

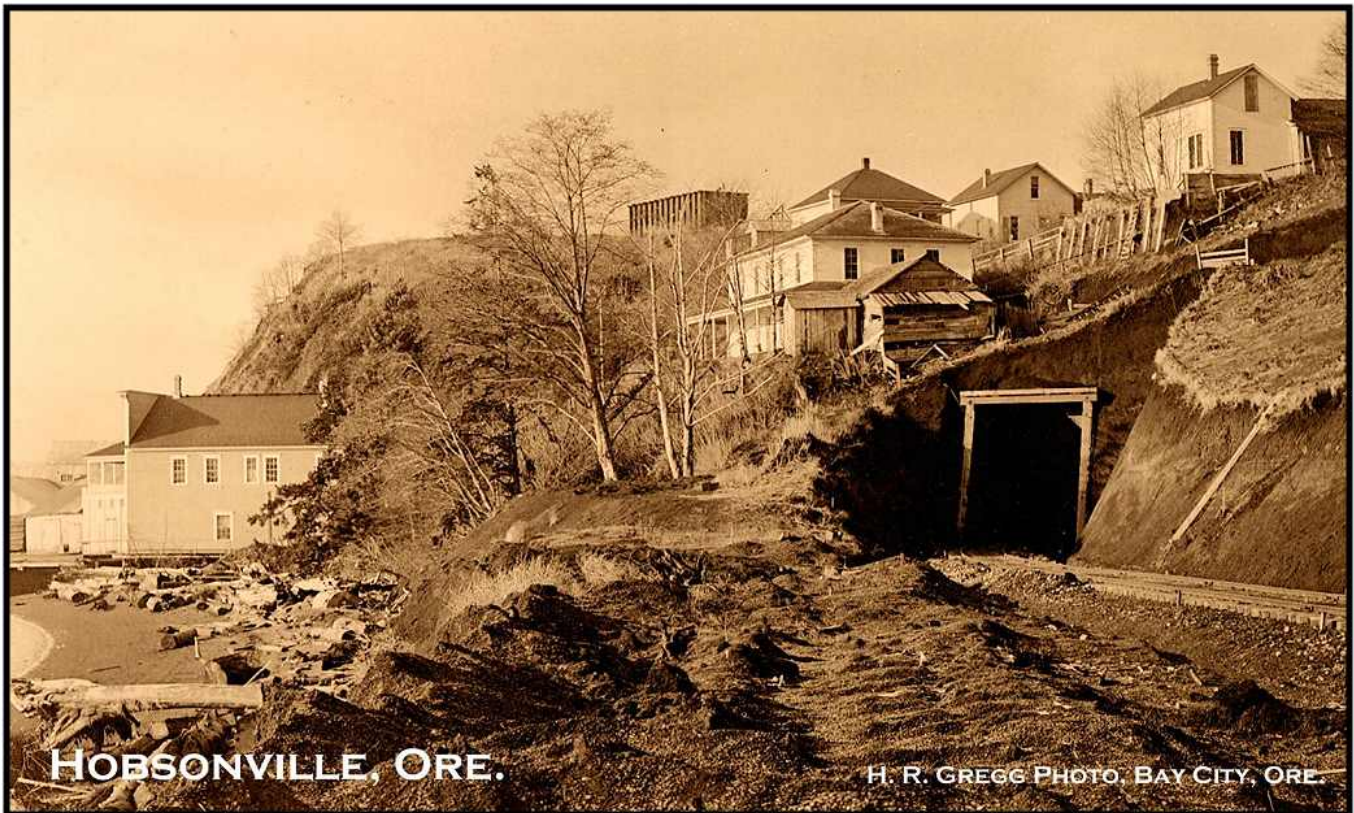


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October 2019

TILLAMOOK COUNTY GHOST TOWN

HOBSONVILLE, OREGON



