Discover
Stories on the Land

This is excerpt 13 from the unpublished 1996 book, Stories on the Land: An Environmental History of the Applegate and Upper Illinois Valley, *by George McKinley and Doug Frank. This passage is from pages 71-72.*
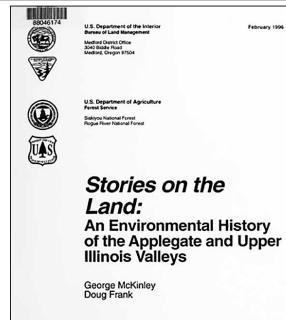
Stopping Places

Along the gradually improving roads of this era (1857-1900), communities began forming around services that could be provided to travelers and miners. These communities also served the social and commercial needs of the growing body of more permanent residents. Many of these were first established in the early period of our study but took on greater permanency as settled communities during the last decades of the century. Some of them barely made it into the twentieth century, however, before they disappeared altogether.

The first house in the Illinois Valley was built near the mouth of Democrat Gulch by Walling, Northcut, and Ball in 1852. Known as Walling's Ranch, it sold supplies to miners in the Sucker and Althouse drainages. On Deer Creek, the DLCs (Donation Land Claims) of Henry Wixom and Samuel Mooney were among the earliest examples of an established community. Wixom and Mooney operated "Mooney's Place" on Wixom's land, where they provided accommodation to early travelers. William Hay's DLC, on what is now called "Hayes Hill," became a stopping place midway from Waldo to the ferry at Fort Vannoy. During the Indian Wars, it was known as "Fort Hay"; its stockade-style architecture was intended for defense against the natives.

In the lower part of the Applegate Valley, Alexander Jess operated a ferry at the mouth of Slate Creek. Just upstream was Junction House, built in 1857, a stopping place and store that became the foundation of Wilderville. In 1858, Hugh Heaps opened "Prospect Ranch on Applegate Creek" in the vicinity of Bernard Murphy's DLC, with overnight accommodations. (When Hugh's cook married, he advertised in the Crescent City newspaper for one who might "contract a partnership with him for life.") Later, Lewis Hayes bought the property and "set himself up in the freighting business, while travelers were accommodated at the hotel-home." His barn held 80 horses.

Hayes's son, David, remembered the tenor of life in those early days, which Olga Weydemeyer Johnson paraphrases this way:

"Trips to the Provolt store upriver were undertaken only at long intervals. Horsemen or drivers sighted on the trail would be eagerly accosted and asked to stop in for refreshments and the exchange of news—any news at all, we presume, whether of fresh mining strikes, the birth and death of a baby, the ignorant misfortunes of some greenhorn come in by sea, the antics of a drunk in the Illinois Valley, or the antics of a pack mule."

Bernard Murphy's DLC, along the lower Applegate opposite Murphy Creek, also became a stopping place. By 1859, a hotel and saloon were in operation there.

Further upstream, at the mouth of Thompson Creek, a stopping place was opened by Rial Benedict in 1854 on the former William Thompson DLC. In 1860, Orlando Rose settled near there, across the Applegate River, and erected a spacious two-story building with an upstairs dance hall. John and Marguerite Black tell us:

"Rose's Hall became famous for miles in every direction. Orlando helped organize the Bridge Point School District in 1872. He was postmaster of the Applegate Post Office in 1895, at which time the post office was in his home. Eventually his property was sold and the buildings removed."

Other stores opened at the mouth of Thompson Creek during the 1860s and 1870s. One of the most prominent was built of "hewed square logs" by William W. Pemoll, in 1874, on the north side of the Applegate River a couple of miles west of Applegate Crossing. Pemoll stocked a supply of basic grocery items, clothing, shoes, hardware, drugs, and whiskey. Six miles up Thompson Creek, the Bingham brothers ran a stopping place on their adjoining ranches, where they raised feed for livestock.

By 1860, travelers could count on finding shelter and food within a half day's journey at any point from Waldo to Jacksonville along the Jacksonville-Crescent City road. By 1870, general stores in the area were catering to the needs of an increasingly settled agricultural community.

Excerpted by Diana Coogle