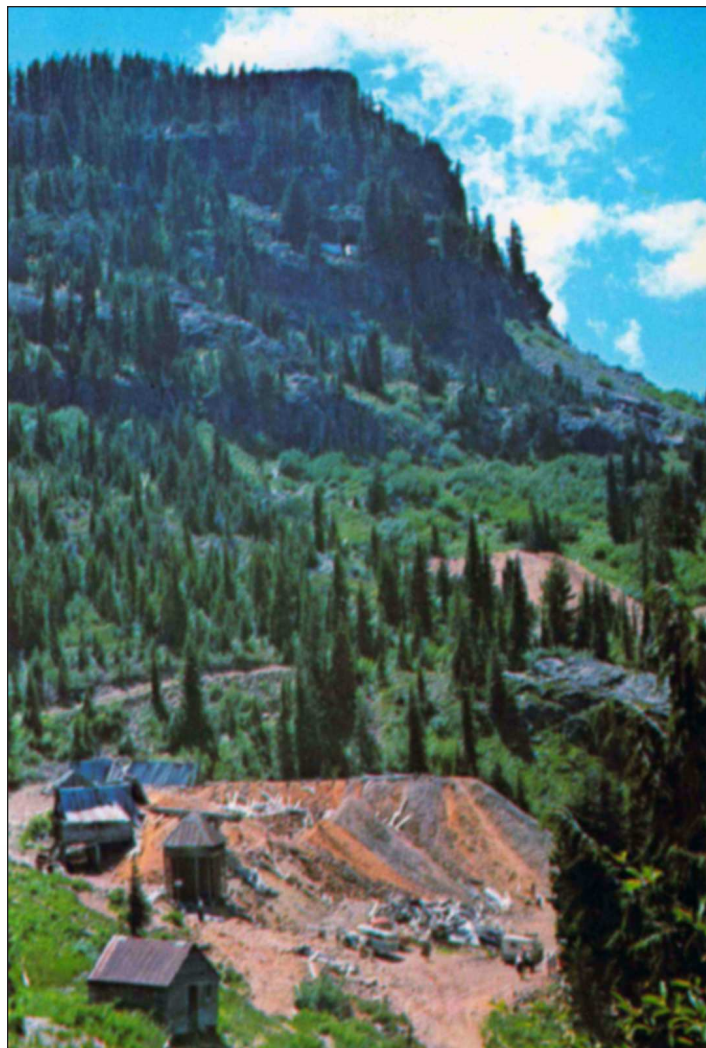
Most of Oregon west of the Cascades is not highly mineralized, making the Bohemia Mining District unusual for its concentration of mines and the high level of their production. Those that have driven I-5 south of Eugene know the road goes over and through a series of hills, wooded and pleasant. Bohemia is only about 20 miles east of the Interstate, but it is surprisingly rugged, with lofty elevations and steep slopes. Transportation of goods and supplies was difficult on the rudimentary roads, and that they moved in heavy mining machinery was a marvel. There's very little in the way of level land, so camps and buildings tend to be perched on steep hillsides.

In August 2018 members of PNWPHS had an excursion to visit many of the sites in the Bohemia Mining District. As a guide, we had Tony Pepiot, president of the Bohemia Miners' Association. Their group has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to maintain area facilities and to provide an official presence to protect the private mining properties. We visited the sites of Bluff, Mineral, the Vesuvius mine, Bohemia City, the Helena mine camp, and Bonita. Best of all, he had keys to unlock gates that allowed us access to the remote and relatively complete camp of the Golden Star mine, and to the Fairview Peak lookout tower. Not far from Bohemia City, at the Helena mine, the old boarding house is now a seasonal residence. Since our guide knew the occupants, we got to tour the inside.

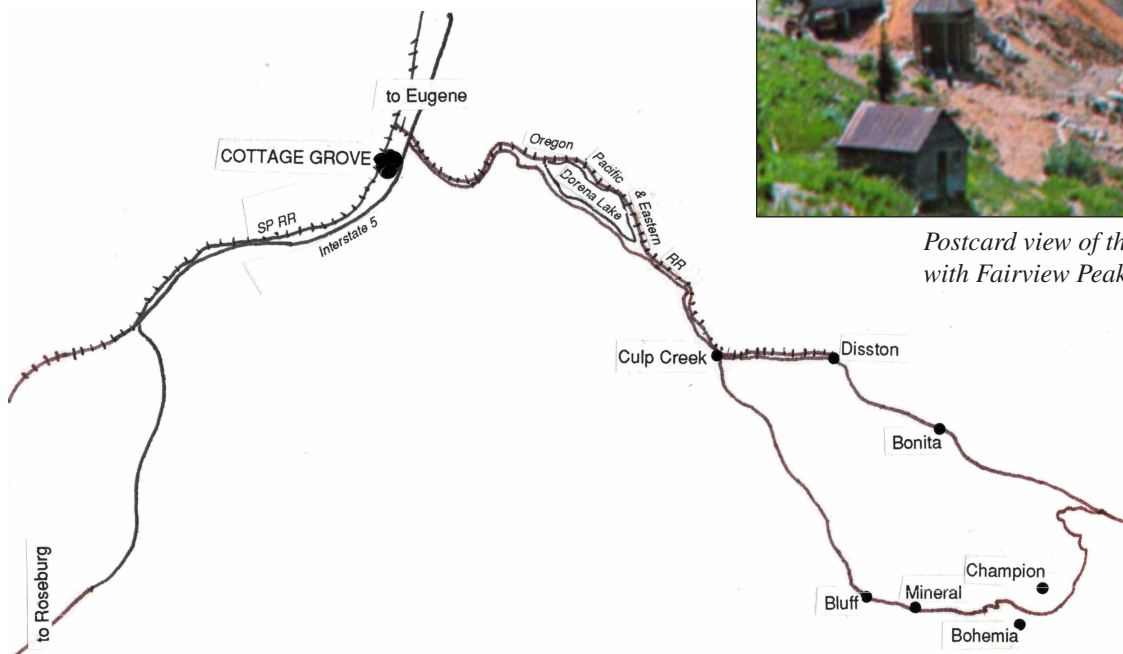
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*Postcard view of the site of Bohemia City, with Fairview Peak in the background.*



# BOHEMIA MINING DISTRICT

by Larry D. Maddux PLS



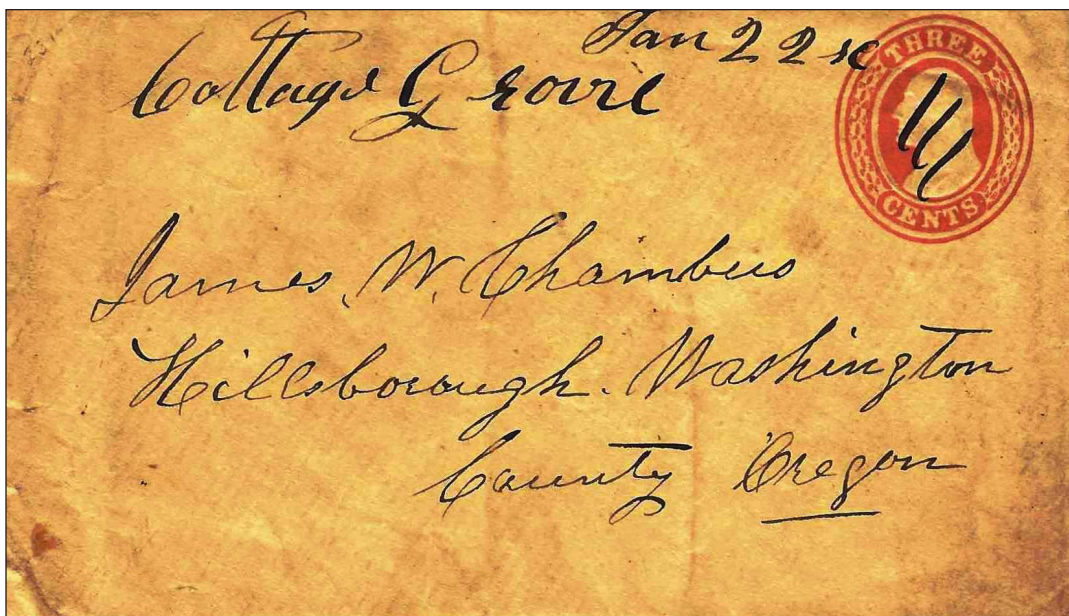
The Bohemia Mining District is located in the Calapooya Mountain range, approximately 36 miles southeast of the community of Cottage Grove, Oregon. The district has been described as the largest and most productive of the mining districts in the Western Cascades. The area was originally in Douglas County, but after several shifts of the county boundary most of the district is now in Lane County. Cottage Grove was the supply point, as it had the easiest transport route to the mines.

