

# The Vanishing Post Office; From 69 to 13 in Jackson County

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This Agate post office on the road to Bybee bridge was operated from Feb. 13, 1901, to April 30, 1907, with Jefferson S. Grigsby as first postmaster. A magnifying glass reveals that Star plug (chewing tobacco) was advertised on the front of the building.

Many poets and song writers have been inspired to action by the passing of the little red schoolhouse and its successors in wood and brick. The protest started early and in many areas has not lost its momentum.

"Still sits the schoolhouse by the road, a ragged begger sunning," was recited in school programs long ago to arouse nostalgia before the most advanced thinkers had proposed school consolidation or reorganization.

But no one seems to write songs or poems about the passing of post offices, which put so many places on the map.

They have come and gone. In many cases unheralded and certainly unsung. Many of the first ones were discontinued with the establishment of Star Routes and Rural Free Delivery, others with consolidation.

The number created in Jackson county through the years totals 84, according to a review of available records. The greatest number in operation at any one time was 69. There are 13 listed in 1963.

The statement of Herodotus, "Neither snow, nor rain, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from their appointed rounds," has been quoted frequently in appreciation of the work of mail carriers. It appears above the marble entrance of the New York City post office.

**Written on Tablets**  
The statement was made, post office history notes, when messages written on tablets of bronze were carried by men astride fast horses during the fifth century. The Greek historian said it in describing these couriers.

Even the post office ink well is commemorated in a poem found in the Medford post office files, author unknown. Hand written on a yellowed piece of stationery, it reads:

"How many humble hearts have dipped  
In you and scrawled their manuscript  
Have shared their secrets, told their cares  
Their curious and quaint affairs.

Your pool of ink, your scratchy pen  
Have moved the lives of unborn men  
And watched young people breathing hard  
Put heaven on a postal card."

But the post office itself, as much a part of the early community as the country store in which it was

often housed, the gathering place of pioneers longing for letters from home, seems to have been denied (or spared) the outpourings of sentimentalists.

This may be why it is so difficult to obtain authentic information to establish the history of post offices.

## First in Jackson County

The first one in Jackson county was at The Dardanelles. There is no dispute about that. It was established in 1852 with William G. T'Vault as postmaster.

His name appears in the history of the earliest post offices in Oregon.

By an act of Congress, dated March 3, 1847, the establishment of post offices in what soon became the Oregon territory was authorized. In that year post offices were opened at Astoria and Oregon City with Postmaster W. G. T'Vault in charge of the latter.

Cornelius Gilliam was appointed special agent or post office inspector for the Oregon territory in 1847. George Abernathy, Oregon's first governor, had written President Polk requesting appropriation for transportation of mails in Oregon and to Oregon, adding: "We have postmasters and a special agent but no mail."

## Routes Are Established

Post routes had been established from Oregon City and from Astoria, three in all. They were: "From Astoria to Independence, Missouri; from Oregon City, via Fort Vancouver and Fort Nequally to the mouth of Admiralty inlet; and from Oregon City up the Willamette river to the Kalamit river and thence in the direction of San Francisco."

Gilliam was to "Cause the mail to be carried on said routes and to select suitable and competent persons at proper points for postmasters."

"The amount of pay will be the entire yield of the respective offices on the routes over and above the commissions to the postmasters, respectively," his instructions read.

## Contract for Transportation

Annual report on Dec. 2, 1848, announced: "This department has made a contract for the transportation of the mails across the isthmus, from Chagres to Panama, so that in future there will be regular monthly mail from Charleston by Havana, Chagres, and Panama to Oregon."

Gilliam was accidentally killed in 1848 while defending his people against an Indian outbreak.

In 1851 there were post offices in 10 counties in the Oregon territory. Jackson was not one of them.

The first Dardanelles post office, established in 1852, was discontinued in 1854 but reopened Oct. 29, 1855. Nine years later it was discontinued but only to be re-established in 1877 for one year of service. In 1878 it was consolidated with Jacksonville, to which the mail was transferred.

## Marker Is Testimonial

The Dardanelles, where a marker now stands as testimonial to its history, was a stage station located on the south bank of Rogue river across from the present town of Gold Hill.

The Jacksonville post office, contrary to popular belief, was not the next post office authorized in Jackson county. It is, however, the oldest in continuous service.

The second post office was Mansaneta, established in 1853. A letter, written by Mrs. Mary M. Coker in 1938, tells of a Mansaneta school, which stood about two miles from Central Point on what is now the old Pacific highway. Her mother, Margery E. Magruder, attended the school.

It is assumed that the post office was in approximately the same area. William R. Rose was the postmaster for the three years that the post office was in operation.

