

History of the Hippies of Takilma

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Part 2 of a 21 part series: The Early History of Takilma, Oregon

After the Indians were removed, three more waves of people came to take whatever they could from the land. First the Gold Rush of the 1850s swept over Southern Oregon, with emigrating parties of miners coming into the region from both California and the Willamette Valley, adding to a small population of widely scattered farms in the Rogue Valley.

The region would also have coastal access from Crescent City bringing people in who started Sailor's Diggings. After gold strikes were made in 1851, the boomtown of Waldo sprang up and grew to be home to over 2,500 people, and by 1856 was a thriving town, including a small "China Town," home to over 1,500 Chinese workers.

These frenzied miners came by the thousands to scour the hills and valleys of the undisturbed landscape for gold nuggets. With short-sighted greed they ruined riverbeds, valleys and creeks, dug canals and sluiced and drained away millions of tons of topsoil, trees and plant life. When

several of the buildings in Waldo burned down, the miners ended their path of destruction by mining out the topsoil of the town with a giant plume of water diverted from the river. Nothing is left of the "Ghost Town" of Waldo except a few scattered old cemeteries, one of which is in Allen Gulch and a few old fruit trees. Legend has it that there are still ghosts above the old cemetery and from the accounts of a miner's wife, shrieking and moaning could be heard and lanterns could be seen flickering through the trees at night.

When copper was discovered in Takilma, first in 1860 and then in 1900, it would draw mine speculators and investors to get enough ore for the country's industrial needs. They built a mine and smelter on the Queen of Bronze Mine on Hope Mountain. This was owned by a Mr. Charles Tutt from 1903 to 1915. A contract had been signed with Col. John Draper to produce 1,000 tons of copper. By 1904 the smelter was operating at full capacity, and having trouble finding enough willing workers. By 1915 it had produced over 35,000 tons of copper ore. The copper ore was hauled by mule teams from Takilma to a railroad stop of the Crescent City & Oregon Coast Railway at the bottom of Hayes Hill. Coal was loaded in the backhaul to fuel the smelter. The round trip took 24 hours. The train

station at the bottom of Hayes Hill was known as the "Love Station" after its owner James Love. Later the mine was sold and by 1930 the price of copper was so low the smelter was dismantled and the metal recycled. What remained was thrown into the back fill of Lake Shasta.

There were few laws to govern the miners, yet their own rules stated that if a claim lay unworked for five days, it was claimable by another, so thereby mining was a way of life which was inherently temporary. Miners just seemed to borrow the land and leave it when they were done for another to come and claim it. Several stories of people finding gold on a claim that had been abandoned were found, including the 17 pound nugget found by Mattie Collins in the root ball of a downed tree beside Althouse Creek.

In the 1930s people were fleeing from the Depression. They were coming west on a great migration similar to the settlers coming west on the Oregon Trail. Many of them came to the Rogue and Illinois

Valleys and moved into the small towns and cities, farms and ranches left over from earlier times. A few even trickled out to Takilma, where there was a small store, post office, and a boarding house up until about 1918. These emigrants found jobs as loggers working for the area's many small sawmills. They cut the valley's immense store of ponderosa and sugar pine. By the late 50s the valley was "logged out" and most of the mills closed.

Early accounts tell of a time when the Takilma valley was planted with irrigated row crops. They also tell of a rich, fertile valley with abundant water and trees where ranches, farms and dairies flourished. The Homestead Act allowed many people to claim free land. The daughter of one of the early settlers, Ruth Pfefferle took an interest in writing and in her later years owned the Takilma Store. She also became the town historian and wrote a book called "Golden Days and Pioneer Ways," which has much more information on that time period in Takilma.

The largest house in Takilma at the time was known as the boarding house, and had been built by G.B. Fife and later finished by Ole Valens, a Swedish immigrant. John and Mary Valens, his children and many other relatives of the Valens family had welcomed boarders for decades, but it ended up being the home of a woman by the name of Mrs. Heatherbee in the 1970s. She seemed to have fallen on hard times trying to raise six children there and the state was going to take her kids away. She was desperate to leave and sold it to Dred Mikal in very poor condition around 1976. So it happened that the "boarding house" was purchased by a hippie and is still standing.

Author Kindi Fahrnkopf is a poet and flower child of the 60s who has lived in Takilma for 32 years. She moved to Cave Junction in 1979 with her husband and two little children to open the Caves Cobbler shoe repair shop.



Waldo (above) as photographed sometime around 1860. The Takilma Smelter (above right) was taken around the turn of the century. Both photos were used from the "Golden Days And Pioneer Ways" published by Bulletin Publishing Company Grants Pass, Oregon, 1977.



Takilma Smelter at the turn of the century.

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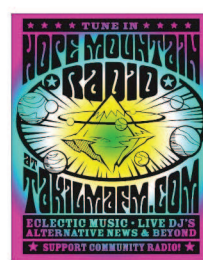
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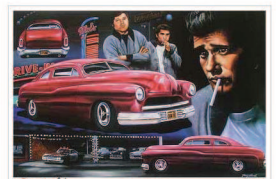
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