This area has been known as the Bohemia Mining District since the early 1860s. It had its beginning in August of

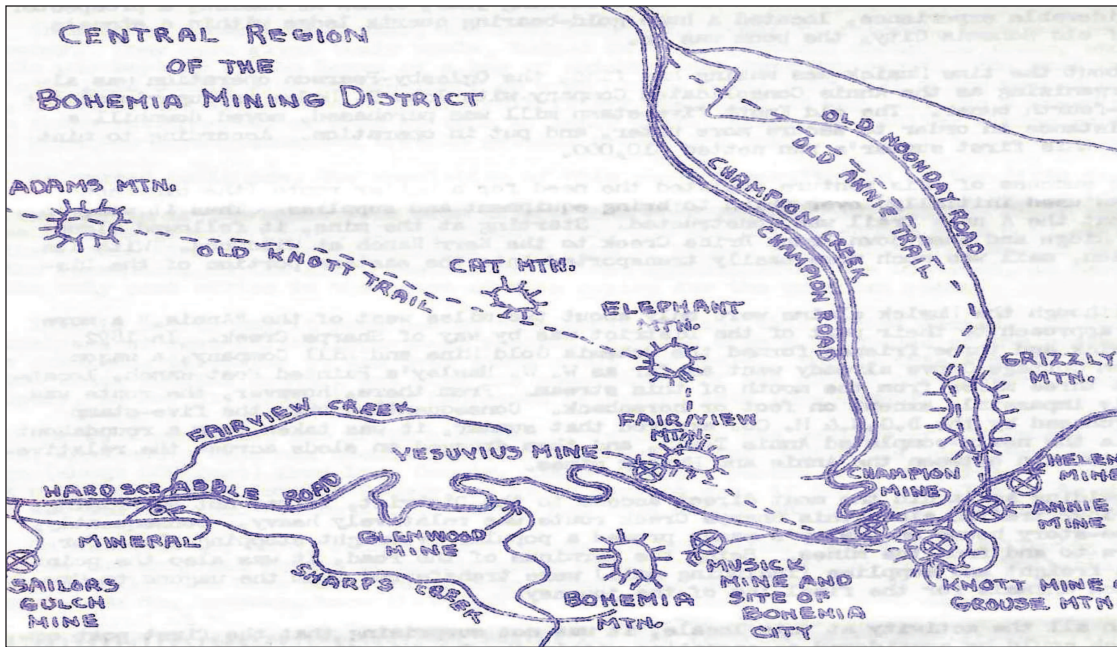
1858, when four prospectors, O. P. Adams, W. W. Oglesby, Rufus Adams and William Shields, were to discover placer gold on a stream now known as Sharps Creek. The following year a richer deposit of ore was discovered on the left fork of this creek, Sailor's Gulch, by the brothers Adams and Lyle Miller. For the next few years more prospecting was conducted in the region but they were unsuccessful in finding any more areas of great wealth. Between the failed mining efforts and the outbreak of the Civil War, the activity in the region ceased until the spring of 1863.

Around the Spring of 1863 there was an incident, which

this author has heard about a great number of times during my over 48 years of collecting Oregon Postal History. The story goes that in the Spring of 1863 George Ramsey and James (John) Johnson killed an Indian in the town of Roseburg. They fled into the wilderness of the Calapooya Mountains by way of the North Umpqua River in the steamboat region. One day Johnson killed a deer and



Early Cottage Grove manuscript marking. Author's collection.



Hand-drawn map of the Bohemia Mining District showing many of the significant locations, including the Hardscabble Road at lower left.

during the time he was field dressing the animal he spotted an outcropping of gold quartz in the sunlight. A sample of this ore was uncovered from the vein. It was located near the headwaters of City Creek, which was about three quarters of a mile from a peak in the Calapooya Range which was known as Bohemia Mountain. This discovery was the start of serious mining in the region. Prospectors in great numbers flooded the region during the summers of 1864 and 1865. Over 2,000 mining claims were filed in the Bohemia District prior to 1904.

In 1866 the miners in the area created a “Code of Laws” which set the boundaries for the districts and the rules by which all miners in the district were expected to abide. Bohemia City was established and located on Musick mine claim, just east of Bohemia Saddle. During 1868 John Alexander and Bird Farrier built a number of cabins, a hotel, a saloon and a branch office for the Douglas County Recorder, since most of the mines claims were considered to be located in Douglas County at this time.

With a great concentration of people in the general area, the receipt and dispatching of mail was a matter of great importance. Although it could have easily qualified for a post office based on the number of persons that would

have benefitted, a Bohemia City office was never acquired. All during its existence, those living in the region had to depend on an informal mail service provided by anyone traveling the route to and from the post offices at Cottage Grove or Roseburg. During the first phase (1863-1874) of Bohemia’s development, miners realized the necessity of an adequate travel and trade network that would ease the area’s isolation.

In the early 1860s miners preferred businesses and financial arrangements from Oakland and Roseburg in Douglas County, as most of the mining claims and mining developers had migrated from this area. The main transportation route into this region remained primitive trail systems. In 1868 a trail was started from the nearby community of Sutherlin following the Calapooya Divide. It was built by Crouch and Hawley and was called the Crouch Trail. Later on the trail was simply called the Bohemia Trail. It was of considerable length and was impractical after a shorter route going north was constructed from Cottage Grove.

It was near the end of Bohemia’s initial phase of development when Levi Knott, owner of the largest mine operating in the district, started trail construction in the fall of 1871. Knott’s Trail out of Cottage Grove was barely wide enough for a narrow wagon or sled. It began just above Red Bridge (Culp Creek) on the Row River east of Cottage Grove and followed the divide between Sharps and Brice creeks. It passed over the shoulder of Adams Mountain, and followed along the Utopian Saddle over Cat Mountain, Elephant Mountain, around the side of Fairview Mountain, down to the Champion Saddle. Over this trail packers took the first supplies, machinery and mail out of Cottage Grove by pack horse to the mines. Knott’s primary purpose in building the trail was to provide the means for transporting goods. A Joshua Hendy five-stamp mill was to be used at the Excelsior claim, which was purchased by Mr. Knott in 1867. The mill was pulled over the trail on a sled by 16

Post Offices of the Bohemia Mining District			
Wildwood	6 Jan 1888	31 Oct 1914	Disston
Christman	6 Jan 1888	6 Sep 1893	Star
Bluff	29 Jul 1892	16 May 1899	Wildwood
Bohemia	26 Apr 1893	15 Dec 1922	Disston
Dorena	20 Jul 1899	open	
Mineral	31 Jul 1903	31 Jul 1908	Bohemia
Orseco	23 Nov 1903	15 Sep 1909	C to Champion
Bonita	2 Mar 1904	15 Mar 1908	Disston
Disston	25 Oct 1906	13 Sep 1974	to CPO
Disston CPO	14 Sep 1974	1 Jul 1976	Cottage Grove
Champion	15 Sep 1909	15 Oct 1918	Bohemia

*Wildwood was the closest post office when mining got underway in the 1890s. Author's collection.*

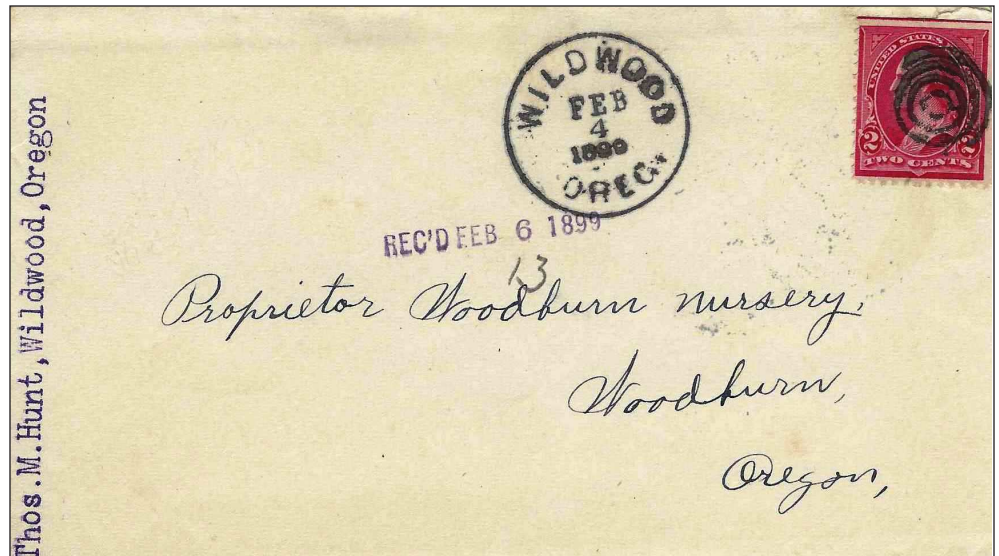
oxen and a crew of Chinamen. The mill was setup near the Champion mine site, which was in Mr. Knott's control at this time. In the winter of 1877 a heavy snow crushed the Knott mill building. Interest in the mine district was lost and the camp was completely deserted.