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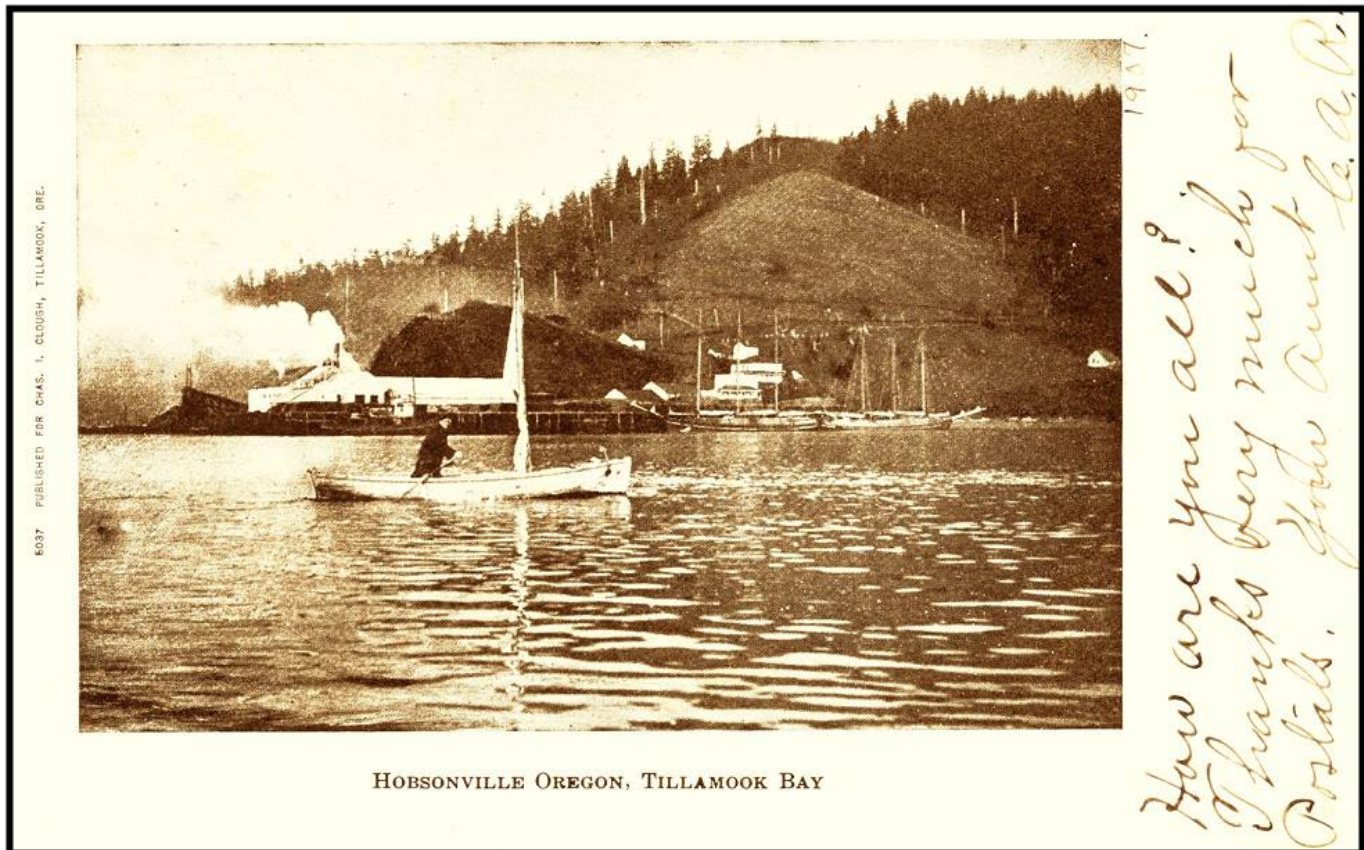
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TILLAMOOK COUNTY GHOST TOWN

