United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST

Florence Tells Her Secrets



A marker at Florence Cemetery

A Self-Guided Tour of the Florence Basin



Welcome

The story of Florence is seldom told. Few visitors to the Nez Perce National Forest are even aware the site exists. Just driving through the area today, one can hardly tell there once existed a thriving mining community.

The interpretive signs on the kiosk at the cemetery are designed to help you locate sites on the map and to tell some of the rich history of the Florence Basin. This brochure will be your guide as you tour the sites.

Before you start, take a few minutes to read the following information.

Area Access

The most common route used to access Florence from the north end is the Grangeville-Salmon Road #221. Road #221 is paved to Boulder Creek (milepost 36.6), about 4 miles south of Rocky Bluff Campground. You continue along this route to milepost 40.4 and then turn left on Forest Road #394 which intersects with Forest Road #643. After traveling 1.4 miles from this intersection, you will reach the primitive road that services the Florence cemetery.

Access from the south leaves US Highway 95 near the south city limits of Riggins. The route crosses the Little Salmon River and follows the Salmon River Road #1614 for 9.7 miles. At milepost 9.7 you will turn north and travel on the Grangeville-Salmon Road #221. You will encounter a single lane road climbing steeply out of the canyon for 15.2 miles where you turn onto Forest Road #394 and travel east for 10.2 miles to the northern intersection with Forest Road #643.

Road Conditions

Forest roads in the area are suitable for most highway vehicles, although some are best suited for high clearance vehicles, pick-up trucks, ATVs, motorcycles and mountain bikes. The roads beyond the cemetery are narrow, dirt routes not suited for RVs and low clearance vehicles.

Elevations range from 5880 to 6080 feet. Snow falls early and persists until mid-June, however adverse weather can occur at any time.

Most roads in the area have rock surfaces, but can be muddy and slick when snow covered.

Once you leave Grangeville or Riggins, you are traveling within an undeveloped area with no services. Be sure your vehicle is in good operating condition and has a full tank of gas. Always carry a spare tire.

Please drive with caution and be alert for other travelers, wildlife, livestock, washouts, fallen trees and other debris in the roadway.

The access roads experience the heaviest use in the fall during the main hunting season: mid-August through October.

Travel Time

Travel times are dependent on the traveler, vehicle speeds and number of stops for viewing. You should allow 2-3 hours for travel along either route.

Comfort Facilities

The Florence Cemetery is fully accessible to people with disabilities. However, the trail to the cemetery is rated "difficult." The parking lot has space for six vehicles with additonal space for parking nearby. There is a one-unit toilet and a picnic table. Water is not available.

Drinking Water

Water from springs, lakes, ponds and streams should not be consumed without proper treatment (boiling for more than five minutes or using a water filter) as giardia could be present. It is a good idea to carry extra water.

Dispersed Camping

Rocky Bluff Campground is a cool retreat from the summer heat complete with four camping units, picnic tables, restrooms, RV and trailer spaces. Potable water is not available. There is a fee for using the campground.

Wilderness

The Gospel-Hump Wilderness borders the east side of the Florence area. If you plan to travel into this unique wilderness, please:

- Remember the use of motorized or mechanized equipment or vehicles is not permitted in a designated wilderness. This includes bicycles;
- Use certified weed-free products. All forage or mulch used on national forest lands must be certified noxious weed free;
- Safeguard the naturalness of wilderness by practicing "leave no trace" techniques.

Primitive Camping

When camping at primitive locations, please follow these guidelines:

- Choose a site 200 feet from trails and water;
- Use existing fire grates and fire rings when building campfires;
- Make sure your campfire is dead out when you leave;
- Pack out all trash, both yours and that of others.

Cultural Heritage

Today, most remnants of the extensive human activity that occured in Florence are masked by time.

Trees have grown up in the areas where the towns once stood. Some structures remain in decaying form, others are marked only by rotting timbers in the ground where foundations were. The topography of the area is furrowed, dug out and overturned.