### Wildwood

For the next 13 years little was done in the mining district, but mail service along the route into the region did improve. On January 6, 1888 two post offices were established between Cottage Grove and the Bohemia mining district. One was located about ten miles out of Cottage Grove on Wes Christman's ranch where Teeters Creek entered into the Row River. Logically this site, which now lies in the middle of Dorena Lake, was called Christman (1888-1893), and its only postmaster was Mattie Kirk. No markings from this post office have ever been recorded. The second post office established was located on the Kerr Ranch, a few miles above where Sharps Creek flows into the Row River. The name of this office was called Wildwood because of its rustic setting. Sarah E. Kerr was appointed its first postmaster. Mrs. Kerr operated the office from 1888 to 1893. This locale, for many, played an important role for mail traffic going to and from the mining district.

For over ten years little news was heard from the district. The discovery in 1890 of a rich outcrop of ore near the summit on the northeast side of Grouse Mountain was exciting news. Dr. W.W. Oglesby and Henry D. Pearson, awakened interest in the mining district. W. W. Oglesby was one of the area's original prospectors. The new claim was, called "The Annie," in honor of Oglesby's daughter, and was located just over the crest of the hill from the old Knott mine. A year later in the fall of 1891, James A. Musick located a huge gold bearing quartz ledge within a stone's throw of the site of the old Bohemia City town site. The boom started the second phase of mining in the district. About the time that Musick was making his discovery, the Annie Consolidated Mining Company was in full operation. John B. McGee was superintendant and a one-fourth owner. The old Knott mine's five stamp mill was purchased and moved a short distance down the hill in order to make use of a larger water supply. According to mint records the first year's return netted \$10,000 (\$639,000 in today's money).

The success of the Annie mine indicated a need for a better travel route to and from the mine. In 1892 the Annie



trail was constructed. The route started at the mine location and followed along Noonday Ridge, down to Brice Creek, to the Kerr ranch, and the Wildwood post office. With this trail completed mail was more easily transported into the eastern portion of the mining district. With the Musick mine only two miles from the Annie mine, the most direct route to these mining claims was a wagon road that lead to W.W. Hawley's ranch, which was located about three miles from the mouth of Sharps Creek. However the last three miles were impassible except on foot or horseback. So when the Bohemia Gold Mine and Mill Company (B.G.M.&M. Co.) purchased a five stamp mill it was delivered over the Annie Trail, which was a roundabout way to their claim. It was then dragged on sleds across the relatively flat ground between the Annie and Musick mines. Since the wagon road up Sharps Creek was the most direct route into the district, traffic in 1892 along this route was relatively heavy. This



*W.W. and Anna Oglesby in 1914.*

The establishment papers for Bluff were sent to the postal authorities on December 11, 1891. The post office was officially opened on July 29, 1892. When Ulysses L. LeRoy moved the Bluff post office some seven miles east in 1897 he tried to get the name changed to "LeRoy" as seen in the inset below.

Applications for post offices should be accompanied by returns of the census, in order to answer the inquiries fully and accurately, or the case will not be acted upon.

To Mr. Carrie E. Hawley  
 care of the Postmaster of Wildwood, who will please forward to him

**STATEMENT.**

The proposed office to be called Bluff

Select a short name for the proposed office, which, when written, will not resemble the name of any other post office in the State.

It will be situated in the SW quarter of Section 30, Township 21 (North of South), Range 1 (East of West), in the County of Lane, State of Oregon

It will be on or near route No. Wildwood, being the route from Wildwood to Bluff, on which the mail is now carried twice times per week.

Will it be directly on this route?—Ans. No  
 If not, how far from it?—Ans. 50 rods

If not on any route, is a "Special Office" wanted?—Ans. No To be supplied from Bluff

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, on one side, is Bluff, its distance is three or four miles in a North West direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office, on the other side, is South West Wildwood, its distance is three or four miles in a South East direction from the proposed office.

The name of the other nearest office to the proposed one is Chermon, its distance by the most direct road is five or six miles in a South West direction from the proposed office.

The name of the most prominent river near it is How River

The name of the nearest creek is Cedar Creek

The proposed office will be one seventh miles from said river, on the East side of it, and will be three or four miles from said nearest creek, on the North side of it.

The name of the nearest railroad is Clatsop Pacific

If on the line of or near a railroad, on which side will the office be located, how far from the track, and will it be, or will be, the name of the station?—Ans. East from R. R. Station fifteen or half miles

If it be a village, state the number of inhabitants—Ans. four or five

Also, the population to be supplied by the proposed office—Ans. 35

A diagram, or sketch from a map, showing the position of the proposed new office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other post offices, towns, or villages near it, will be useful, and is therefore desired.

A correct map of the locality might be furnished by the county surveyor, but it must be without expense to the Post Office Department.

ALL WHICH I CERTIFY to be correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, this 11 day of December, 18 91

(Sign full name.) Caroline E. Hawley Proposed P. M.

I CERTIFY that I have examined the foregoing statement, and that it is correct and true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

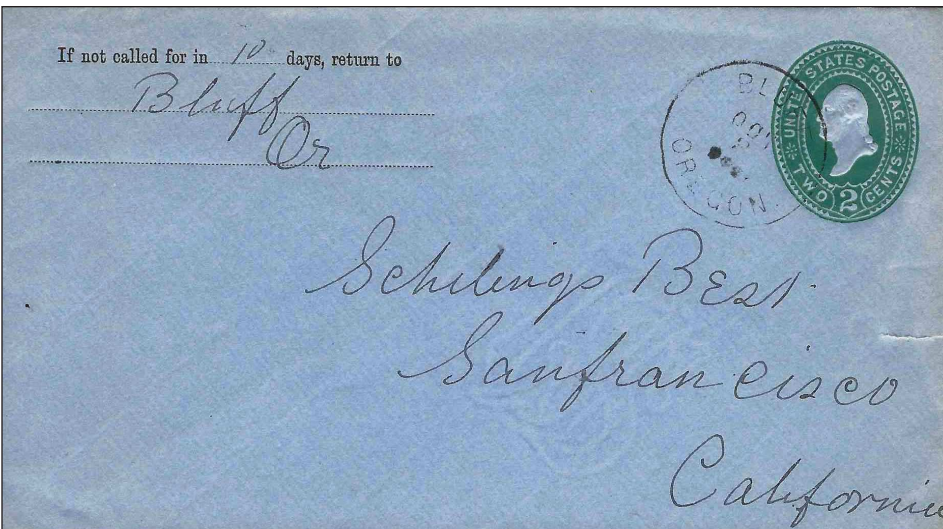
Applications for post offices should be accompanied by returns of the census, in order to answer the inquiries fully and accurately, or the case will not be acted upon.

**STATEMENT.**

The office to be called Bluff

The new site will be situated on the SW quarter of Section 30, Township 21, Range 1, in the County of Lane, State of Oregon

"LeRoy" crossed out and replaced with "Bluff."



- BLUFF POSTMASTERS**
- Caroline E. Hawley 29 Jul 1892
  - Lydia J. Paxson 10 Apr 1895
  - Ulysses L. LeRoy 17 Sep 1897
  - Disc. (16 May 1899)

Bluff postmark, Oct. 2, 1898. The office operated for 6 years and 10 months. Author's collection.

