



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

APRIL 2026

CELEBRATING

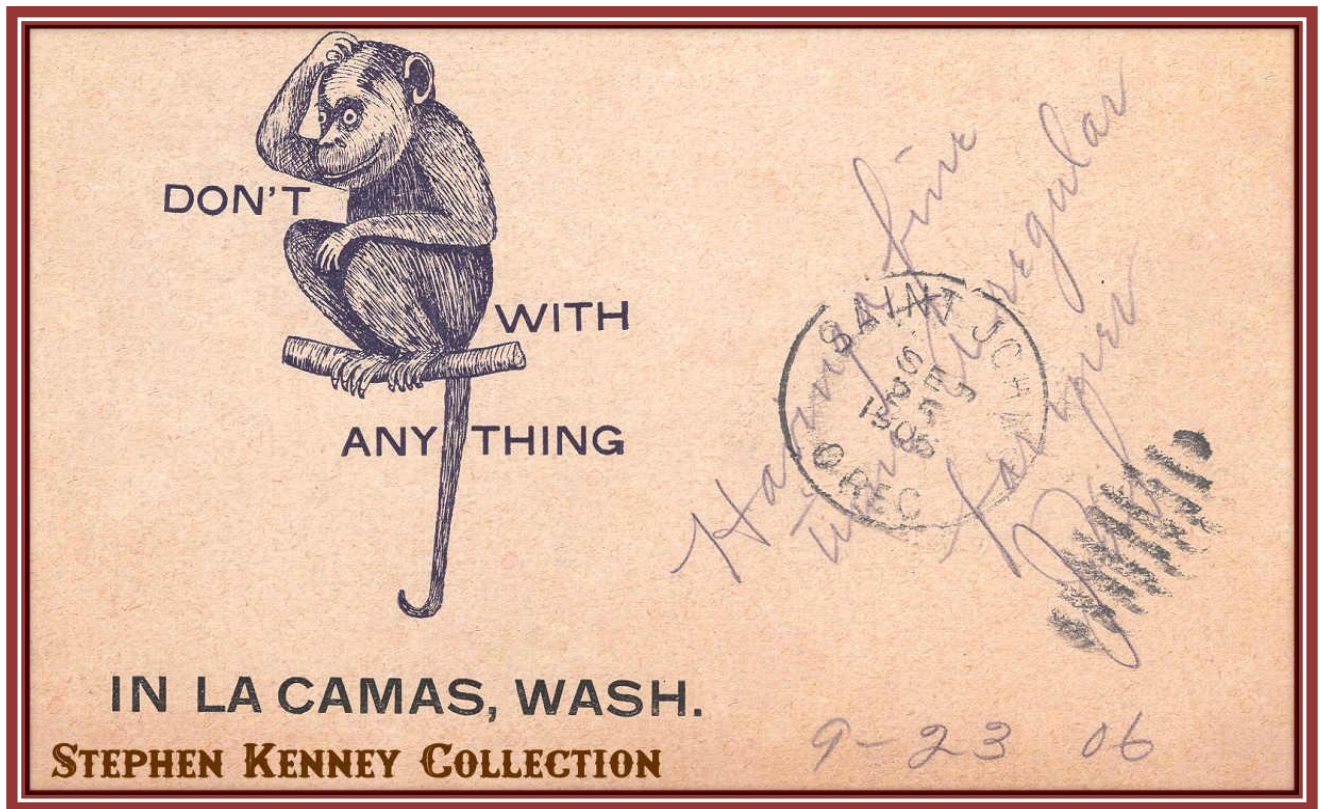


1966-2026

A HISTORY OF CAMAS, WASHINGTON



Pennant greetings postcard from Camas, Washington. Postmarked in Camas on February 22, 1915.



Humorous Greetings from La Camas, Washington postcard. Postmarked September 24, 1906 in Camas. Receiving postmark at Saint Johns, Oregon on front dated September 25, 1906.

A HISTORY OF CAMAS WASH.

Camas, Washington was founded in 1883 as a historic mill town along the north bank of the Columbia River and it was named after the indigenous, blue-flowered *camas* lily. The town grew around the Crown Willamette Paper Company which was established by *The Oregonian's* newspaper publisher, Henry Pittock.

The area was originally a gathering place for Native Americans who harvested the nutritious bulb of the camas plant. Blossoming with clusters of showy deep blue flowers, something like a hyacinth in habit, the Camas Lily was eagerly sought by Columbia River Indians, since its bulb was an important part of their diet.