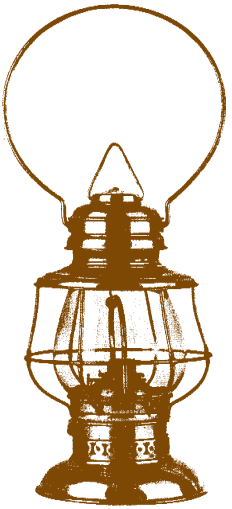
Tobacco

Most artifacts from these sites have been removed over the years. Some remain, scattered throughout the forest.

Artifacts are fragile remnants linking us to the past. Please do not disturb or remove these items.



Boy's Boots



Kerosene Lamp

How Did Florence Get Her Name?

The naming of Florence, which occurred by November, 1861, is clouded in controversy, with long-time area residents reporting different versions of its naming.

The most common version, and the one most likely, is that Florence was named for a stepdaughter of Dr. George Furber. Dr. Furber had a claim on Pioneer Gulch and ran a pharmacy in Florence.

Historian Elliott reported this version in 1884 but mentioned that others claimed Florence was a woman of ill repute in the area.

The other popular story of the origin of the name says that Florence was named for the daughter of Jim and Julia Hunt. Jim was an early grocer and hotelkeeper of the new town. Florence Hunt was reportedly the first child born there.

Dangers In and Around Abandoned Mines

There are many dangers in and around abandoned mines. Great care should be taken when exploring in the Florence area as it is a historical mining district that was quite active over 100 years ago.

Structures: In the Florence area there are many cabins, sheds and other structures. These can be very dangerous to enter. Many are rotting, and the structure could give way with little or no warning. Many are also infested with rodents. Hantavirus is a very serious health hazard associated with rodent nesting areas. Sickness and death can result if a person is infected with this virus.

Shafts: Shafts are vertical openings to underground workings. Many times the shaft may be over 100 feet deep, with the opening being surrounded by decomposing rock, soils and rotting timbers. Within mining tunnels, there are also vertical shafts that connect mine levels and these may have been boarded over at one time. Stepping on the decayed boards could result in a fatal fall. There may also be water covering the floor of the tunnel, hiding vertical shafts.

Cave-ins: Areas that look safe could crumble with the slightest vibrations. A person could be trapped or crushed if a tunnel collapsed while they were exploring.

Bad Air: Miners use the term "bad air" to describe an atmosphere that can kill. Either poisonous gases are present or there is little or Soon there is no oxygen. "Bad air" is treacherous, and frequently kills even experienced miners.

Timbers: Timbers used to support underground tunnels are often very old and decaying. Other timbers that aren't decayed may become loose and fall at the slightest touch. A well-timbered mine opening can look very solid, but can in fact, barely support its own weight. One wrong touch and the whole area may collapse.

Explosives: Many mine sites may have old explosives left lying around by careless workers. Old dynamite sticks and caps can explode if stepped on or just touched.



One of many abandoned cabins in the Florence area - photo taken 8/97.

1 *Summit Creek Ditch*

The Summit Creek ditch is one of the first things you encounter when you come to the junction of the cemetery road and #643. Miners created this large canal and tunnels to divert water from Summit Creek into the gold-rich site of Baboon Gulch.

2 *Florence Cemetery*

The Florence Cemetery is the one site that really brings you close to the people who once inhabitated Florence. Miners, outlaws, merchants and their families came to seek their fortune in Florence. Many found their final resting place here.

Drinking, gambling, fighting, robbery and murder were commonplace in Florence during its peak. A notorious outlaw "Cherokee Bob" Talbotte moved to Florence with a woman called Red Headed Cynthia, taking over a saloon by reportedly threatening to murder the owner. Talbotte was killed in a shootout in the streets of Florence in 1863. You will find his grave in the cemetery.

An Oregon newspaper indicated shootings were so common that "when a man is shot people hardly turn round to see what is the matter." For awhile, Florence was the roughest place in the west.



Short Barrel Peacemaker



Schoolbook

Not all was rough and rowdy. Children were present and it was necessary to provide a school house and employ a teacher. The Florence school district was organized in the spring of 1864.