## Movement of the Bohemia Post Office 1893-1922

<u>POSTMASTER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NOTE:</u>
John B. McGee	April 26, 1893	Established in Douglas County Changed in to Lane County on May 31, 1895
George N. Spurr John W. Cook	May 31, 1895 December 16, 1896	Changed in to Douglas County on March 2, 1901
Charles Gettys George O. Knowles	January 18, 1902 May 18, 1905	Changed in to Lane County on August 22, 1907
Frank J. Heard Uriah A. Smith	August 22, 1907 November 5, 1921	Discontinued December 15, 1922, mail to Disston

route led to the three story house, located on Hawley's ranch, a popular overnight stopping place for travelers to and from the mines. Being the terminus of the wagon road, it was also the point at which freight and supplies (including the mail) were transferred from wagons to Hawley's pack animals for the final leg to the mines.

### Bluff

With all this activity happening at this location the first post office, which could be considered as operating within the Bohemia Mining District, should logically be established at the ranch house of Mr. Hawley. So, on July 29, 1892 the post office of Bluff was up and running with Caroline E. Hawley as the first postmaster. The name was chosen as a description of the natural surroundings. The office was located at the Hawley's ranch until 1897 when Ulysses L. LeRoy became postmaster and moved the office seven miles to the southeast.

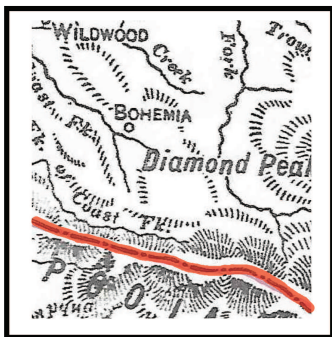
The post office of Bluff was discontinued on May 16, 1899 with the papers being transferred to the post office at Wildwood. Hawley did a brisk business as a packer for the miners, running daily pack trains into the region. At the beginning of his freighting business his route was up the side branch of Sharps Creek from his ranch and met the old Knott's Trail, following it to the mining claims. This however was not the most direct route to the Bohemia Gold Mine and Mill Company operation. With the help of the miners, Mr. Hawley carved a trail up Sharps Creek to its junction

with Fairview Creek, and from there up Hardscrabble Ridge to the Musick mine. This trail became known as the Hardscrabble Trail. So by the start of 1893 the mining district had two possible routes to carry the mail into the mines. The Annie Trail, beginning at Wildwood post office, and the Hardscrabble Trail, beginning at Bluff. Most of the time, the mail was carried on horseback. However, there were long periods of snow in the winter months so the only way to deliver the mail was by skis.

The success of the operations at the Musick and Annie mines inspired improvements to be made in 1893. The Annie mining company built a 500 foot tramway to move the ore. Hundreds of feet of water pipe were laid to bring in a larger quantity of water. The importance, from a postal perspective, was the enlarging of the Annie Trail into a wagon road leading from Wildwood to the mine. This road was built all by hand with no machinery used. It was a very steep road with a lot of sharp switchbacks, so much so that teamsters hauling mining equipment with ten-horse teams had trouble navigating the turns. As steep and rugged as it was the completion of the wagon road resulted in an immediate impact on the transportation of both supplies and the mail, as wagons could now reach the mining district.

### Bohemia City

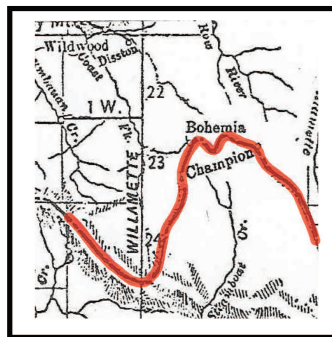
With the road project being started a new post office was called for and established at the Annie mine on April 26, 1893, with John B. McGee as postmaster. He was part



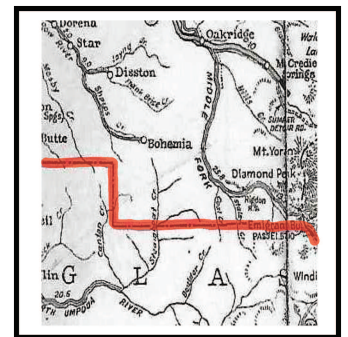
ca 1900



ca 1906

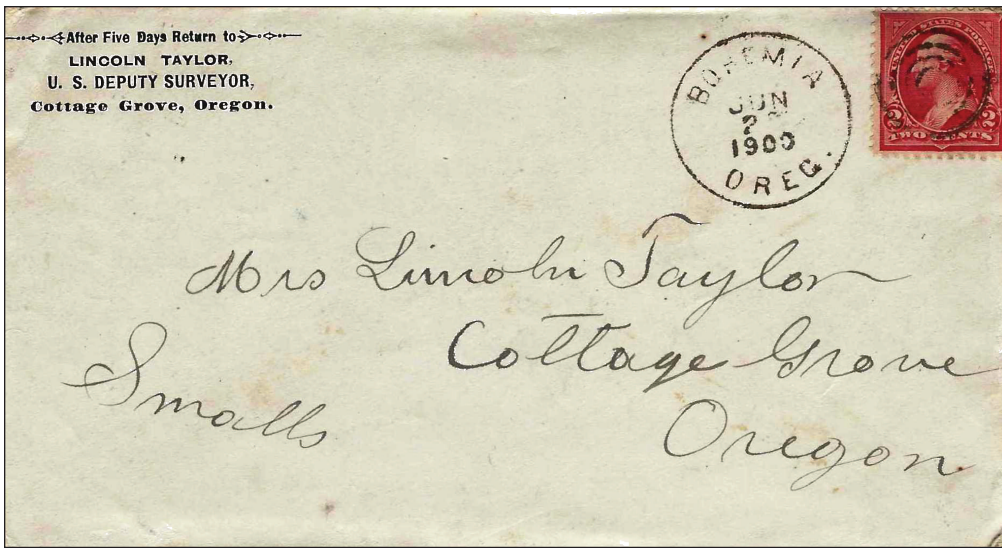


ca 1913



ca 1921

Maps showing Bohemia post office relative to the county line, which is marked in red.



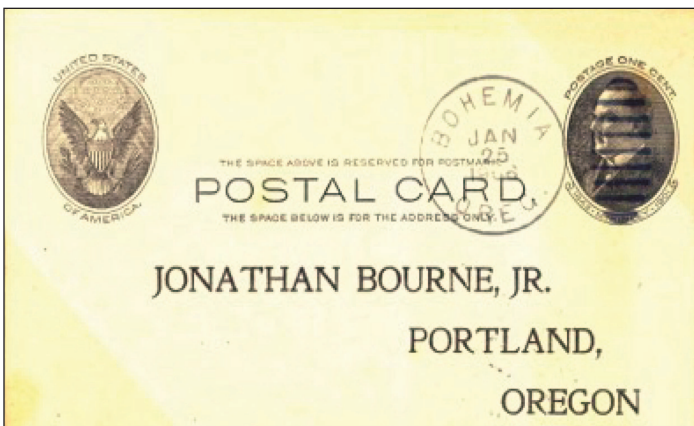
A selection of Bohemia postmarks from the author's collection.

rolls. On December 16, 1896 John W. Cook became the postmaster at the Bohemia post office.