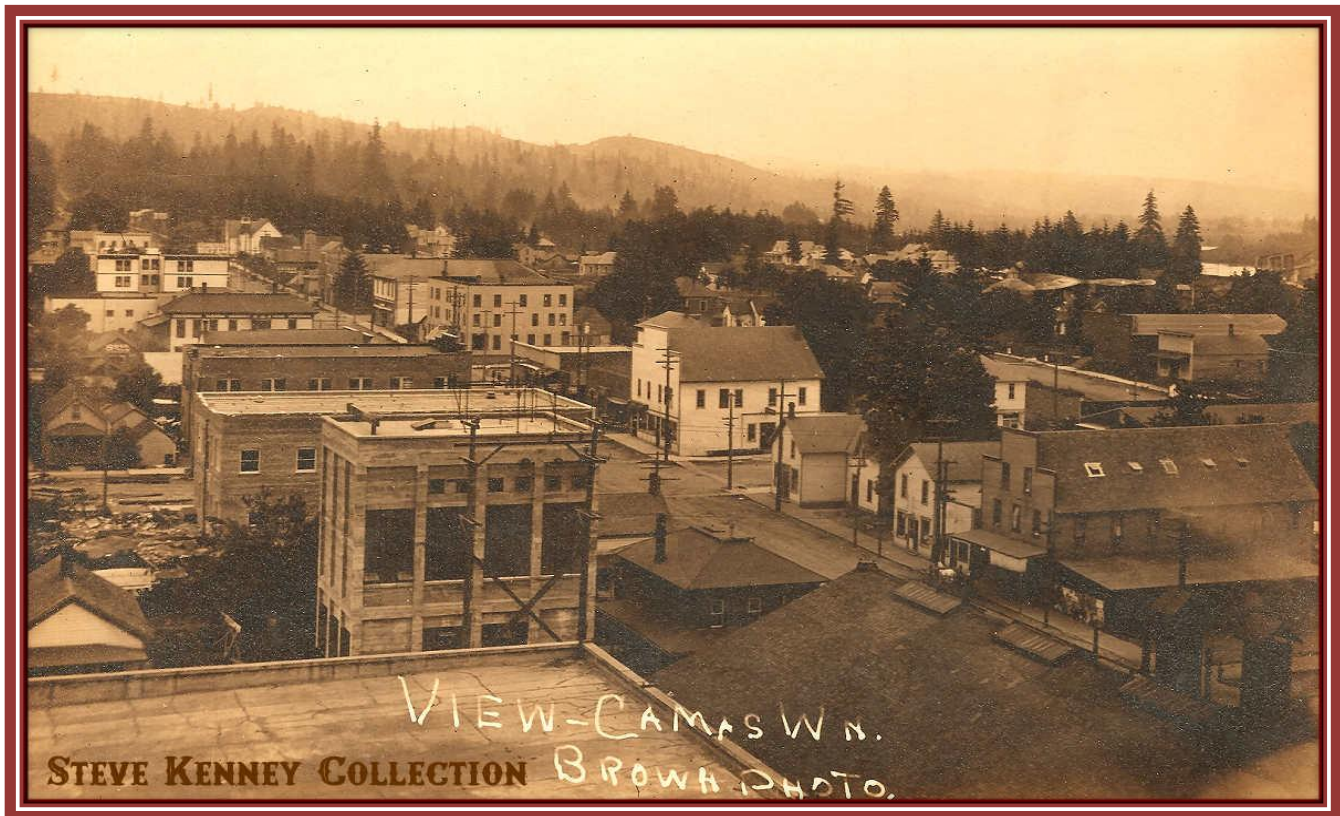
Grown in meadows and marshes, it was harvested in mid-summer and prepared for eating, cooking in primitive baking pits, first being wrapped in swamp grass before contact with hot stones. When the cooked bulbs were dry, they were reduced to a flour from which bread could be made. When boiled in water, the bulbs yielded a molasses that was treasured for use on important festival occasions. Indians called the flower the "KAMASS."



Patton real photo postcard of a Mail Train at Camas, Washington, circa 1914. Postally unused.



