

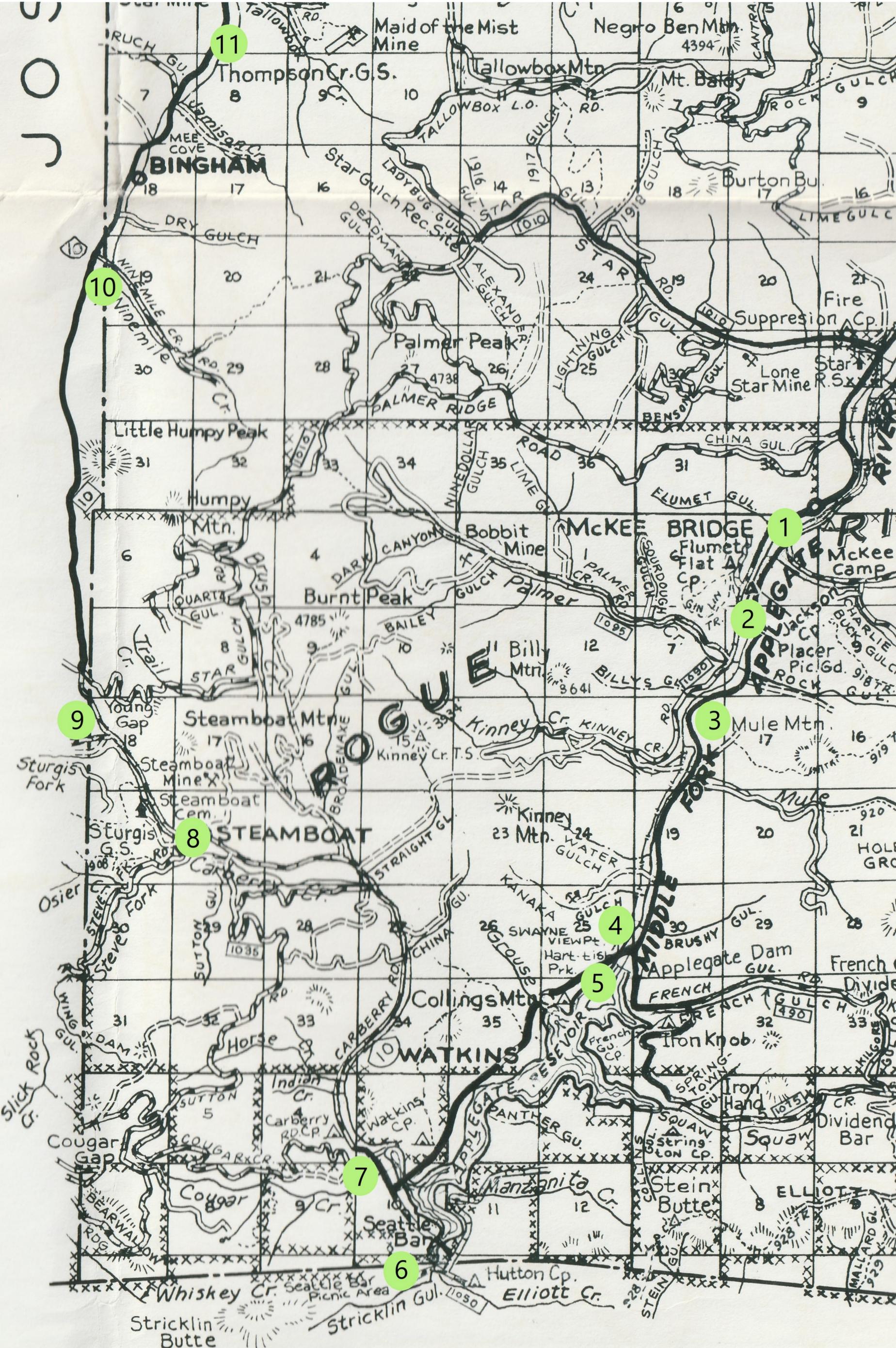
THE STEAMBOAT TIME TRAVEL TRAIL

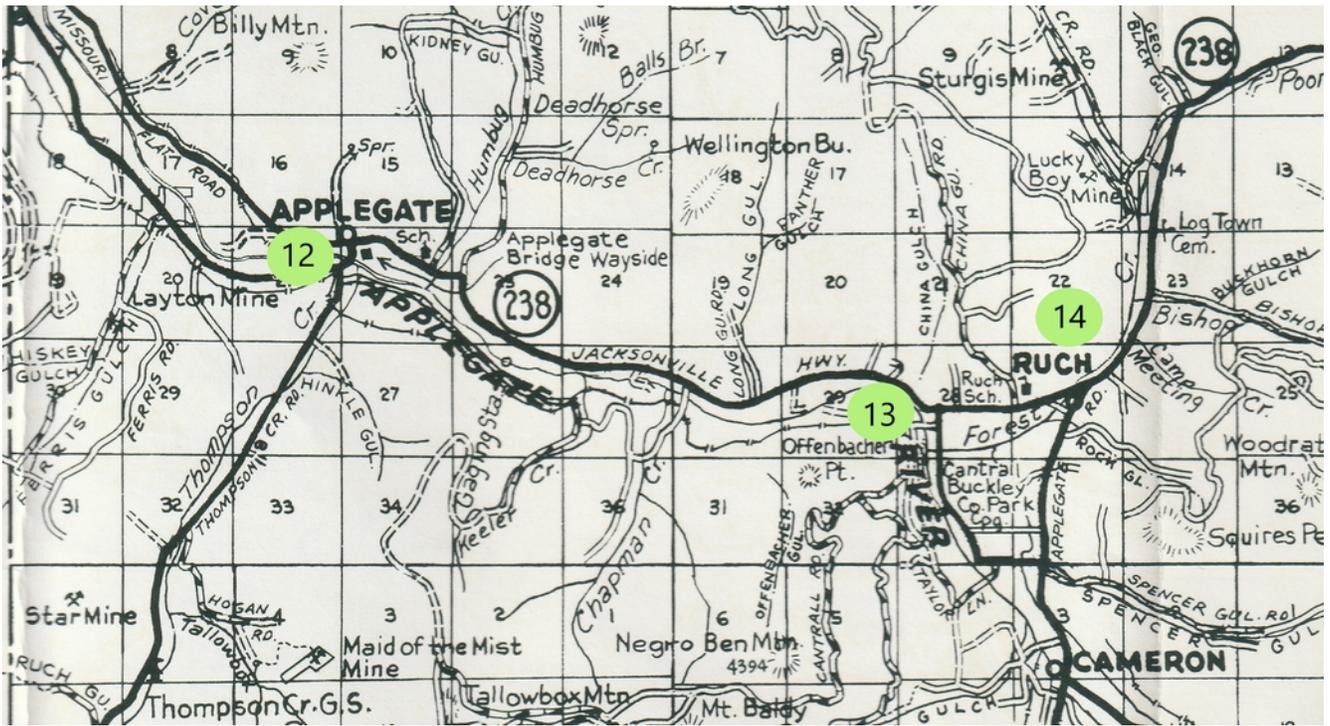
McKee Bridge Historical Society

Saturday, June 11, 2022

Check in at McKee Bridge 10:30-11AM

Check out at Ruch Outdoor Community School by 2:30PM





1. McKee Bridge area

The original wagon road, built by the county in 1876, cut inland from Mile 6 across China Gulch, and stayed on the west side of the river (Palmer Creek Road) until the ford at Nicholas Wright's ranch, store and post office at Mile 12.

The Palmer Creek school was organized in early 1898, at the site of today's McKee Bridge Mobile Home Park. Maud Harr was the teacher at the time of this 1909 photo.



The Civilian Conservation Corps built the kitchen shelter and individual camp stoves in 1935-36.



Upper Applegate Grange, 1938. The lodge burned down in 1955. You can see remnants of the foundation.

2. Beaver Creek confluence

In 1913 the Palmer Creek schoolhouse was replaced with this one, on the east side of the river and road, across from today's Jackson Campground.



There was a huge dance hall and ball field a bit further up the road. There is a sawmill on this lot now.



3. Mule Mountain

How did Mule Mountain (or Hill) get its name? Over the decades the story has been dramatized and embellished. This news report published at the time is probably most reliable.

Table Rock Sentinel, Jan. 5, 1856

THE WAR.—We had expected to be able, by the close of this week, to give an account of the destruction of the band of Indians on the upper Applegate. Capt. Rice's command, with a large citizen force from Sterling, reached their position and surrounded them on Tuesday night, and Capt. BUSHLEY's company were on the way. The party from Fort Lane, with the howitzer were endeavoring to join them on Wednesday night, and the prospects were for an attack on Thursday. In consequence of an accident, however, the measure was defeated for two or three days. A mule belonging to the howitzer train, and loaded with ammunition for the piece, lost its footing and fell down a steep bank into the river, and thus the ammunition was lost, and a necessity produced for obtaining another supply from the Fort. The



As at Dead Horse Hill, the “Eastside Road” was blasted and chiseled into steep Mule Mountain in 1905-06. We believe this is a 1911 Studebaker in this photo from 1914.