According to Publication of Records Group 28, the Post Office was to be listed in Douglas County. The Townships and Ranges where these mines were located, were not surveyed by the GLO (Government Land Office) until 1922. The survey was finished in 1925. From a land surveyor's point of view, it

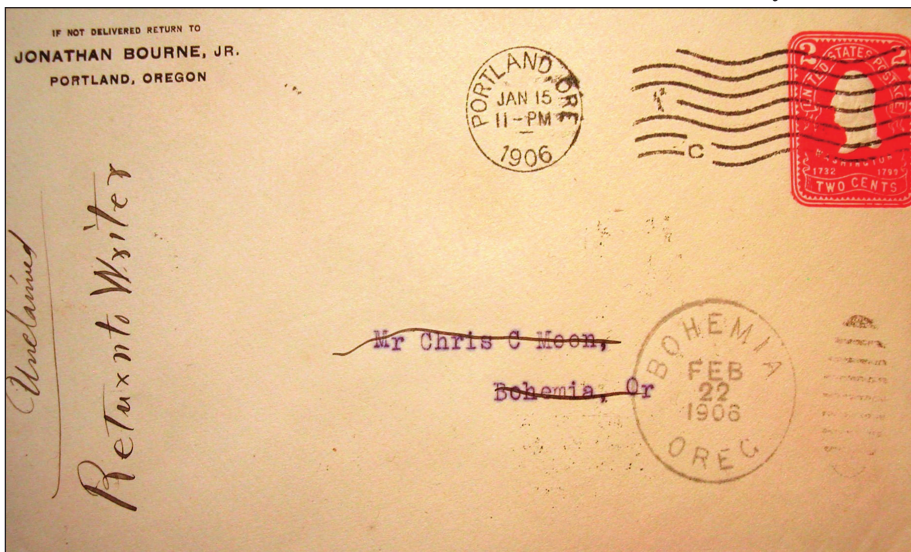
would be difficult to determine which side of the county line you were mining prior to that date. Four different maps of the area indicate that the Bohemia post office was moving around in the Lane County area, but the post office was considered to be in Douglas County.

The second postmaster, George Spurr, was a geologist at the Musick mine headquarters. The mine location, was over the ridge line from the Annie mine, and definitely in Lane County, so it was then moved onto Lane County rolls. As the maps on page 7 show, the post office moved into and out of the two counties a number of times. An assessment of 37 maps, from the web site of *Historical Maps of Oregon*, Bohemia 1906, including maps from McNally, Cram, and Reynolds, the dividing line between these two counties was



the ridge line of the Calapooya Mountains, but in looking at the different maps the top of the mountain was in completely different areas of the mines from one year to the next. By 1924 the Lane-Douglas county line was fixed along the northern boundary of Township 24 South, where it is at the present time. This line is 12 miles south of the mining area around Bohemia Claims.

In 1896 John Cook became postmaster and communications between the Bluff and Bohemia post offices improved. During this time period the mine owners had several thousand tons of high grade ore to ship. This was not possible over the existing trails into and out of the area. The mine



owners got together along with Lane County to help build the Hardscrabble Road. In 1897 the road bed followed along the Hardscrabble Trail. In 1898 the road was continued along the south side of Hardscrabble Ridge at a wagon road grade and reached the mines. Thus the ore was able to be shipped out in wagons and the mail travelling between Bluff and Bohemia was much easier.

On April 10, 1895, Lydia J. Paxton assumed the duties as postmaster at Bluff, but little is known of her. It is not

owner and manager of the mining operation. The post office was named Bohemia after the district. It was the only post office in the central part of the district for the next 10 years.

The post office stayed at the Annie mine site for only a couple of years. During this time the office was listed as located in Douglas County. On May 31, 1895 George N. Spurr was appointed postmaster. Since he made his headquarters at the Musick mining operation, which was in Lane County, the office was then moved over and listed on the Lane County





*Pack train stopped in front of the Bohemia Store and Post Office at the Musick mine about 1900.*

known if she resided at the Hawley ranch or if the post office was moved to a different site. Lydia Paxton was postmaster until September 16, 1897, when Ulysses L. LeRoy took over the postal duties and the office was moved some eight miles up Sharps Creek from the Hawley's ranch. Mr. LeRoy had a large cabin and it was used as an overnight stopping place for travel in and out of the mines. This was the last location for the Bluff post office as the office was closed down on May 16, 1899, with the mail transferred to the Wildwood post office. This was the postal picture through 1922 for this

area, Bohemia post office operating in the mining district with Wildwood supplying it with mail over the Hardscrabble Road.

The year 1902 was a turning point in the development of the mining region, P. J. "Pat" Jennings, one of the owners of the Helena mine took over a number of other mines in the area including one which plays an important part in the story. Discovered in 1892 about half way between the Annie and Musick mines was a mine named "Champion" after one of the Champion brothers who discovered the site. This site

consisted of 13 claims and was owned by the Hartford Company of Chicago. When a ten-stamp mill was carried in over the Annie Road in 1895 and set up along Champion Creek, the Champion mine became a major operation. With the Champion mine producing a great amount of ore and with the ten-stamp mill working, Mr. Jennings wanted to build a railroad from Cottage Grove to the mines. It would provide cheap freight rates for supplies



*The numerous buildings at the Musick mine in this photo make Bohemia City look like a real community.*



*The Vesuvius Mines Co. hotel (above) was the last location of the Bohemia post office. Its location was on a hillside, requiring excavation at the rear. The current Forest Service road crosses on top of the hotel site.*

*Right: The assay office at the Vesuvius mine.*



*Main workings of the Vesuvius mine in the Winter of 1921.*

going into the region and for bringing out the ore being crushed at the mills. On May 6, 1902, then Oregon Governor T.T. Geer (10th Governor of Oregon) symbolically drove a railroad spike made of gold from the mines at Cottage Grove, and the construction was under way for the railroad to be known as the Oregon and Southeastern Railroad (O.&SE. RR.) line. Within a month the grading for a road bed had been completed for five miles, and the depot at Cottage Grove was in the process of being completed. The railroad was to be steam driven up to the base of the mountain and use electric power from there to the mines. The plan was to follow the Noonday Road (formerly Annie Road) to the junction of Brice and Champion creeks, then up Champion Creek to the mill making the route about five miles in length up the hill. With the increased use of machinery at the Champion mine and an electric railroad in the plans there was a need for more power in the district.

A 500 horse-power hydro-electric plant, run by Pelton type waterwheels was built at the base of the mountain and seven miles of power lines were constructed along the new railroad grade road up Champion Canyon. The area of the new power site was to become known as the "Warehouse." The Warehouse was the best lit community in the region, as the electricity was free to use.

### **BOHEMIA POSTMASTERS**

in Douglas Co.	
John B. McGee	26 Apr 1893
into Lane County	31 May 1895
Geo. N. Spurr	31 May 1895
John W. Cook	16 Dec 1896
into Douglas County	
Charles Gettys	18 Jan 1902
George O. Knowles	18 May 1905
Frank J. Heard	22 Aug 1907
Uriah A. Smith	1 Oct 1921 (Acting)
	5 Nov 1921 (Appt.)
	Disc. 15 Dec 1922



*USFS Fairview Peak lookout tower.*



*Helena mine boarding house.*



*The Vesuvius Hotel building, pictured opposite, sat directly upon the present road shown above, with the earlier road on a lower grade to the left.*



*Above: The remaining old building at Bohemia was stabilized in the 1980s, but the heavy winter snows are taking their toll.*

*Left: Members of the PNWPHS on the dump of the Musick mine. The tracks enter the hillside at the main adit of the mine.*



*Alan Patera photos, August 2018.*

## Freighting to Bohemia

*There were two routes to Bohemia City. The Annie, or Noonday Road was longer, but the Hardscrabble Road had steep grades. The view on the right is the Hardscrabble Road, dated 1909.*

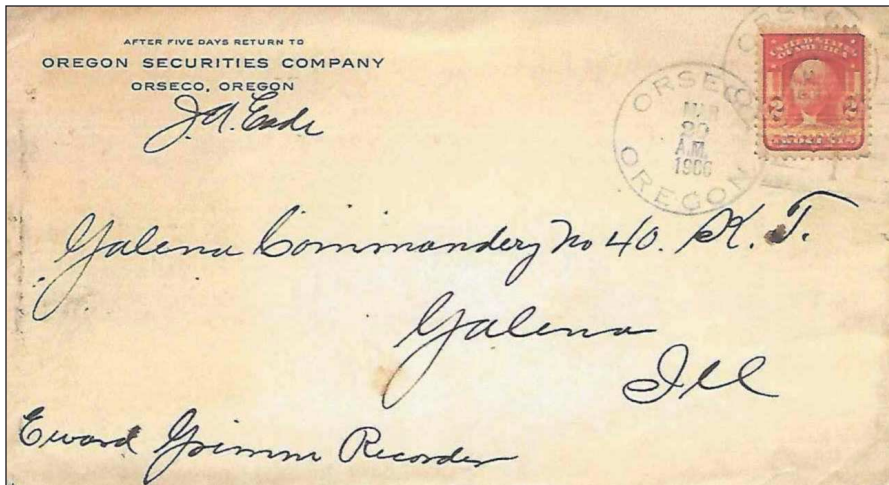


The final segment of the route was completed to railroad grade in preparation for the tracks, but unanticipated circumstances prevented the O. & SE. R.R. to ever reach beyond the outskirts of the district.

