

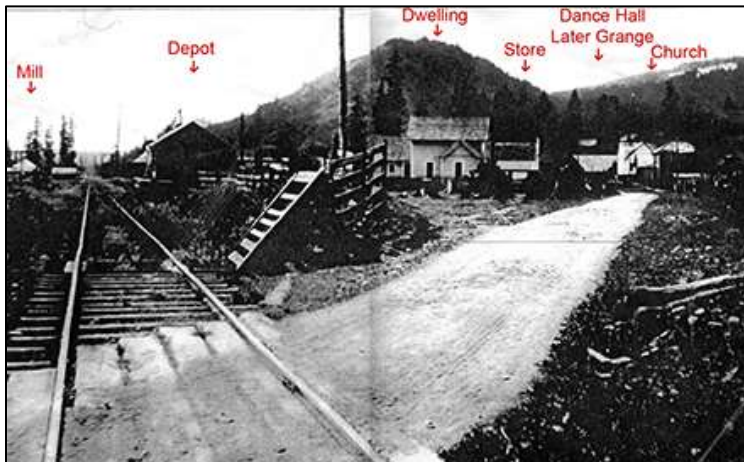
## Row River Towns

By Katy Vaughn

The Kalapuya Indians lived in the Row River Valley for perhaps as long as 5,000 years. You can read their story in the previous mini lesson titled Kalapuya.

The first settlers came to the valley in around 1852 because of the Donation Land Claims Act of 1850. The act gave a single person 320 acres and a married couple 640 acres. After working the land for 4 years, it became theirs and they were free to stay or sell. Most people sold out, but a few stayed in the area. Some of the early settlers in the Row River Valley were John Harms (for whom Harm's Park is named) Gordon Macaulay, Mark Calvert and George Clark. Mr. Clark's tragic death gave the Row River its name.

The first Post Office opened in the area in 1888. The Wildwood Post Office, near Wildwood Falls, opened with Sarah Kerr as the Postmistress. She had strong ideas about what was proper. Carrie Layng was a local cattiewoman who did not believe in riding **sidesaddle** like a 'proper' lady. This bothered Sarah so much that she did not want to allow Carrie into the Post Office. The authorities were contacted, and a compromise was reached, Mrs Kerr would leave the Office while Mrs Layng entered to get her mail.



The town of Dorena before it moved to make way for the Lake.

The Dorena Post Office was established in 1899, and named for two local women, Dora Burnette and Rena Martin. The original site of the town of Dorena is now under Dorena Lake. The United States built a series of dams along the Willamette River to manage severe flooding common in the valley. The

community was scattered throughout the surrounding area in the late 1940's to make way for the reservoir. The Grange moved down river a couple of miles and the School and Post Office moved upriver.

In 1902 a railroad line was built from Cottage Grove up through the valley. The intention was that it would be over 30 miles long and go all the way to the mines but only the



cheapest 15 miles were built. Although the railroad was built to supply the mines, it ended up being a boon for logging, providing an easy way to get the product down the hill to market. In 1915 small passenger car called the Galloping Goose was put into service on the line. It looked like a streetcar and had benches all the way around and a comfy pot-bellied stove in the middle. Rides were a nickel per stop, and you could ride the whole line for a dollar. Farmers, housewives and other valley residents could go to town in the morning and come home in the evening without having to take a grueling wagon ride. In 1917 the Goose had 17,000 riders but use of the railroad for travel began to slow in the 1920's as the age of the automobile took hold.



The town of Disston, a timber town on the Row River.

The mill town of Disston was established in 1906. The Disston Saw Company offered the mill free saws if they would call the town Disston. Times were tough, so they said yes, and the rest is history.

Culp Creek was established in 1925 and named for early resident John Culp, who farmed along its banks. Earlier in his life Mr Culp had been falsely accused of murder near Salem and spent some years in jail before his accuser **recanted** his story. Mr Culp was freed and his aunt and uncle, who lived in Cottage Grove, picked the poor fellow up from the prison gates and brought him home with them. He ended up marrying a local girl who lived on Sharps Creek and had a happy life from then on.



The Culp Creek Post Office

#### Discussion Points

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1. Why did the town of Dorena have to move?
  2. Why did so many towns pop up in the Row River Valley?
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#### Vocabulary

Recant: say that one no longer holds an opinion or belief, to admit a statement made previously is not accurate

Sidesaddle: a saddle in which the rider has both feet on the same side of the horse. It is typically used by a woman rider wearing a skirt

