

# NAPOLEON NEWS

1851



1969

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## Pioneer Days in Josephine County

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**JOSEPHINE COUNTY** Until 1854 it was not known whether the southern part of our county was in Oregon or in California. The "Alta California", a San Francisco newspaper on July 8, 1851 said: "The governor of California has authorized General Miles to call out the California militia for the Rogue River Indian War if necessary."

An 1853 map of the mineral district of California shows all of Illinois Valley as being in California.

**COUNTY POPULATION** The county population increased from 618 (476 men, 36 women, and 106 minors) in 1856 to 1600 in 1861 and then dropped to 785 (342 men, 127 women and 316 minors) in 1865 and increased again to 987 in 1870. The Chinese are not included in the census figures. The highest number of Chinese in the mining area of our county was 402 in 1858. The number dropped to 137 in 1865. The Chinese miners had to pay a license fee of \$4.00 every three months and in this way the number of Chinese was recorded.

**MILLS-SCHOOLS** By 1858 there were five saw and grist mills and five schoolhouses in Josephine County.

**DONATION LAND CLAIMS** Land could be acquired under Donation Land Claim (DLC) laws until December 1855. There were 78 DLC's recorded in what now is Josephine County. Some of the most historic are:

**ALONZO P. TURNER** This was the first DLC in Illinois Valley and was filed December, 1852. It is on the West Side Road adjoining Chief Frye's place.

**FORT HAY** This DLC was taken by William B. Hay in November, 1854. He built a hotel here for the benefit of travelers. At the start of the 1855-56 Indian uprising, a stockade was built around the hotel yard. The first postoffice was named Anderson and was established in 1889. The postoffice was moved and the name changed to Selma in 1897.

**SAMUEL MOONEY** This was the first DLC in what was then called Clover Valley, now called Deer Creek Valley. It was taken up in March, 1853.

**FORT BRIGGS** This was on George E. Briggs' DLC file in February, 1854. It was used during the 1855-56 Indian war as a place of refuge.

**EARLY FERRIES** The first ferry in southern Oregon was the Perkins ferry. It was located near what is now the east edge of Grants Pass. The ferry was built in January or February, 1851. The cabin was on the north side of Rogue River and was the first building in the Rogue River Valley. This ferry was built for the travelers using the California-Oregon trail.

Long's ferry was in operation by June 1, 1851. Long sold to Tufts and Barnes, and in 1853 they sold to Vannoy. Vannoy filed a DLC on this property August, 1852. This ferry crossed Rogue River near the mouth of the Applegate River. It was built for the use of the inhabitants of Illinois Valley.



**JOSEPHINE AND CANYON CREEK AREA** The first important gold discovery in southern Oregon was on Josephine Creek near where it empties into the Illinois River. This gold strike was made early in 1851 by miners who came north from the Klamath River. The party that included Josephine Rollins was guided by the Indians from Perkins' Rogue River Ferry to this new mining district. Rollins mined about three miles from the Illinois River, just below the junction of Josephine Creek and Canyon Creek. The small settlement on Canyon Creek was called by various names: Sebastopol, Canyon Creek, Cannon Creek, Kenyon Creek. There are records of two stores and one saloon here. This was probably the first town in Oregon south of Douglas County. R. P. Daniels' store there was the polling place in January 1852 even before Jacksonville was in existence.

**GALICE AREA** Galice Creek and Galiceburg were named for Louis Galice, a French miner. Here was the next important gold discovery after Josephine Creek. The Alta California for July 1, 1851 quotes the Oregon "Statesman": "New diggings discovered on Rogue River. About 200 miners came north to mine." In this area there were two towns: Skull Bar on Rogue River near what is now called Galice, and Galiceburg on Galice Creek. In this neighborhood there are records of four stores, a hotel and saloons.

**SAILORS' DIGGINGS AREA** Gold was discovered in Sailors Gulch in 1852 and this mining district became known as Sailors' Diggings. This area included, besides Sailors' Gulch, Fry Gulch,

were two bakeries, ten stores, four hotels, a bowling alley, seven saloons, three blacksmith shops and two dance or fancy houses. One of the stores was George E. Briggs' and Dr. W. H. Watkins' "round tent store."

**TIGER TOWN** This town was farther up Althouse Creek at the mouth of Number Eight Gulch. Tiger Town now is usually called Browntown.

**FRENCHTOWN** It was located at the mouth of Snow Gulch. This is a place where a company of Frenchmen mined. When any business was done with the inhabitants of this town an interpreter was necessary. There is record of a store and a hotel here.

**GRASS FLAT** This town was just beyond Frenchtown on the west side of Althouse Creek. We have a record of two hotels, one store, two saloons and a butcher shop in Grass Flat.

About two miles above Grass Flat "an Australian Englishman named Webb" had a hotel and saloon.

**SUCKER CREEK TOWNS** Mining started in 1853 on Sucker Creek. In June of that year a town was starting a short distance above California Bar. Here was a store, a saloon and a bakery and bowling alley. This town was burned by Indians in 1855.

- Later after the Indian war, farther up Sucker Creek at the mouth of Bolan Creek the town of Sucker Creek was rebuilt. Here there were three stores, three saloons, one hotel, a blacksmith shop, a butcher shop and a cobbler's shop.



**LELAND** This town was originally located on Grave Creek. It was named for Leland Crowley, a member of the first Applegate party of 1846, whose daughter, Martha, died and was buried at Grave Creek crossing. Bates built the first tavern in 1851. It was soon after acquired by James Twogood and McDonough Harkness. Twogood filed the DLC May of 1852. Following is a quotation from the Yreka Union, January 1, 1876: "The Grave Creek House on the stage road in Oregon was totally destroyed by fire along with its contents on the evening of December 27, 1875." Grave Creek, Coyote Creek and their tributaries were being mined in the early 1850's.