HOBSONVILLE – BY STEVE KING

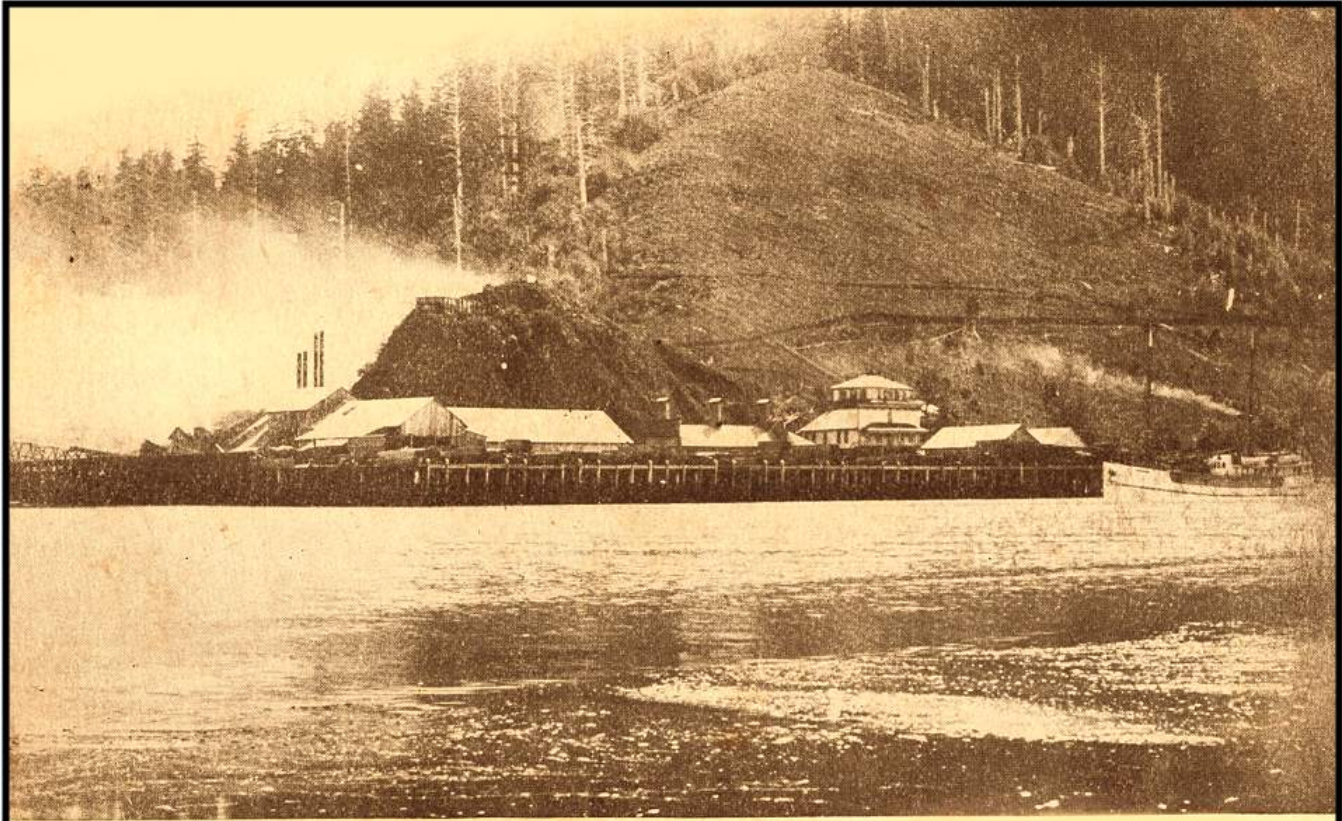


Hobsonville, Oregon on Tillamook Bay, circa 1906.

Hobsonville Point is a large spur of rock jutting into northern Tillamook Bay, about one mile across Miami Cove from Garibaldi, Oregon. The first post office in Tillamook County was Tillamook, established in 1866, followed by Nehalem and Garibaldi in 1870. When the Hobsonville post office opened in 1883, the Garibaldi post office closed.

Garibaldi and Hobsonville competed to provide service for this small area of lower Tillamook Bay until 1899. Garibaldi eventually won. The Garibaldi post office has been in continuous operation since it reopened in 1899. Hobsonville post office lasted for 30 years, and was closed in 1913.

Hobsonville Point was considered sacred by the local Tillamook Indians, who believed that the Coyote God had his cradle here. The first historical reference comes from Captain Robert Gray, who landed nearby in 1788. Gray was the second European to enter the Columbia River and is credited with naming it.



Hobsonville, Tillamook, Oregon.

Hobsonville in Tillamook County, Oregon, circa 1907.

The first commercial ventures at Hobsonville were two fish canneries established by the Leinwebers and by John Hobson, for whom Hobsonville was named. The *Portland Oregonian* of August 1, 1883 reported the canneries and associated communities were thriving. But it was lumber that brought the community to its peak of prosperity.