4. Kanaka Gulch

“Kanackers” was a term for Sandwich Islanders (Hawaiians) who worked for the Hudson Bay Company in the Pacific Northwest and later as miners.

A short way on the right after you cross the river where the road veers right (you can tell that the original wagon road continued straight ahead) is the site where Agnes Baker-Pilgrim – Grandma Aggie – revived the sacred Takelma Salmon Ceremony in 1994. Photo: Julie Norman.



5. Swayne Lookout – Big Applegate

Your first stop to pick up a card!

How it looks now, much of the time ... versus before the dam.



Why is it called Swayne Point? Patrick Swayne arrived from Ireland by way of Canada in 1864. He owned a ranch here 1907-27. The other name for this lookout, Dakutebede, acknowledges the Native American group that inhabited this area for millenia before the arrival of White prospectors and homesteaders.

6. Seattle Bar, Elliott Creek, Blue Ledge Mine

You'll reach a T intersection. An side trip to the left *would* take you to Elliott Creek, Joe Bar and the Blue Ledge Mine – *but for* locked gates on the roads.

William Dorn is generally accepted as the first permanent miner and settler in the Upper Applegate. In 1853, when others thronged Table Rock City (Jacksonville) to seek gold, Billy and J.J. Elliott pressed on up a vacant watershed. J.J.'s name stuck to the creek but Dorn is the namesake of Billy's Gulch.



Miners at Portal No. 1 at the Blue Ledge Mine. The mine is now a Superfund site.

7. Carberry Campground

Turn right at the T intersection. In a quarter mile on the left is the former Carberry Campground. Easy walk to see lovely Cougar Creek, drop toilets.

There is some sad history at this spot – the kidnappings and murders of the Cowden family.



Mark & Martha (Langley Watkins) Winningham's home on Cougar Creek.



8. Steamboat

In the 1850s prospectors scoured the gulches along Carberry Creek. In 1860 a vein of gold was discovered in a ledge high on the north side of the valley. "Fowler & Co." began drilling, crushing the ore in a stamp mill on the creek. Another company found a vein on the opposite side of the hill. Was it the same lode? Litigation ensued. Some Middle Applegate farmers were on both sides of the case. By the time that the Oregon Supreme Court ruled for Fowler, the vein had petered out. Or so they thought. Others mined later with some success.

In the 1880s Steamboat was populated by farming families with children. The Shearers came from Washington County with five offspring. The Culy arrived from Hayfork, California, and ran 500 head of cattle. George Culy took the contract to carry the mail by horseback from Bridge Point aka Applegate. Albert Shearer built a sawmill on O'Brien Creek. The hewn logs were used to build the Culy home, where an official post office was established on January 10, 1888. The Culy and Shearers built a log schoolhouse in 1889. The post office closed in 1915 and the school was annexed to Thompson Creek the next year. "Steamboat City" had seen its heyday.



The Culy Cabin, 1891. They later built the white two-story house which still stands on the north side of the road.



Very few grave markers survive at Steamboat Cemetery. Frances Emily Shearer married James William Scoggin in 1882. They lived in Scoggin Valley in NW Oregon. Hers is the earliest known burial, at age 37. There is no evidence she ever lived here. Perhaps as of 1896 the Shearers envisioned a family plot, keeping them together through eternity, but in fact all other family members moved away before 1900, leaving Frances behind.

James died in the Oregon State Hospital in 1922; his remains were never claimed.

Shown here with son Harry Wilbur (1892-1964), their only child.

9. Sturgis Fork to The Summit

Leaving scenic Steamboat Valley you'll drive up Sturgis Fork into Josephine County. Sturgis Guard Station used to stand on the left. Albert W. Sturgis made a strike in the area in 1875, before his massive hydraulic operation on Forest Creek. "Quartz from what is supposed to be a continuation of the famous Steamboat or Fowler ledge, on Applegate, which has been abandoned by other parties, was tested by A. W. Sturgis last week. Two pounds of the same crushed in a mortar, gave \$2.87½ in gold, or at the rate of over \$2,000 a ton." Corvallis Gazette, March 6, 1875.

Wrecked Plane Found in Rogue Forest

FORESTRY PILOT SEES NO SIGN OF PASSENGER TRIO

Plane Standing on Nose on
Butte Fork, Northern Cal-
ifornia Is Word of Finder.