On the postal front in the year 1902, there was a change of postmaster at Bohemia City. On January 18, Charles Gettys was appointed postmaster at Bohemia. Gettys, along with Gottfried Graber and George O. Knowles operated a general merchandise store at the Musick mine. During his administration, on October 25, 1904, the Bohemia post office became authorized to issue money orders. Early in 1903, the Oregon Securities Corporation, a New Jersey company whose main stockholder was a Mr. Nathaniel Wheeler, owner of the Wheeler Sewing Machine Company, secured controlling interest of the central part of the mining district. This included the Musick, Helena, and Chapman mines, along with the Oregon and Southeastern Railroad Company. A. B. Wood was general manager and C. Mathews was the superintendent. With the control of these three mines, centralizing of the mine operations began to happen.

The ten stamp mill at the Musick mine

*Freight wagon leaving the Warehouse (future site of Bonita post office), c.1900.*



Orseco Doane postmark Mar. 20, 1906 with an Oregon Securities Company printed return address. Dorton Humber collection.



Nathaniel Wheeler, 1898.

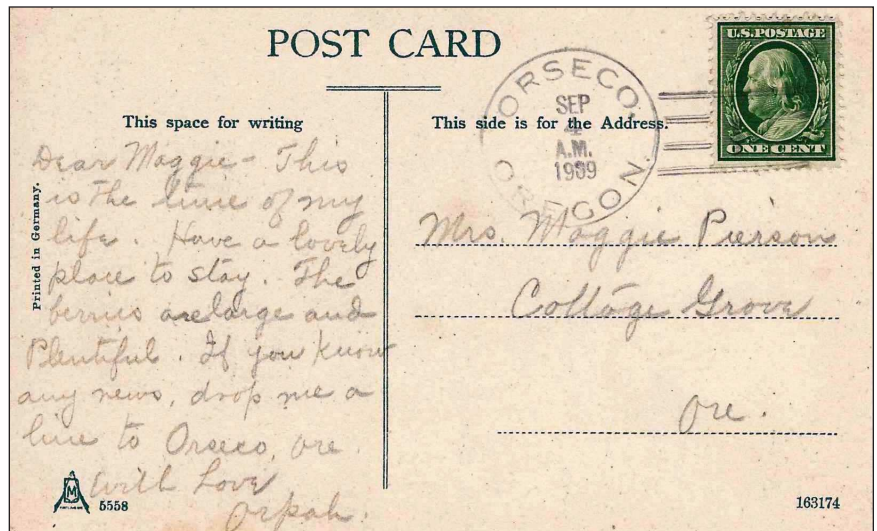
Orseco postmark, Sep. 4, 1909. Author's collection.

### ORSECO POSTMASTERS

Minnie Mathews	23 Nov 1903
Charles Gettys	16 Aug 1905
Lewis D. Ryan	8 Aug 1907
NCT to Champion	15 Sep 1909

### MINERAL POSTMASTERS

Ulysses L. LeRoy	31 Jul 1903
William Wechler	21 Jul 1904
Disc.	31 Jul 1908



was moved over and installed alongside Champion's ten-stamp mill. This move was done over a couple of years and in the spring of 1905 the second mill went into operation.

### Orseco

The most important event resulting from all of this increased activity was the establishment of a new post office located at the Champion mine. On November 23, 1903, Minnie Mathews, wife of the superintendent was to become the first postmaster at a post office called Orseco when it was opened for operation. The name was chosen from using the first two letters in each word in the company's name, the Oregon Securities Company.

She held this position at Orseco for a year when Charles Gettys became postmaster on August 16, 1905. On September 15, 1909 the post office name was changed to Champion and a new postmaster was appointed.

### Mineral

Orseco was not the only post office opened in the region in 1903. On July 31 of that year an office called Mineral began operation at the junction of Fairview and Sharps creeks. Ulysses G. LeRoy was appointed postmaster. Mr. LeRoy was the last postmaster at the Bluff post office, which was discontinued on May 16, 1899. With the completion of the

Hardscrabble Road up Champion Creek, the journey from Cottage Grove to the mines along this route was a mere three days and it proved to be the best route. Mineral was the best location for a second night stop. A hotel owned by James Benson and run by his wife, as well as a barn and assay office had been at this location for a number of years.

In addition to serving travelers, it was a gathering place for miners and prospectors working in the region. It was also a distribution point for the mail coming into the area even before it became an official post office. William Wechler was appointed postmaster on July 21, 1904. The office was discontinued July 31, 1908.

### Bonita

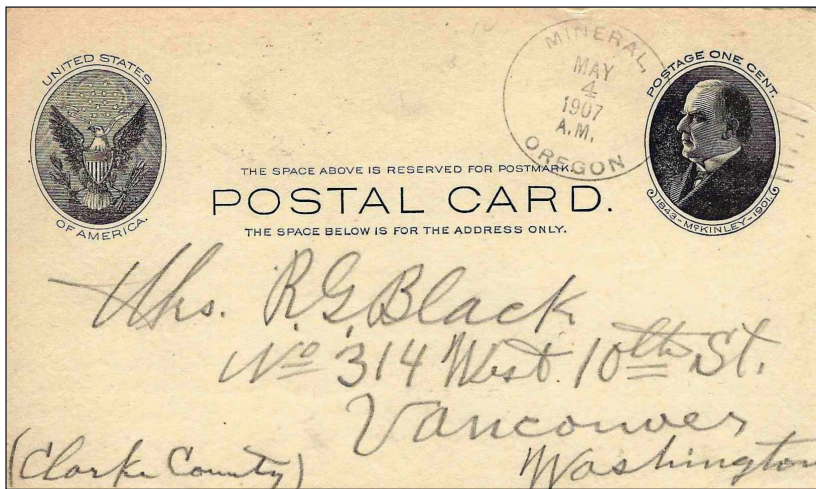
On March 2, 1904 a post office was established at the location known as the "Warehouse," with Fred W. Lee as the first of five postmasters to serve this office. The post office was in operation from March 2, 1904 to March 15, 1908 (4 years, 13 days). The new post office was called Bonita. There are a couple of theories behind where the name came from. Bonita is a Spanish word for pretty or graceful. The second theory is that there was a miner and his wife living at this location and they had a daughter by this name so maybe the post office was named after her. By the end of 1904 the Bohemia mining district had four post offices: Bohemia,



*Leaving Bonita, also known as the Warehouse. The building in the background is the Bonita hotel and post office.*

**BONITA POSTMASTERS**

Fred W. Lee	2 Mar 1904
Iva E. Abrams	16 Jan 1905
Nellie E. Purvance	20 Dec 1905
Nina Jackson	5 Oct 1906
William A. Simmonds	4 Nov 1907
Disc.	15 Mar 1908



*Mineral postmark, May 4, 1907. Author's collection.*

Bonita, Mineral, and Orseco. This was the largest number post offices operated in the mining region at one time. This situation remained until March of 1908.

The only thing notable that happened between 1904 and 1908 was the January 16, 1905 appointment of Iva E. Abrams to replace Fred Lee as postmaster at Bonita. On May 18, 1905 George O. Knowles became postmaster at Bohemia replacing Charles Gettys. Knowles & Graber were operating the general store at the Musick mine. Additionally, Knowles was a deputy mineral recorder with whom mining claims could be filed. Mr. Gettys later moved on to the Champion mine. Gettys then became the postmaster of the Orseco post office on August 16, 1905. Only one other postmaster change occurred during that year. On December 20, 1905, Nellie Purvance, took over the postal duties at Bonita. Her husband ran the hotel, general store, and was one of the operators of the power plant.

By 1906 about the only activity at the Musick mine was the mining of ore. A 6,000 foot electric railway between this mine and the Champion stamp mill was constructed and in May of 1906 Musick ore began to move over this railway to the Champion stamp mill. With two post offices located only



*The site of Mineral is now a Forest Service campground.*





*Disston store and post office.*

one mile apart and all of the activity happening at the Champion mine and Orseco post office, the need in Bonita was greatly reduced. The Orseco office was the main headquarters, so it appeared that the office at Bonita was on its way out; but circumstances prevented this closure.