In the 1880s most of Tillamook County was covered with towering trees of fir, spruce and hemlock. Charles Robson thought the rocky Hobsonville Point would be ideal for a sawmill, so he established a homestead there. Joseph Smith, another pioneer, had the same thought, bought the property from Robson on June 19, 1883 for \$325. There were no roads in the area, only an Indian trail that ran from Garibaldi past Hobsonville Point and on to Tillamook. All of the sawmill machinery had to be brought in by boat, crossing the treacherous bar at the mouth of Tillamook Bay.

Smith hired a crew, cleared his site, drove pilings into the bay, and erected a sawmill structure, dock, and log incline from the water. Trees were cut and the logs floated in, and by the fall of 1883 he was ready to cut lumber. The first sawed logs were used to complete the construction of the complex. Labor was not a problem. He hired homesteaders and Indians. Logs were plentiful and cheap.



Early view from Tillamook Bay of the Hobsonville Hotel and sawmill. Courtesy of Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.

As business grew Smith blasted rock for a hotel site, built lumber docks, added dwellings, bunkhouses and a mess house. A store was built on the slope above the mill, aside the wagon road that now ran past Hobsonville. A road from the beach to the hill side homes of the workers was "paved" with slabs from the mill. The workers called it "Sawdust Avenue."

Hobsonville post office was established February 6, 1883 with Joseph E. Sibley as postmaster. The office was likely proposed by John Hobson, the original owner of the property and operator of a fish cannery there. The post office and community were named after him, and perhaps by him. The mail arrived once a week from Astoria to Tillamook.

From Seaside the mail was carried down a trail, over and around the difficult Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain, and six miles overland up Nehalem Bay to the Nehalem post office. From there it was floated down Nehalem Bay to the mouth. Then it was walked seven miles down Garibaldi Beach to the entrance of Tillamook Bay, where Garibaldi was but a short distance inland. Then it went by boat again across to Hobsonville and continued by boat twelve miles to Tillamook, at the head of Tillamook Bay. By the late 1890s, mail was delivered daily except Sunday.

When Hobsonville post office opened in 1883, a peculiar postal situation ensued. Records show that the Garibaldi post office, a mile across the cove, was closed, or converted into a "Special" office. Apparently there was no postmaster at Garibaldi, but the office building remained open and there was someone with the authority there to transport the mail to and from Hobsonville. No postmarks are reported from Garibaldi during this period.

Garibaldi became a post office with a postmaster again in 1886, but in 1892 came under Hobsonville management once more. Finally, in 1899 Garibaldi post office was re-established and continues to this day. The competition between Hobsonville and Garibaldi see-sawed like this for nearly 30 years, but in the end Garibaldi won out and Hobsonville disappeared. Neither post office did a large volume of business.

