

The Mining Industry

By Katy Vaughn

In 1858 a group of settlers found traces of gold in Sharp's Creek, east of Cottage Grove. They later returned with a sluice box and got a small amount of gold. They gave up the not realizing there were large amounts of gold, not in the creek beds, but further up the mountains under the ground.



Vesuvius offices, hotel and Post office

In the spring of 1863 James "Bohemia" Johnson and George Ramsey traveled through the area following Steamboat Creek into the Row River watershed. While hunting, they spotted gold-bearing quartz on the ground. Johnson and Ramsey spread the word around Cottage Grove and by 1864 prospectors were heading for the hills. Soon more than 100 claims were staked, with the imaginative names that became a trait of the District. Names like Venus and Mars, Falling Star and Fallen Leaf, The Moor and The Hindoo, and Orphan Boy and Lucky Boy. By 1868 Bohemia City had a hotel, a saloon, an assay office and a collection of miner's cabins.

The miners established laws which set boundaries and established rules the miners were expected to follow. Claim sizes of 100 by 25 yards and claim limits were set along with rules for "town lots" in Bohemia City of 50 by 75 feet that had to have a cabin built, or a fence surrounding it to be considered owned by a miner.

The Knott Trail was built in 1871 and became the first road that allowed machinery and supplies to be brought to the mines. An earlier trail came from Sutherlin, but the distance proved challenging. Around 1889 the Annie mine and Musick mine were discovered, a road was built through Mineral, and the Red Bridge was built along the Row River over Sharp's Creek.

Things really boomed in 1903 with corporations buying up claims and running operations often from far away. A 30-stamp mill was constructed at the Champion mine, a 6,000-foot tramway was built, and power was brought in from a water powered generator at Lund Park. The district also had shipping and passenger depots and hotels. The Painted Post Ranch on Sharp's Creek served travelers and their horses. There was a large vegetable gardens and fresh beef was brought up to the mines by George and



Carrie Layng who ranched near Rujada. During the boom years thousands of men worked the mines and millions of dollars worth of gold were taken out.



Vegetable Garden, supplied mining district

All of these single men coming into town on Saturday nights turned Cottage Grove into a wild, rough town. It was said that mine owners preferred to hire men who could be counted on to spend their entire check over the weekend because they would be back to work on Monday. Some miners did manage to save and eventually left to start their own businesses.

Mining started to decrease after 1915, and the timber industry began to take hold, buying the railroad to move timber instead of miners and mining supplies. Gold, silver, lead, copper and zinc continued to be mined but corporate interests pulled out and interest declined. WWII efforts forced the closure of all mines that were not considered strategic, including the entire Bohemia Mining District. Much of the equipment in the District was salvaged for scrap metal for the War effort.

Mining continues today much as it started, with individual miners operating private claims. You can meet some of today miners when you visit the Bohemia Gold Mining Museum on South 10th street in Cottage Grove. You can also learn more from their web site at <https://www.bohemiagoldminingmuseum.com>

Discussion Points

1. How did mining in Bohemia District impact life in Cottage Grove?
 2. If you filed a claim, and began to mine for gold, what creative name would you give your mine, and why?
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Vocabulary

Sluice Box: a long, sloping trough or box, with grooves on the bottom, water is used to directed to separate gold from gravel or sand

Watershed: land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, to eventual outflow points such as reservoirs, bays, and the ocean.

Claims: plot of land a miner has registered and to gain the right to develop and extract a discovered, valuable, mineral deposit

Assay: Scientific examination of material to determine the content or quality of a metal or ore contained within the material. (How much gold can be pulled from the rock, sand or other material; used to determine if it is worth the effort to separate the gold)