### **Disston**

The year 1906 also saw the opening of yet another new post office, located on Frank Brice Creek about four miles southeast of Wildwood at the terminus of the Oregon and Southeastern Railroad tracks. This office was to become known as Disston, which received its name from the Disston saws that were in use at the J. "Ike" Jones sawmill located nearby. The post office was opened on October 25, 1906, with Cranston H. Jones as the first postmaster. The Disston post office would stay in operation until September 13, 1974, when the office was changed to a Community post office (CPO) out of Cottage Grove. This CPO would be discontinued on July 1, 1976 with the mail transferred to the post office at Culp Creek which was five miles west of Disston.

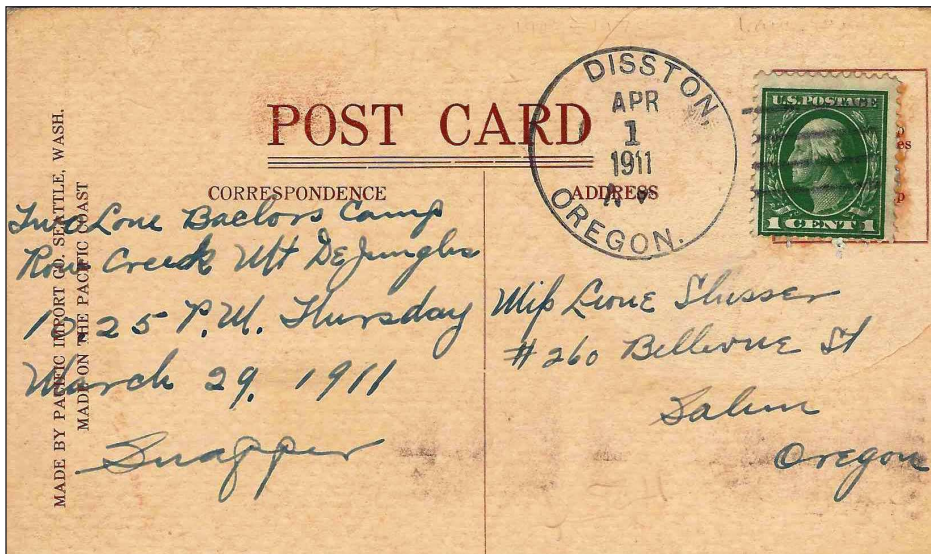
The end of the railroad track was at Disston. Once the tracks reached Disston, mail was carried by train directly, bypassing the office at Wildwood. The mail was then carried into the district by way of the Noonday Road. The train also dropped off mail at a location known as Red Bridge which was located at the junction of Sharps and Frank Brice creeks. This mail was picked up by a rural carrier heading up Sharps Creek. Thus it can be seen that the post office at Wildwood, a distribution point for the mail to the mines was no longer needed. It continued to operate as a store and post office for another eight years, but finally closed its doors on October 31, 1914, with the local mail transferred to the Disston post office.

The only other change during this time was the appointment of Nina Jackson as postmaster at Bonita on October 5, 1906. This would be the fourth time a postmaster changed at this office in two years. The year 1907 proved to be a

depression year in the county and the economic situation dictated that the Oregon Securities Corporation be reorganized as the West Coast Mines Company. The economic down turn changed the plans for continuing the railroad line to the Champion Mill, causing the terminus to remain at the community of Disston. Most of the mines in the region were either shut down or had

their activity greatly curtailed with only a handful of men working them. With little business in the district, Knowles & Graber decided to move their general mercantile store to Cottage Grove. This move put the post office at Bohemia at risk of being discontinued. Just over the ridge line about a mile west of the Musick mine and Bohemia post office was the Vesuvius mine, owned and operated at this time by Frank J. Hard. Mr. Hard, a miner from Colorado, who came to the district in 1894 was not about to let the panic close down his operation. He would not hike or ski the couple of miles to the Champion mine (Orseco post office), which was uphill, to retrieve his mail. Almost certainly this would have been the case had Bohemia post office closed because the postal carriers would have terminated their routes at the Orseco and Mineral post offices. With closure likely, Mr. Hard applied for the postmaster position and had his request accepted. On August 22, 1907, he was appointed postmaster of Bohemia.

Having also bought out the remaining stock of the Musick general store, he moved the post office and stock into a building on the end of a three story bunkhouse. With this move the post office of Bohemia again moved into Lane County, where it remained for remainder of its life. Mr. Hard had solved his mail problem by moving the Bohemia post office to his mine site. This left a hardship on the company employees working at the Musick mine site since their mail was delivered to the post office at Champion (Orseco post office). This location was about half way down the northerly slope of Champion Saddle, between the mine and the mill. For the men to receive their mail it involved hiking a mile across country to the Champion mine site, then going downhill some 1,700 feet to the Orseco post office at the Champion mill. The return trip required then climbing back up the slope to the rim of the saddle, then across county another mile to the Musick mine. Most of this traveling was during the eight to nine months the route was covered with 10 to 12 feet of snow and the only mode of transportation was the use of homemade skis.



*Disston 4-bar, Apr 1 1911. Author's collection.*



*Cranston "Ike" Jones, Disston Postmaster.*

On August 8, 1907, Lewis D. Ryan, then superintendent of Champion mine, became the postmaster of Orseco. On November 4, 1907 the post office at Orseco was authorized to issue money orders. Also on this date William A. Simmonds was appointed the fifth and final postmaster at the Bonita post office.

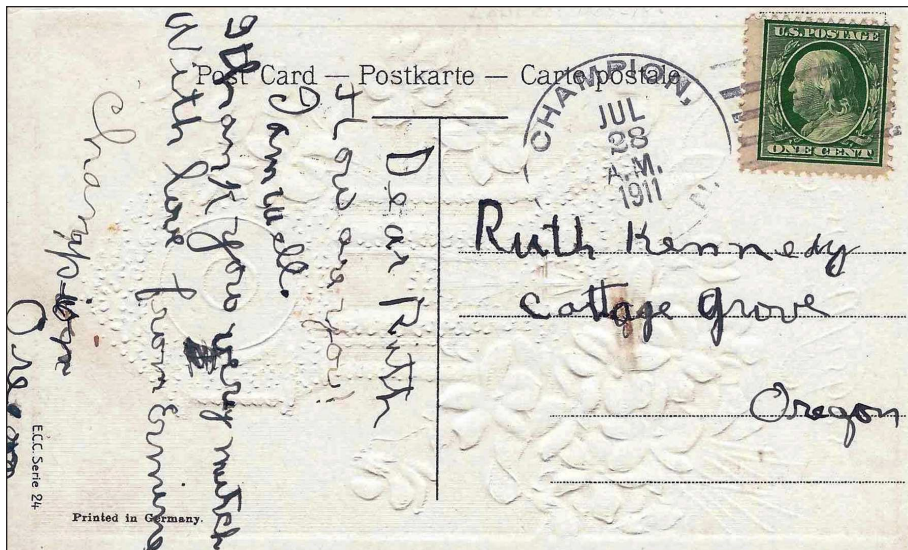
With the depression in full swing in 1907 most of the mining activity in the District was coming to an end, it was not at all surprising the early part of 1908 saw two of the post offices ceasing operations. On February 20, 1908 the

post office at Bonita was ordered discontinued, effective on March 15, 1908, with the mail being transferred to the post office at Disston. It had been open 3 years, 9 months and 14 days. Then on July 7, 1908 the post office at Mineral was ordered discontinued with William Wechler in charge, effec-



*Oregon & Southeastern locomotive leaving Cottage Grove for Disston and the mines.*





Champion [Oregon] Jul 28, 1911 4-bar.  
Author's collection.

#### CHAMPION POSTMASTERS

Lewis D. Ryan	15 Sep 1909
Gavin T. Hogg	11 Sep 1911
Linnie Violette	20 Jan 1914
Harold W. Mahon	25 Jun 1915
Disc.	15 Oct 1918

tive on July 31, 1908 with the mail being transferred to the post office at Bohemia (post office open 5 years to the day).