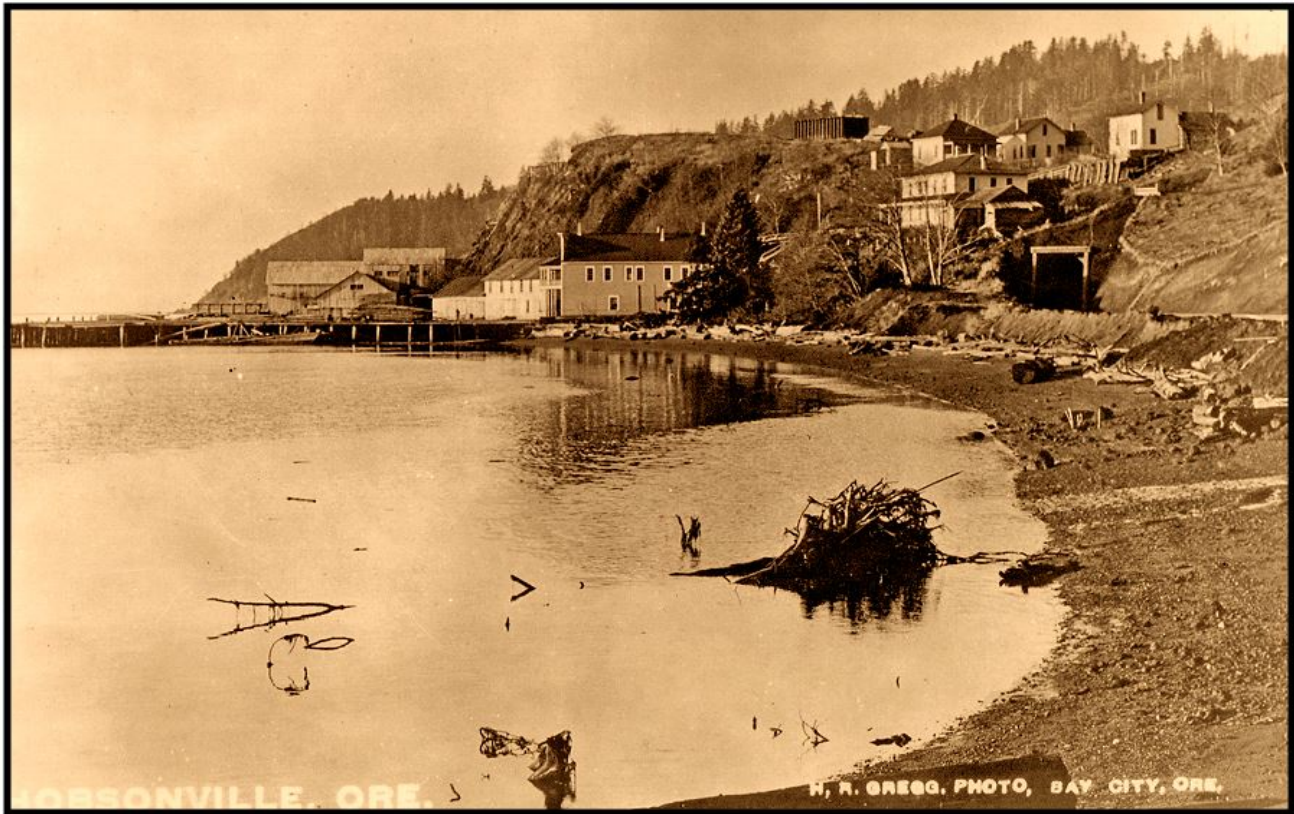
The location of the Hobsonville post office tended to move when a new postmaster was appointed. The first location was likely at the postmaster's house, located just above the mill. A Site Location Report of May 31, 1886 listed the population to be served at 100. When the store was opened along the wagon road above the mill, the post office moved there

In 1886 arrangements were made with a San Francisco firm to lease a ship to haul lumber out of Tillamook Bay and ship it to California. Later several ships were employed in the business. By 1887 the Smith mill was the only important mill on the Bay. The mill employed 40 men and cut 50,000 feet of lumber per day.

On April 19, 1888 Joseph Smith sold the mill to the Truckee Lumber Co. of San Francisco. The new manager was W.H. Kruger, who managed the mill for the next 17 years. He enlarged the mill with J.E. Sibley in charge of construction. Sibley was also the Hobsonville postmaster off and on between 1883 and 1904. Output increased to 75,000 feet of sawed lumber per day. Hobsonville reached a peak population of about 500 in the 1890s.

On March 3, 1906 the Truckee Lumber interests were sold to Clark Hadley of the Hadley Lumber Company. On January 16, 1907 Hadley merged his holdings with the Miami Lumber Company and continued under their name.

However, a financial panic in the fall of 1907 closed the mill. Everyone departed except for the watchman and his wife. For ten years they watched as Hobsonville fell into disrepair and decay. Then they left.



View of Hobsonville Point from the shore. Courtesy of Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.



View from the shore with the Pacific Railway and Navigation Company tunnel running under Hobsonville Point circa 1911. Courtesy of Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.