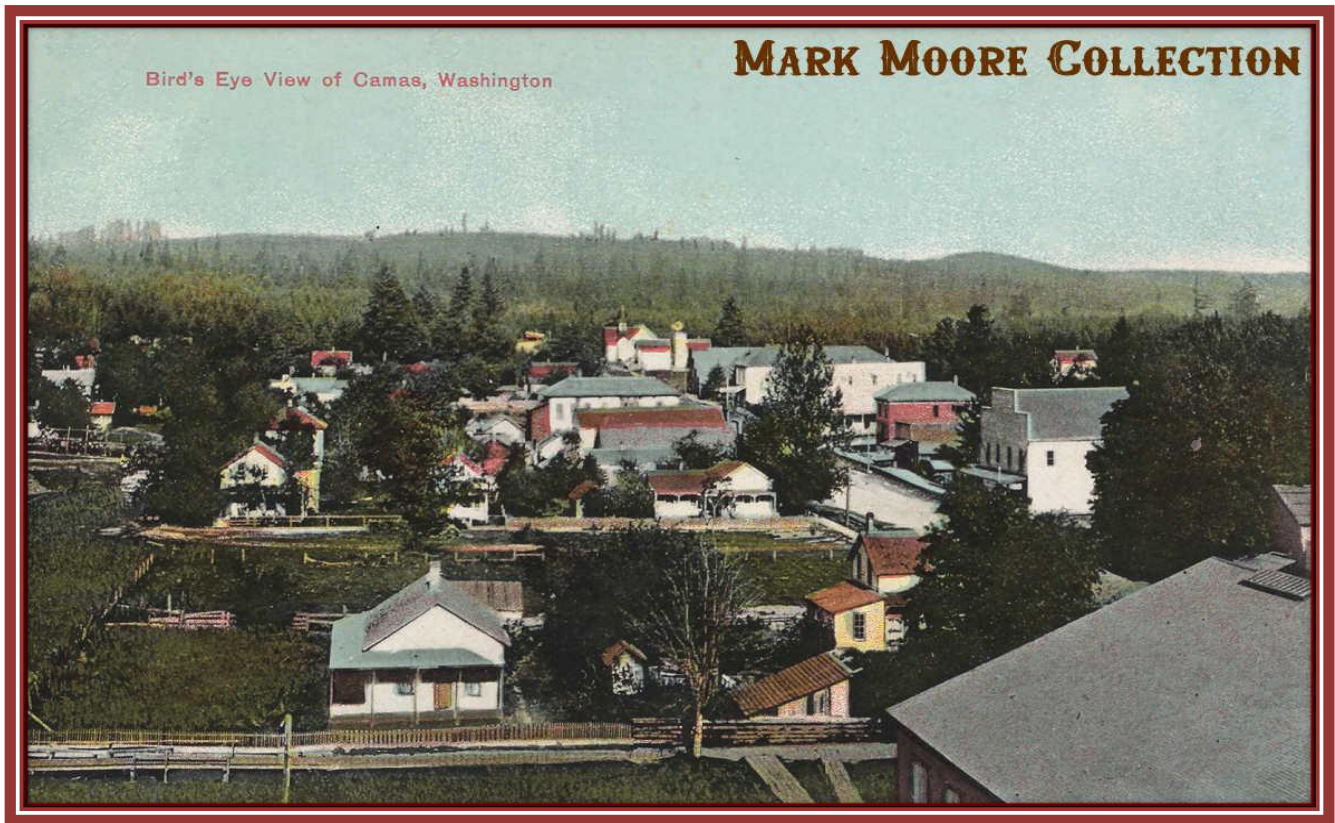
Patton real photo postcard of Main Street in Camas, Washington circa 1912. Postally unused.