Man Goes to Scene

Nearest Forest Service employee to the wreck, stationed at Sturgis guard station, was dispatched to the scene by foot when the first report was received today. Forest Service headquarters state that cars can travel to about eight miles from the wreckage, and from there the man must hike over a trail in rather rough country.

Another man with a horse, left the Applegate district at the same time. The Sturgis guard will remain with the wreckage and the second man will return to Medford with a report this evening, it was expected.

Pick up a second card at the summit. Stay on the main road. Don't turn left on NF1005.

10. English Lavender Farm – 8040 Thompson Creek Road

Lucky us, the farm opened for the season yesterday. Grab card #3, and perhaps some lavender soap or other luxury. Back in Jackson County you will pass the homesteads and farms of notable early settlers like Fritz Ruch (brother of Casper who built a general store and post office in the settlement that bears his name), and Thomas and John Mee and their descendants.

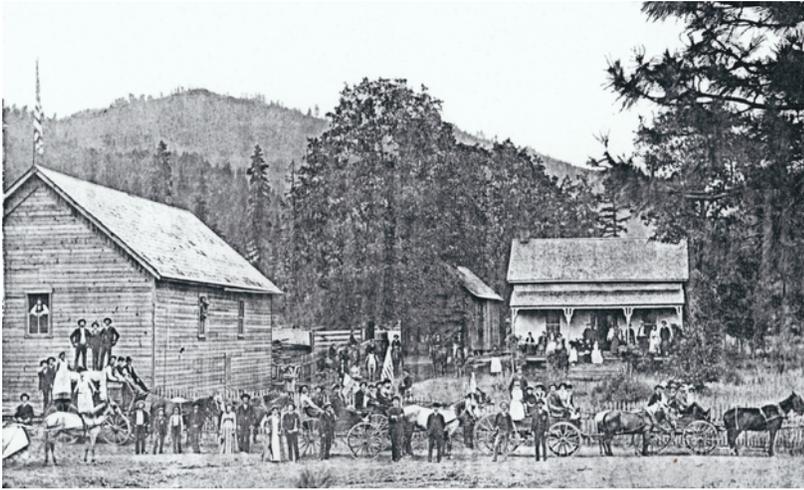


The Mee family. Standing: Emma, James, Laura, Warren. Seated: Drucilla (Wooldridge), Thomas, Mary Ann



Thomas Mee's sawmill.

11. Orlando Rose's Dance Hall



Can you line up the skyline to find the location of this once-happening place?

Look closely in the vicinity of the Applegate Mobile Home Park.

12. Bridge Point – Applegate Country Club

This area was called Bridge Point before the name "Applegate" settled in, although an Applegate Post Office was established here in 1858, when Oregon was just a territory. The Applegate Country Club is the stop for card #4. The Applegate Grange lodge stood at this location, a site of as much revelry as Orlando Rose's dance hall. Grangers are preparing to reseed slopes of Humbug Creek after a fire in this 1931 photo. Peek through the garden at the small log building to the north. The Pernoll store has been moved multiple times, and was originally located around a mile to the west.



13. The First Store – The Geary farm

A store for miners opened in April of 1853, somewhere around where Forest Creek flows into the river. Young Daniel Giles worked at the store and left a detailed diary of events during the first phase of the Rogue Indian War.

Lewis Geary was the first settler on the land situated southwest of the river. His wife, Maranda Ann Johnson, was the daughter of a freed slave and a member of the Mathews emigrant group who came to Jackson County via the Applegate Trail in 1853. Maranda Ann and their eldest child Phoebe died in 1873 and were buried in Logtown Cemetery. An interpretive panel by their graves tells this fascinating story in more detail.

14. Ruch

This settlement acquired the name "Ruch" in 1897, when Casper Ruch was authorized to run a post office which he named for himself. Your fifth and final card is waiting at the Ruch schoolhouse built in 1914. Students in the neighborhood previously attended the wooden Drake school, constructed in 1876 a couple of miles to the west.



The Ruch General Store around 1910.



The new Ruch school on May 6, 1914. Teacher Nellie Collins, "Cap" Ruch, Miles Cantrall, Charles Hamilton and Horace Venable (now owner of Geary's place).



The Drake schoolhouse in 1910.

For more stories, photos, maps, etc., visit the Virtual Museum at mckeebridge.org.

Follow McKee Bridge Historical Society on Facebook.

Thank you for travelling the Steamboat Time Travel Trail. Become a member of McKee Bridge Historical Society – just \$20 per year for your entire household!