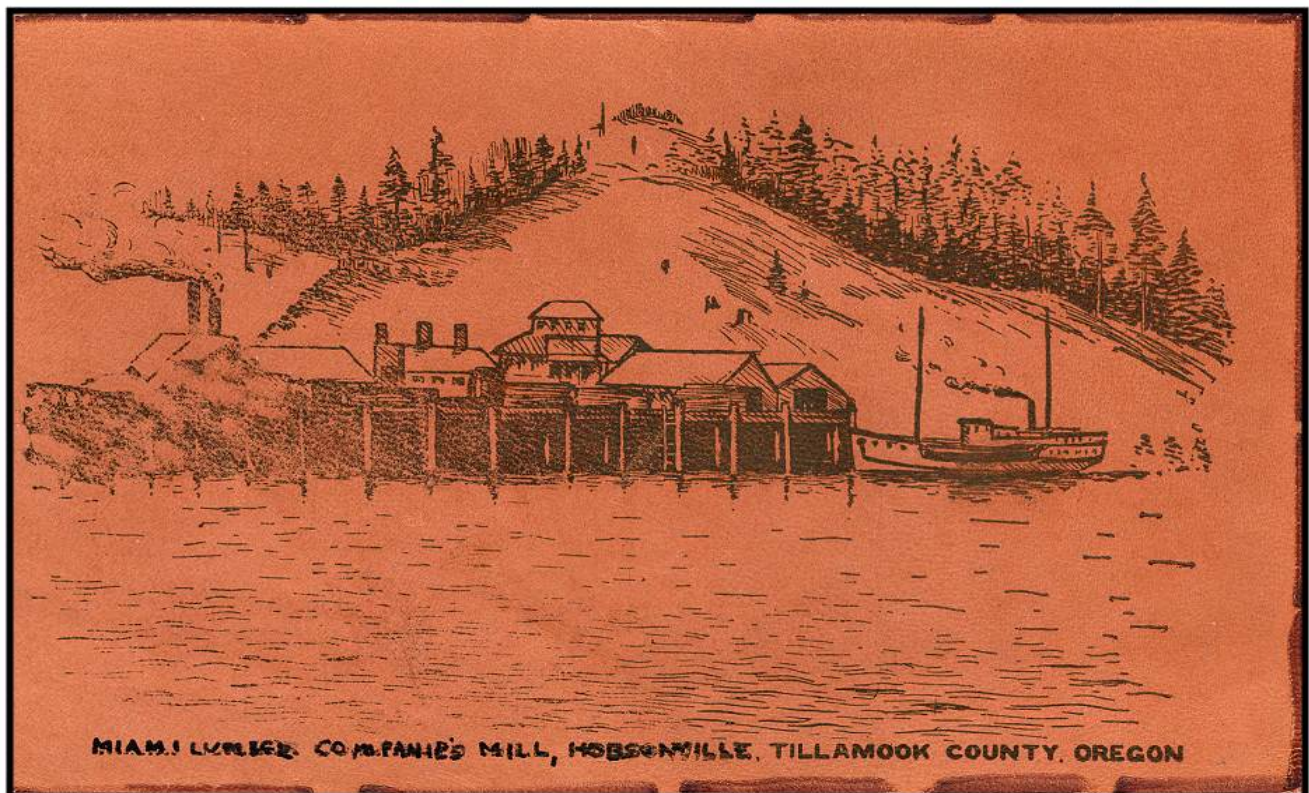
Hobsonville Hotel and Store. Courtesy Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.



Scene at Hobsonville Store and Post Office. Courtesy Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.



Hobsonville, Oregon from the hill above, circa 1909, after the 1907 mill closure.



A rare leather postcard of the Miami Lumber Mill in Hobsonville from 1907.

The Pacific Railway and Navigation Company was fully operational by 1911. A report to the Division of Topography of the Post Office Department signed on December 12, 1911 by Hobsonville postmaster A.S. Bent describes the post office as being 184 feet from the track. Hobsonville post office was discontinued November 15, 1913, with mail to Bay City. Establishment to discontinuance spanned 30 years and six months, but there were six months in 1887-88 when it did not operate.

By 1973, when the author first visited the Hobsonville site, nothing remained except several large concrete blocks, some piling stubs, and a small structure made of bricks. Slabs from the mill days were present, but these too are mostly gone now. One can still see evidence of the road blasted out of the rock around the point. A small community of seven homes exists a short distance northeast of the former Hobsonville town. The author has spent over 40 years fishing for salmon on Tillamook Bay, much of the time off Hobsonville Point. I often wondered about the sawmill community and the people that lived there, and have enjoyed the research on its history.

This article was adapted from an article written by Steve King for *The Oregon Country*, which is published four times a year by the Pacific Northwest Postal History Society.