The schoolhouse was about 12 by 14 feet with 8-foot walls and was built of hewn logs. The floor was made of whipsawed boards and the roof was made of shaved hand-riven shingles.

There was quite an array of textbooks brought to the school by the six youngsters who made up the enrollment. Parents in the frontier west learned not to leave schoolbooks behind when migrating from place to place. Needless to say the school, held during the summer months, was a success.

3 *Old Florence*

Since there is little to see of the Old Florence site, the photo on page 6 might help you get a feel for the size and character of the town that once existed.

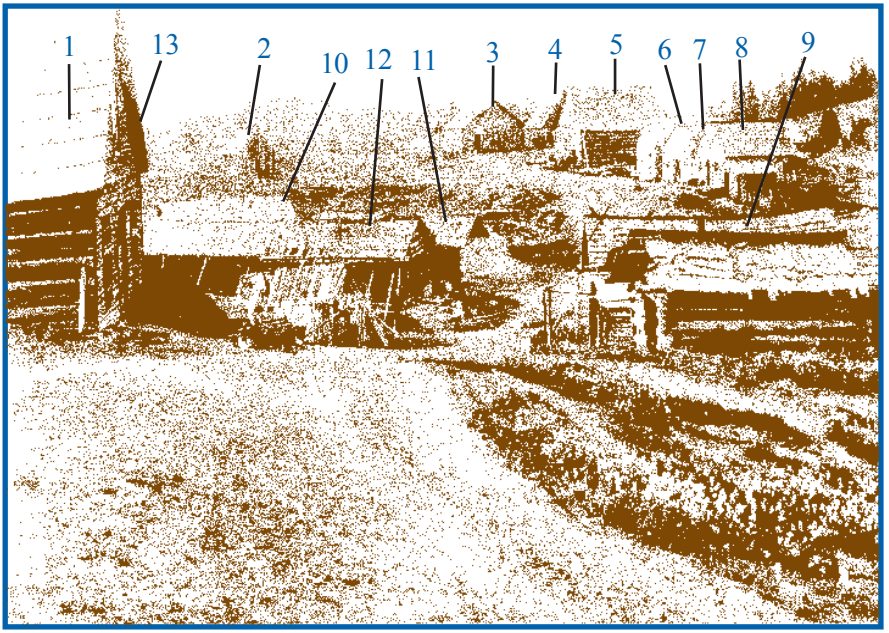


Photo Caption: Old Florence (1896) Contributed by Martin Bardhof

Legend for Photo Sites:

#1 - Masonic Hall, later Idaho County Courthouse and still later a hotel.
#2 - Benefield's Cabin
#3 - Cherokee Bob's Saloon
#4 - Redheaded Cynthia's House
#5 - McKenzie's General Store
#6 - Restaurant
#7 - Barber Shop, later John Clark's General Store
#8 - Mulkey's Butcher Shop
#9 - Where the first court in Idaho County was held
#10 - Warren's Cabin
#11 - Romaris' Cabin
#12 - Stage and Livery Barn
#13 - Dance Hall