**WILLIAMSBURG** Mining started here in 1859, after most of the other gold deposits in the county had been nearly exhausted. The postoffice was established in 1860. The early town of

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Williamsburg was not located in quite the same place as the Williams of later years. Williamsburg was near the mouth of Williams Creek which was named for Robert Williams. In Williamsburg there were three stores, one hotel, a blacksmith shop, and three saloons.

**KERBYVILLE--NAPOLEON** The first known settler of what is now Kerby, was a horse trader. His buildings were located between the Thrifty Mart and the river. This place was called the Kentucky Ranch. The original occupant never recorded a claim to this land.

In May of 1855 James Kerby took up a DLC. Kerby's claim included the Kentucky Ranch buildings. Part of the Kerby claim was laid out in town lots by Dr. Holten. This town was first called Kerbyville. Then in 1859 the legislature changed the name of the town to Napoleon. The name Napoleon was not popular so it was changed back. Kerbyville was the second County Seat. In 1858 Kerbyville had three large stores, two fine hotels, a livery stable, a jailhouse, a barber shop, a billiard saloon, a grist mill and a postoffice. The Kerbyville Postoffice was established in 1856.

**MURPHY** This place was named for Bernard O.R. Murphy, who filed his claim in October 1854. This town has had a post office since 1875. In the early days there was a water power grist mill and sawmill on "Murphy's Creek". The stage station and postoffice was on the south side of Applegate River near the mouth of the creek.

**WILDERVILLE--SLATE CREEK** Oliver J. Evans' Junction House was the first business at this location. Here the road from Jacksonville joined the road from Vannoy's to the Illinois Valley. Slate Creek has had a postoffice since 1858, but did not acquire the name of Wilderville until 1878. Joe Wilder had a blacksmith shop here. There was also a hotel, a brewery, a dance hall and a candy factory.



**JEROME PRAIRIE** This place was named for Jerome Dyer who filed on his claim here in March, 1855. He was killed on the Mooney Mountain trail by Indians June 1, 1855.

**GRANTS PASS** This place wasn't a town until the first days of the railroad. It was only a stage station and postoffice in 1865 and was in Jackson County until the 1880's. To quote Walling's History: "Grants Pass was the westernmost village in Jackson County. We stole a strip from our neighboring county and added to our own."

Quartsville, (Alameda), Gold Center, Yanktown, (Lumber-town), Robin's Nest, (Robber's Roost), Gates Tavern, Daisy Mine, Lucky Queen, Bain Station, Golden, Placer, Speaker, Evan's Lower Ferry Tavern, Love Station, Stone Corral, Greenback, Winona, Davidson, Deering--Some of these places had postoffices. Some had schools, stores, hotels, saloons, or dance houses. Some were stage stations, but none were really large enough to call towns--villages maybe but not towns.

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The Kerbyville Museum is open 7 days a week from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. The regular season is from the first of May to the first of November. The museum will open in the winter by appointment. For an appointment phone either Grants Pass 476-5898 or Cave Junction 3161.



To join the Historical Society send your \$3.00 membership fee to:  
Josephine County Historical Society  
Box 34--Kerby, Oregon 97531



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Shelly Gulch, Butcher Gulch, French Flat, Allen Gulch, and Scotch Gulch.

John C. Weston, manager of "Sailors' Diggings Water, Mining and Milling Company" said: "Our coarsest gold was found in Scotch Gulch but our richest diggings was Allen Gulch." The first ditch was three miles long. It brought water to the lower part of Scotch Gulch, Allen Gulch and Sailors' Gulch, so the first extensive mining took place in these three gulches. The second ditch, eleven miles long, passed through a tunnel near the summit of the ridge that separates the east fork of the Illinois from the west fork of the Illinois. It made water available to Fry Gulch and Waldo.

The two towns in Sailors' Diggings were Waldo and Allen Town.

**ALLEN TOWN** was in existence shortly before the town of Waldo. We have records of two saloons, one store and a Catholic Chapel and cemetery.

**WALDO** was the first County Seat. A. G. Walling who lived near Democrat Gulch and later wrote the well known "History of Southern Oregon" stated that: "Waldo was named for a California politician, made the more applicable as the place was thought to be in that state." This was William Waldo who ran for governor of California in 1853.

Waldo had one street. There were two hotels, a butcher shop, a brewery, blacksmith shops, a ball alley, five saloons and dance houses, three big stores and the first courthouse—a log cabin. The post office was established in 1856.

**DEMOCRAT GULCH, ALTHOUSE AND SUCKER CREEK AREA** This was the third important mining area in our county

**DEMOCRAT GULCH** The mining at Democrat Gulch commenced in 1852. A. G. Walling (author of History of Southern Oregon) with his partners Ed Northcutt and B. J. Bell built the first cabin in this very rich Althouse Creek, Sucker Creek and Democrat Gulch area early in 1852. Here they operated a store and a pack train to supply the miners. Since 1852, there has been a store here or near here until the Holland Store closed. In 1877 the Althouse postoffice was located near Democrat Gulch. The name of the postoffice was changed to Aloysius and in 1899 was changed to Holland.

**ALTHOUSE CREEK** This creek was named for Philip Althouse. Gold was first found here early in 1852 by the Althouse brothers party.

**BROWNTOWN** This was the first town up Althouse Creek. It was located at the mouth of Walker Gulch. Browntown was named for Henry H. (Webfoot) Brown. In Browntown there