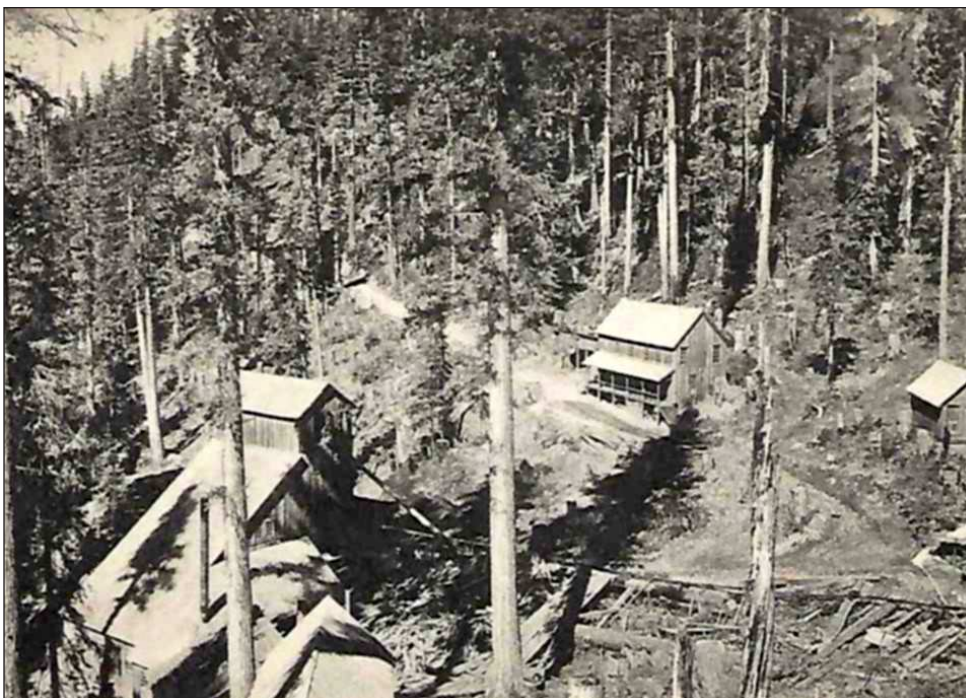
#### Champion

Since the Oregon Securities Corporation was reorganized in 1907 for economic reasons, and the company was now called the West Coast Mines Co., the name Orseco for the post office was rather inappropriate. On September 15, 1909 the name was officially changed to Champion.

Lewis D. Ryan was appointed postmaster at Orseco on August 8, 1907, and was still in charge of the office when the name was changed to Champion. Sometime before September 15, 1911, a Mr. Gavin "Guy" T. Hogg purchased the Champion mine from the West Coast Mines Company and on September 11, 1911, was appointed the postmaster of Champion post office. It was during his time as postmaster that a post office directive just about ruined the freighting business in the District. This was the inauguration of the

Parcel Post. With this service, it was cheaper to send groceries or a sack of ore by mail than it was to send it by private carrier. The real problem with this was that the freighters in the district were the ones transporting the mail to the mines. This meant that on the basis of their mail carrying contracts with the U. S. Mail Service, they now had to haul parcel post items for which they otherwise would have been paid freight rates.

By the end of 1914 Gavin Hogg had exhausted all of the available ore at the Champion mine, so he traded the mine rights to Zimmerman, Wells and Brown for some logging machinery. When Mr. Hogg left to pursue other interests, the postmaster job was open. So on January 20, 1914 Linnie Violette was appointed postmaster at the Champion post office. Violette was the cook at the Champion mine. She was in charge of the "room and board" operations and had a crew helping her. There was a three-story bunkhouse/cookhouse complex on the property and the post office was in one end



#### DISSTON POSTMASTERS

Cranston H. Jones	25 Oct 1906
D. Ernest Pruvance	20 Apr 1907
Hyre D. Crites	25 Jun 1909
Chester A. Von Denburg	13 Apr 1911
James W. Mackintosh	20 Aug 1914
Mrs. Lena M. Carr	18 Feb 1916
Mrs. Joellen Miller	1 Nov 1948
Disc.	13 Sep 1974

Looking down on a Bohemia mine camp.

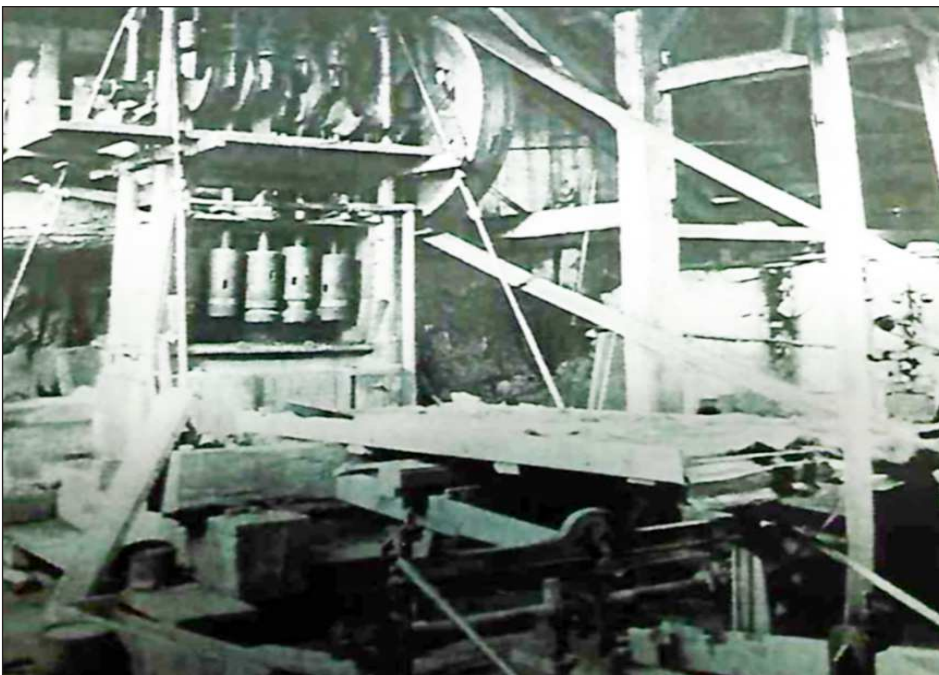


*The Champion stamp mill was located well below the saddle east of the Musick mine.*

of the cookhouse. Records show that rooms were rented for 50 cents per night and breakfast and lunch were 35 cents each with dinner going for 50 cents.

It only took a year for Zimmerman and Company to unload the Champion mine to Harold W. Mahon and on June 25, 1915, Mahon was appointed the postmaster of the Champion office. Mr. Mahon operated the mine as best he could with a small crew for a few years, but when World

War I came along and the lucrative war time jobs drained the remaining manpower from the region, he closed down the Champion mine entirely. The mine has been worked off and on since the closure in 1918, which marked the end of the post office at Champion. With its discontinuance ordered on September 28, 1918, effective on October 15, 1918, only the Bohemia post office remained as the sole surviving office in the Bohemia Mining District.



*Interior view of the Champion mill showing a five-stamp battery to crush ore.*



*Cement foundations of the Champion mill. Alan Patera photos 1988.*

Frank Heard did not stop working the Vesuvius mine site during the war. With his son Charles, and Oliver Gilbertson they continued operating the mine, despite the labor shortage and the high cost of materials. It was not until the death of Mr. Heard and his son, within a couple of months of each other in 1921, that the Vesuvius mine fell silent. With everything closed down in the region, this should have been the end of the last post office in the Bohemia district. However, this was not the case. Mr. Heard's daughter Lucille hired Uriah A. Smith as the watchman and caretaker for the mine property, in addition to which he took over handling of the post office and store. Mr. Smith was sworn in as the acting postmaster on October 1, 1921, and appointed as postmaster on November 5, 1921. Finally, on December 7, 1922, the Bohemia post office was ordered discontinued with an effective date on December 15, 1922, with the mail transferred to the post office at Disston. This final post office closing brought to an end the postal activity in the Bohemia Mining District.

*Cement foundations of the Champion mill. Alan Patera photos 1988.*

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*The remains of an ore cart at the Champion mill.*



# Golden Star mine

The Golden Star mine is a rarity, a largely complete mine camp with original buildings and machinery in place. It is well hidden, up a steep draw on a narrow road with a locked gate. It now belongs to and is under protection of the U.S. Forest Service. The buildings have endured deep snow every winter, but are still in reasonable condition.

Miners at this camp would have used the nearby Mineral post office when it was open (1903-1908). After Mineral closed they would have gone to Disston or Culp Creek.

2018 photos by Alan H. Patera.