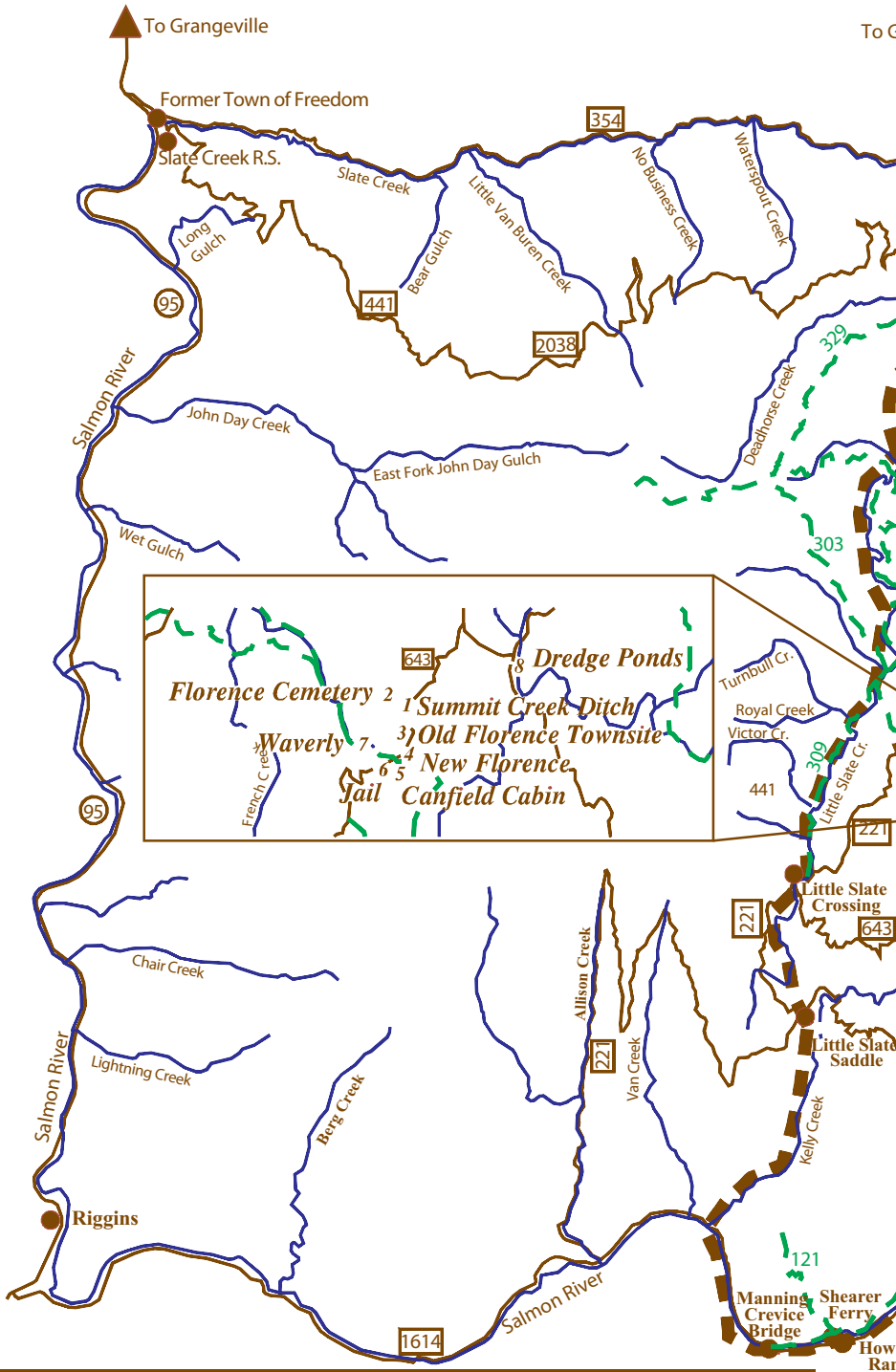


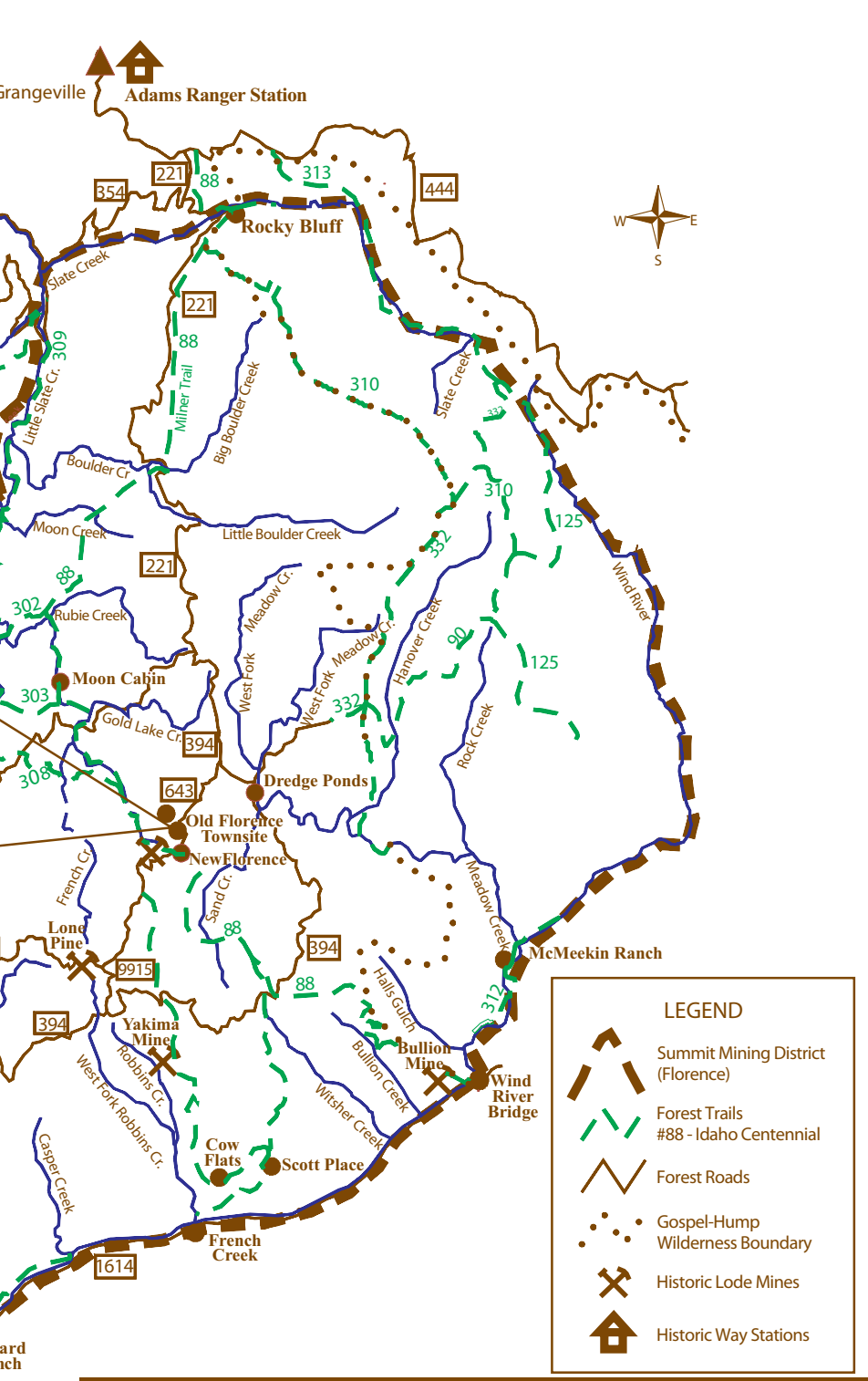
Poker - A Pleasurable Pastime

4 *New Florence*

Founded in 1896 and supported by a second mining boom in the 1890s, New Florence covered 40 acres with businesses, tents and cabins. Most of the remnant cabins left are from the New Florence era.

There are still some buildings of New Florence left to see. With the Canfield place and the jail nearby, this site is one where you will want to park and walk around.


To Grangeville
Former Town of Freedom
Slate Creek R.S.
Slate Creek
Long Gulch
Bear Gulch
Little Van Buren Creek
No Business Creek
Waterspout Creek
354
441
2038
95
Salmon River
John Day Creek
East Fork John Day Gulch
Deadhorse Creek
329
303
Wet Gulch
643
Florence Cemetery
2
Dredge Ponds
8
1
Summit Creek Ditch
3
Old Florence Townsite
Waverly
7.
4
New Florence
6
5
Jail
Canfield Cabin
French C reek
Turnbull Cr.
Royal Creek
Victor Cr.
309
Little Slate Cr.
441
221
Little Slate Crossing
643
Chair Creek
Lightning Creek
Salmon River
Berg Creek
Allison Creek
Van Creek
Little Slate Saddle
Kelly Creek
Riggins
121
Manning Crevice Bridge
Shearer Ferry
1614
Salmon River