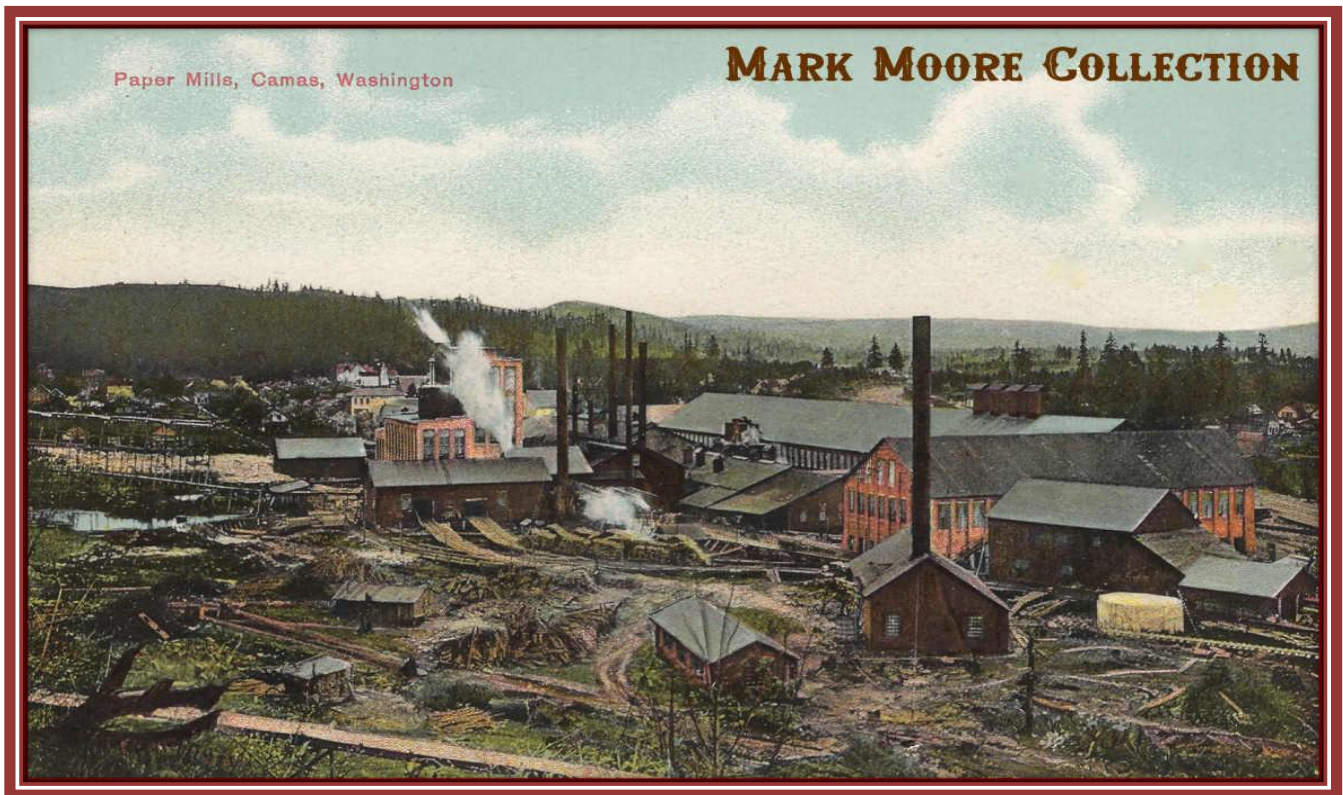
Brown real photo postcard of downtown Camas, Washington, circa 1910. Postally unused.



Patton real photo postcard of Main Street in Camas, Washington circa 1914. Postally unused. The banner hanging in the center of the street advertises a Baseball Game coming up on Sunday the 28th.



Lithographed birdseye view postcard showing Camas, Washington circa 1909. Published by J.W. Conn of Camas. Postally unused.