**Difference in Spelling Name**  
There is a difference of opinion on the spelling of the name. A letter from Leslie M. Lowell, W.P.A. historian, gave Manzanita as the correct spelling and verified it by quoting from the files of W. L. P. Plymale, official surveyor of Jackson county in 1864.

The Jacksonville post office was established in 1854, two years after Jackson county was organized comprising what are now the counties of Coos, Curry and Jackson.

Several men have been named in historical writings as the first postmasters at Jacksonville—James Cluggage, Nat Langwell or Langell and R. Dugan. Lewis a McArthur, secretary of the Oregon Geographic board, settled on Dugan. He said that Dugan served until Sylvester H. Taylor was appointed Dec. 19, 1854.

## Opens Jacksonville Bank

In 1856, Cornelius C. Beekman opened his bank in Jacksonville and established the stage line to Yreka. In addition to carrying gold dust, he carried letters and newspapers for \$1 each.

T'Vault, the versatile first postmaster at Oregon City and Dardanelles, continued to Jacksonville. He had published The Spectator, the first newspaper west of the Rocky mountains, at Oregon City, and he entered the newspaper field in Jacksonville, publishing the Table Rock News. He died in Jacksonville in the smallpox epidemic of 1869.

Four post offices were established in 1855 in Port Orford, Leland, Gold River and Ashland Mills. Port Orford was changed into Coos county, Leland into Josephine county and Ashland Mills became Ashland in 1871 with Abel D. Helman as postmaster, and Gold River was discontinued in 1859.

## The First Postmaster

Phoenix was the next post office authorized in Jackson county. Samuel Miller was the first postmaster. The original site was across the street from the old Phoenix grist mill. The 100th anniversary was observed in 1957.

The names of some of the short-lived early post

offices have inspired numerous legends, which will probably never be proved or disproved.

Buncom is one of these. It served the lively town close to the famous Sterling mine from 1896 to 1917. At the opening of World War I the town still had a store and post office and was served twice a week by the Blue Ledge Mine stage from Jacksonville. Some say the town was named for a man named Buncom and others insist that it got its title from the fact that a miner was buncomed in a deal.

Asbestos in the Beagle district was in existence from 1893 to 1918.

## In Laurelhurst Region

Leeds in the Laurelhurst area of the Upper Rogue was named for W. H. Leeds, one time publisher of the Ashland Tidings.

Stored with post office records is a diploma-like certificate, carrying the seal of the United States postal department and signed by David M. Key, postmaster general of the United States. It announces the appointment of George A. King as postmaster at Big Butte "to hold office during the pleasure of the postmaster general of the U. S."

Linkville, Yanax, Drews Valley, Spikenard, Shake Steinman, Ulvstad, Lilyglen, and Swastika are in the long list of names which few people now residing in Jackson county would recall as post offices.

A post office was established at Willow Springs in 1864 with Samuel P. Tolo and, as Tolo, continued until 1913 with the mail sent in to Central Point.

## Post Offices Established

The Table Rock, Eagle Point and Central Point post offices were established in 1872. Constant Magruder was the first postmaster at Central Point, which was changed to a branch of the Medford office in 1957. Andrew McNeil was the Eagle Point postmaster and Thomas Granit started the Table Rock office, according to postal records.

The latter was discontinued, apparently, and reauthorized during the early eighties and operated until 1906, when the mail was taken into the Central Point office. Postmasters remembered by old timers are Will Hansen, S. M. Nealon, J. C. Pendleton and Ed Davis.

Salm's Valley, called Salm's Valley, when organized (maybe through an error in the reporting to the government) was authorized in 1873 with James W. Hayes as postmaster, and continued in service until 1953.

Woodville, established in 1876 with John Woods as postmaster, was changed to Rogue River and is still in operation.

## Had Unpredictable Career

Thomas Mill, changed to Spikenard, had an unpredictable career. The office was authorized in 1879 with Thurston T. Thomas as postmaster. In 1883 it became Spikenard and the mail was sent to Sals Valley. From 1884 until 1895 the mail went to Astbeson and from 1897 to 1903 it went to Beagle.

In 1891, in the Applegate area, a post office was operated under the name of Kubli with Kaspar J. Kubli as postmaster. In 1907 the office was discontinued.

From 1914 to 1922 there was a Wellen post office and Hugo von der Helien was the first postmaster.

On the Agate desert, where flowers bloom in profusion in spring and agates work their way through the sticky soil to the joy of rock hounds, a post office was opened in 1901 with Jefferson S. Grigsby as postmaster. It was located just across the road from Jack Montgomery's store where farmers could buy many things from strong drink to stick candy at the turn of the century. The post office closed in 1907.