Grangeville
Adams Ranger Station
Rocky Bluff
Slate Creek
Little Slate Cr.
Milner Trail
Big Boulder Creek
Boulder Cr.
Moon Creek
Little Boulder Creek
Rubie Creek
Moon Cabin
Gold Lake Cr.
Meadow Cr.
West Fork
West Fork Meadow Cr.
Hanover Creek
Rock Creek
Wind River
Dredge Ponds
Old Florence Townsite
New Florence
French Cr.
Sand Cr.
Long Pine
Meadow Creek
McMeekin Ranch
Halls Gulch
Bullion Creek
Bullion Mine
Wind River Bridge
Yakima Mine
Robbins Cr.
West Fork Robbins Cr.
Witsher Creek
Cow Flats
Scott Place
Casper Creek
French Creek
221
354
444
309
310
125
302
303
308
394
643
9915
1614
88
313
332
90
312
N
W
E
S
LEGEND
Summit Mining District (Florence)
Forest Trails #88 - Idaho Centennial
Forest Roads
Gospel-Hump Wilderness Boundary
Historic Lode Mines
Historic Way Stations

5 *Canfield Place*

Eva Canfield was one of the last miners to inhabit the Florence area after New Florence was abandoned. She lived here in the 1940s.

In June 1940, Mrs. Canfield, who was then seventy years old, completed the census of the mining region around the whole Salmon River country. To take the census, Eva traveled on horseback, on skis, and on foot in order to register nearly six hundred people. At that time, Florence itself had but ten inhabitants.

6 *Florence Jail*

"Citizens of the town of Florence have taken preliminary steps for the erection of a jail." - Idaho County Free Press, May 13, 1898.

The New Florence jail consisted of two rooms - jailer quarters in

What remains of the Florence jail is enough to spur your imagination of the punishment outlaws endured. Refer to the photo of the jail at the interpretive sign.



Outlaws and claim jumpers earned their stay in this box of 2x4's and nails.

7 *Waverly Mine*

The Waverly Mine first went into production in January 1896. It was active off and on until 1939.

In 1897 a two stamp mill was assembled for processing ore from the mine. This type of mill involves machinery consisting of stamps that have two heavy iron cylinders. These are dropped down on the ore to crush it.

History indicates that the mine was periodically opened and closed again due to poor management and inability to operate at a profit, a history common to many mines.

8 *Dredge Ponds*

The pilings you see are the remains of a dragline dredging site that was active in the 1930s.

A dragline dredge is a power-shovel excavator that feeds a floating washing plant or gold processor. Dredges like the one that sat here rearranged waterways as they worked.

If you look down the creek, you can see where the tailings from the dredge were left.

Wildlife Viewing

The Florence area is filled with creeks, ponds, meadows, marshes and forest environments. It is home to a large number of fish, amphibians, birds and mammals. The mixture of meadows and forest provide good foraging and hiding cover for animals.

The opportunities to view wildlife are abundant. Big game species such as whitetail deer, elk and moose are common. Moose enjoy feeding in the ponds located throughout the drainage, especially near Sand Creek (site #8, Dredge Ponds on the tour). Please be

cautious and do not attempt to approach a cow with her calf as she may charge.

Occasionally, you may see black bears and mountain lions. Again, use caution and keep your distance.

Other animals you may see are members of the weasel family, hares/rabbits, rodents and a variety of birds.



Recreational Opportunities

The area provides excellent recreational opportunities year-round. Hiking, mountain biking, picnicking, berry picking, motorcycling, ATV riding, wildlife viewing, camping and fishing are the most popular summertime activities.

The Meadow and Sand Creek confluences and pond site contain brook trout, which are non-native to Idaho. A fishing license is required if you plan on trying your luck.

In winter, snowmobilers are drawn by the rugged terrain and spectacular scenery.