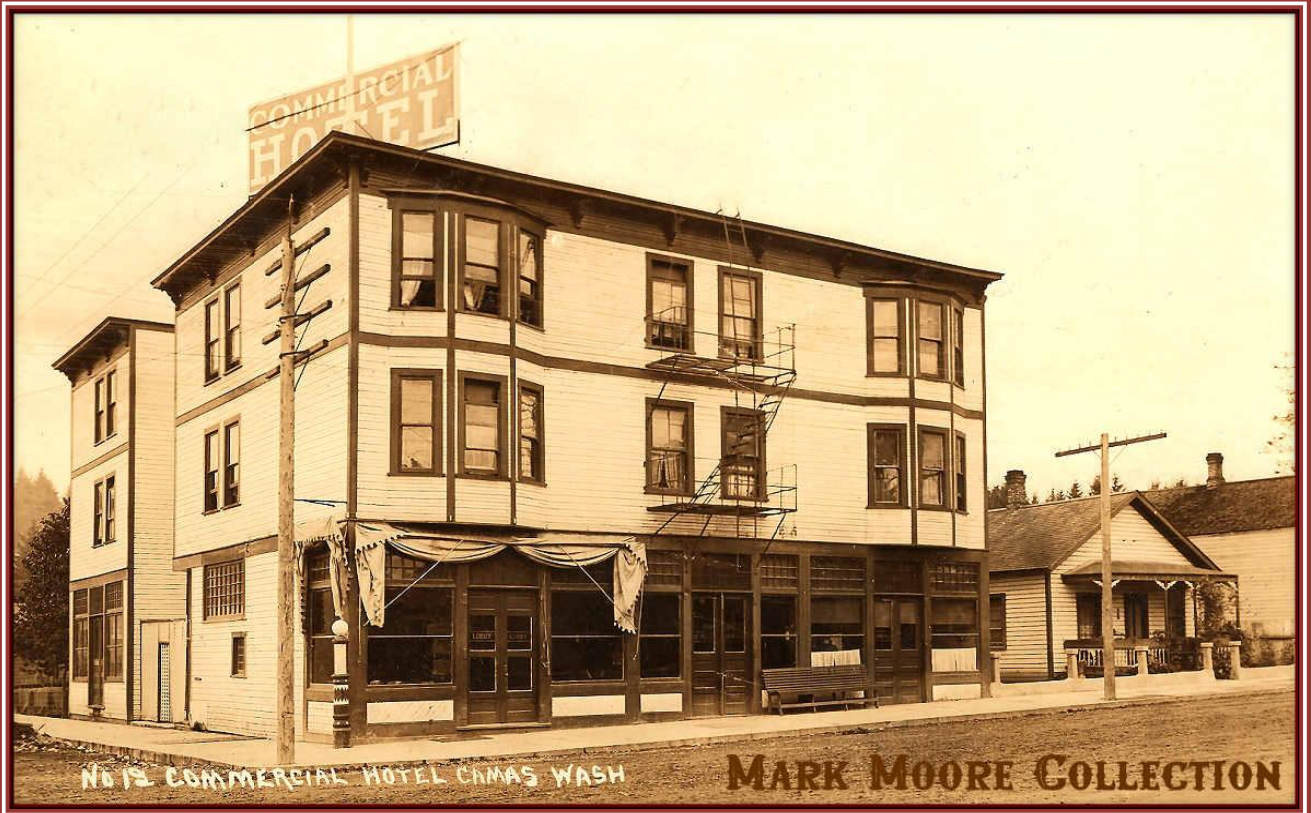


Lithographed postcard showing the Crown Papermill at Camas, Washington circa 1909. Published by J.W. Conn of Camas. Postmarked June 23, 1911.

MARK MOORE COLLECTION



Real photo postcard of the Camas Crown Pacific Paper Mill in Camas, Washington, circa 1909. Postally unused.



Patton real photo postcard of the Commercial Hotel in Camas, Washington circa 1914. Postmarked February 21, 1916.



Real photo postcard view of the Camas Post Office, circa 1930. Postally unused.

Before the paper mill was built, Jacob Hunsaker built a sawmill there in 1846. In 1851, the Hudson's Bay Company built another sawmill nearby in 1851, followed by a third mill by Hamilton J.G. Maxon in 1852. In 1883, Henry Pittock, owner of *The Oregonian* newspaper, selected the site for a paper mill to ensure a steady supply of newsprint. The La Camas Colony Company was formed, and the mill began operating in 1885.

With the mills operating in the area, individuals seeking employment began settling in the area. The first post office was established at La Camas on February 7, 1884. The town was originally named "La Camas," but dropped the "La" in 1894. The original post office closed on September 30, 1894 and it re-opened on October 1, 1894, operating as "Camas," Washington.

For over a century, the local economy was dominated by the paper mill. A 7,000-foot water pipe, known as the "mill ditch," was built from Round Lake to the mill in 1883, and parts of it are still in use today. The City of Camas was incorporated on June 18, 1906. In 1910, the town had a population of 1,125, and 450 workers were employed at the mill.

The city grew up around the paper industry, and a major fire in 1923 destroyed much of downtown Camas, destroying numerous wooden buildings. As a result, the downtown area was rebuilt primarily in brick and by the end of the year, the city formed its first Fire Department.

A merger of the Crown Willamette Paper Company and the San Francisco-based Zellerbach Paper Mill Company in 1928 created the Crown-Zellerbach Corporation. During World War II, the plant produced ship rudders for Liberty ships built in Portland and Vancouver.

In later years, Crown Zellerbach Corporations changed ownership several times, and it is currently being merged again, but known as James River Corporation, it is now known as Georgia Pacific and the paper industry remains a key part of Camas' identity. While historically a "mill town," in recent decades, Camas has evolved into a high-tech hub and residential community. In 2006, the city celebrated 100 years of incorporation.

SOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE

City of Camas website, Google, Postal Historian Steve King, Steve Kenney, Wikipedia



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SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

10 AM TO 4 PM

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