## One Moved Into County

While many post offices were established in Jackson county (when it took in much more territory) and moved into other counties, one was moved into Jackson county from another state. Copper was authorized in Siskiyou county, California, in 1914 and was moved into Jackson county in 1924. It continued in service until 1932.

While the number of post offices has been reduced, the business has been expanded.

"The phenomenal growth," of which the city of Medford wrote in 1909 in an effort to get city delivery service established, sounds infinitesimal today.

It read in part: "The city council has just taken an official census of the city and it shows a population of 5,330. The postal receipts for the fiscal year, ending June 1908, were \$12,757. The receipts for the year ending June 30, 1905, had been \$5,701.80." (The big boom was on in Medford.)

## Assistant Postmaster

The first assistant postmaster general C. P. Granfield replied to Medford's request. "You are informed that a post office inspector has been detailed to visit your city and ascertain whether the requirements of the regulations regarding sidewalks, street lights, street signs and house numbers have been met."

On June 21, 1909, the letter came directing the postmaster to establish city delivery service employing two mail carriers. Apparently the sidewalks, street signs and numbers had been added to the satisfaction of the inspection service. The post office was opened at its present location May 14, 1916, after several moves about the city.

For many years, no new post offices were established in Jackson county. It was a period of reduction, not addition, in the post office business. Then came World War II and Jackson county's youngest post office, White City, came into being.

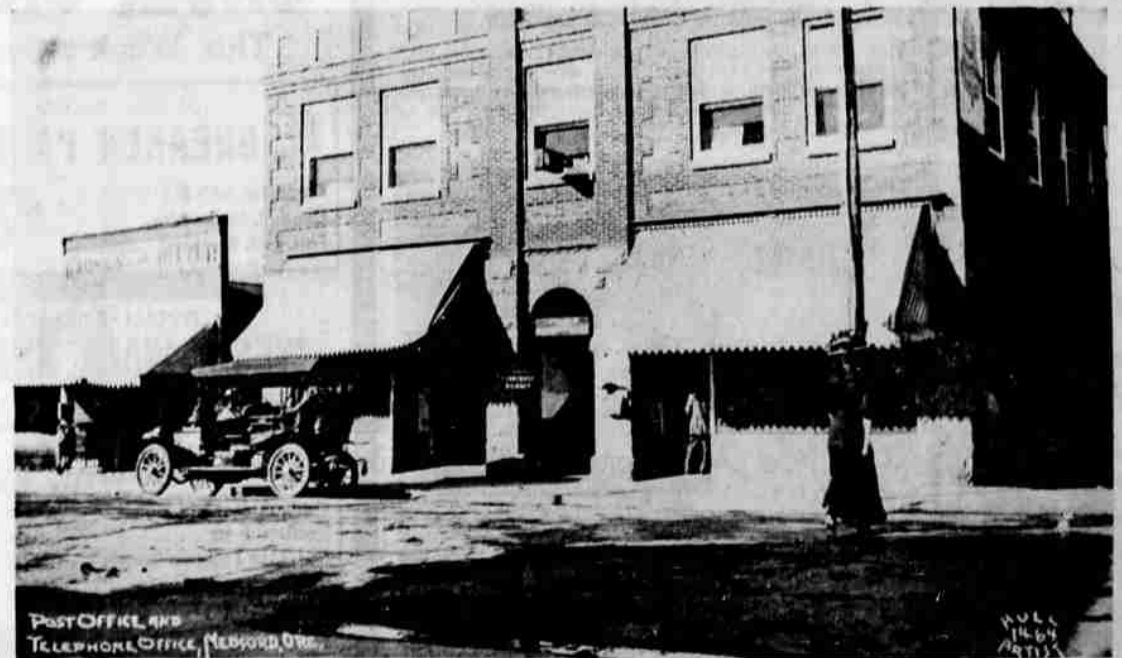
The official list now reads Medford, Ashland, Butte Falls, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Gold Hill, Phoenix, Prospect, Rogue River, Talent, Trail, Shady Cove and White City.



This photograph of the Ashland post office, originally called Ashland Mills, apparently in appreciation of the industry across the way, was taken when the post office was located on The Plaza. It was there for more than 50 years. The move to the present site was made in March, 1933.



The Central Point post office was located in the brick building on the left when this political parade was held in the early 1900s. It remained in this location until 1951, when it moved down the street to the corner of Pine (Main) and Fourth sts. It was housed in the Faber building there for a few years before locating in the new building just off Pine on Fourth st.



The Medford post office was in this location on North Central ave. in the early 1900s. The post office sign is behind the automobile (ownership unknown). The alley to the far right is the one which the city of Medford has been asked to vacate for expansion of Mann's department store. All photographs of post offices are from the collection of W. E. (Gene) Thomas, 41, Ashland, ave., Medford.