Mining Effects on Fisheries

Water diversions through ditching, settling ponds, and test pits can be seen throughout the area. Altering the flow of water from the original stream channels can influence the development and/or maintenance of the streams and change habitat conditions for fish.

An example of an old mining tunnel can be found along Gold Lake Creek. Resident fish can be observed in the creek both upstream and downstream of the remains of the mining tunnel. The changing of the amount of flow in this creek may have isolated portions of the fish population or critical habitat for native trout when the tunnel was orginally completed. Today the tunnel has collapsed in some parts and sediment is entering the stream channel. This sediment may alter habitat for many aquatic species. Please take care when walking above the tunnel entrance and be on the alert for suck holes.

Dollar Days Mine is a display of recent mining (early 1900s) activities in headwater stream channels. Shallow marshy environments which are spring fed were mined. This site is just one source of cold water that is critical to native trout and amphibian populations. An attempt has been made to reclaim the site by burying woody debris and planting and seeding the site.

The Florence Gold Rush

In its early history, Florence experienced a gold rush which caused the population to boom from 50 to 9000 in one year. Gold seekers discovered gold in the Florence Basin in August of 1861. By winter of that year, 3000 people had flocked to the area and over one million dollars in gold had been produced from placer mining alone. By June of 1862, the area reached its peak population of about 9000. Miners produced seven million dollars in gold that year. By early August of 1862, thousands of people left the area due to the lack of paying mining claims.

By 1863, the big rush was over, but mining activity still continued. For the next 20 years a mixed population of Chinese and White miners worked their diggings. Using more patient, labor-intensive mining practices, the Chinese made meager fortunes reworking old placer claims.

After a relatively inactive period at Florence in the 1880s, new technology for quartz mining revived the area in 1895. People once again flocked to the Florence Basin, putting the population back up to 1000 in 1897. Conflict between owners of the Old Florence townsite and new gold-seekers spurred the establishment of New Florence, 1/4 mile south. The old townsite was disassembled for salvage lumber and was mined for remnant gold that fell through the cracks of floorboards in several buildings.

By 1897 only a few buildings were left standing in Old Florence. By 1900, the mining boom had declined again and only a few stamp mills continued their operations. Although some minor booms occured between 1900 and 1940, none were comparable to those of the 1860s and 1890s.



The Placer Miner's Tools

Mining Methods

Florence was best known as a placer mining district. The mining methods were predominantly hand methods using rockers, long toms (a short, modified sluice) and gold pans.

Gold pans: Gold pans are generally made of sheet iron. They are 10 -18" in diameter and 3" deep. In early days, frying pans with the handle removed were also used. The pan was filled about 2/3 full of placer material. It was then dipped in water where lumps were kneaded out and larger stones and pebbles thrown out. Then the pan would be inclined downward away from the operator with the pan just covered with water. The operator would then shake the pan in a circular motion, washing lighter material out.

Panning was mainly used for sampling as it was a fairly slow process.

Rockers: Rockers were a simple piece of equipment that could process up to 5 cubic yards of material a day with two men working. A rocker was a wooden box with a handle, and it rested on a slight incline. At the rear was the hopper or "grizzly" which was usually equipped with a grill of sorts. This grill limited the size of material processed through the rocker.

The bottom of the rocker was covered with carpet or burlap and riffles (small wooden barriers fastened to the floor of the device). Jerking the rocker back and forth with the handle, with a sufficient water supply flowing through the rocker, would result in concentration of the heavier gold behind the riffles or in the carpet/burlap.

Long Toms: A long tom was a compact sluice box which was more efficient than a rocker. It required the availability of lumber. It would be approximately 10-30' long and one and a half foot wide. The bottom was covered with riffles. The bottom or lower end was perforated or screened and had a shallow, flat riffle box below it, 4-5' long, that caught most of the remaining gold.

Sluice Boxes: A sluice was a longer version of the tom sometimes extending to 100 feet in length. A long sluice would generally be made in sections, each with a wide and a narrow end so that the sections could be nested creating a long trough.

Sluicing became the most important type of mining after 1863 when the first of the major ditches was completed to provide numerous claims with a water supply.



Drag Line or Steam Shovel Dredge in Florence Basin

Years after the turn of the century, technological advances brought new methods of mining to the Summit Creek Mining District including the use of dredges, drilling and other metallurgy techniques.

Much of the Florence area shows the impacts of mining activities. Over time, larger diameter trees, dense shrubbery and grasses have filled in the landscape.

The Story of Tolo

The Nez Perce woman Alablernot or Tolo (Too-lah), as she was called by the white settlers she had befriended, played an integral part in the Nez Perce War of 1877.

News of the hostilities between the Nez Perce people and the white settlers and ranchers reached the residents of Freedom (now the site of Slate Creek). The whites congregated at Freedom and constructed a stockade for protection from the Nez Perce.

This stockade was made by digging a trench about 3 feet deep and placing timbers upright. The approximately 40 women and children felt much safer within the confines of the stockade. However, the 23 men present were poorly armed and the settlers were totally shut off from any information from the outside world. Their only possible avenue of help was from the miners of Florence.

It was then that Tolo, who had come to the stockade with her two sisters and their two children, offered to make the 26-mile trek to Florence to warn the miners of the Nez Perce uprising and to get help.

Tolo rode all night arriving at Florence in the early morning. By that night, 25 miners were gathered and armed with modern guns. They arrived at Freedom the next morning prepared to fight, but no conflict occurred.

A lake which lies on the west side of the Camas Prairie was frequently used by the Nez Perce people. It was at this lake that several bands of the Nez Perce were camped when the Nez Perce War of 1877 began. The lake was later named after Tolo, the heroic Nez Perce woman who will not be forgotten for her brave night ride to Florence.



Photo of Tolo, taken about 1890 (contributed by Agnes Moses, Tolo's daughter, Kamiah, Idaho)

Chinese Miners

In the 1870s and 1880s, there were probably as many as 150 Chinese in Florence. Chinese immigrants reworked almost all of the placer ground, including the old tailings.

Not all the Chinese were employed as miners. They also became freighters, merchants,

sawyers, cooks and gardeners. There was a Chinese laundry in town.

When a Chinese man lay dying, he was always moved out of his house because his fellow men would not live in a place where someone had died. They burned all of the clothing and bedding.

The bodies of the Chinese buried in the Florence cemetery were exhumed prior to the 1920s.

Once exhumed, the bones were burnt and the ashes sent back to China to be buried in the sacred ground of the native country.

Milner Trail

In its beginnings, Mount Idaho was one of several way stations along the trail to the Florence mines.

Moses Milner, with the help of his partner Francis, cut the trail from Mount Idaho to Florence in the spring of 1862. There was a toll charged. The Milner Trail was later incorporated into the state wagon road, which was built in 1891.

In May, 1862, Mrs. Seth Jones gained the distinction of being the first woman to pass over the Milner Trail. In recognition of the fact, she was permitted to travel the new pioneer route without payment or toll.

The name Tollgate still clings to a place six or seven miles above Mount Idaho as a reminder of Milner's efforts.

Adams Camp

Adams Camp was a favorite stopping place along the old Milner Trail, and was first settled in 1862.

Adams Camp had a post office and stage station with tri-weekly mail service.

Adams Work Center, formerly Adams Camp, has been used by the Forest Service as an administrative site since 1918. The Adams Camp Ranger Station also served as switchboard center for all telephone lines in the area.



Adams Camp (Date Unknown)

A segment of the Idaho Centennial Trail passes through the Florence Basin (see Trail #88 on the map on pages 7 and 8). This section of trail is currently a multi-purpose trail. The trail passes through the Florence Basin winding along the old wagon roads and miner trails constructed to transport supplies and miners from Grangeville to Warren and service the Florence interior.

For More Information

Salmon River Ranger District
304 Slate Creek Road
White Bird, ID 83554
(208) 839-2211

This brochure is a companion publication to "The Lure of Gold," a more in-depth history of Florence and the 1861 Discovery of Gold. Both of these brochures are located on our website at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/nezperceclearwater.

R1-04-02

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