



STATE OF IDAHO  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

1410 North Hillon • Boise, Idaho 83706 • (208) 373-0502

C.L. "Butch" Otter, Governor  
Curt Fransen, Director

March 28, 2012

Ms. Kristi Keeler  
122 School House Lane  
Grangeville, ID 83530

Subject: Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment of the Queen of the West Lode and  
'City of Florence' Lode, Elk City Mining District, Idaho County, Idaho

Dear Ms. Keeler:

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has completed a review of historical mining data and geological information for the above referenced lodes, located near Elk City, Idaho. Subsequent to that review, DEQ conducted a site visit to the Queen of the West Lode and 'City of Florence' Lode.

During the site visit, mining activities such as placer mining operations, conveyance ditches, and a collapsed shaft were observed in order to provide a comprehensive analysis necessary to complete an Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment.

Preliminary Assessments are conducted by DEQ according to the Federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liabilities Act (CERCLA). The reasons to complete a Preliminary Assessment (PA) include:

- 1) To identify those sites which are not CERCLIS caliber because they do not pose a threat to public health or the environment (No Remedial Action Planned (NRAP));
- 2) To determine if there is a need for removal actions or other programmatic management of sites;
- 3) To determine if a Site Investigation, which is a more detailed site characterization, is needed; and/or
- 4) To gather data to facilitate later evaluation of the release of hazardous substances through the Hazard Ranking System (HRS).

Ms. Kristi Keeler  
March 28, 2012  
Page 2

DEQ has also completed PAs under contract with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in order to identify risks to human health and the environment, and make recommendations to land owners regarding how risks might be managed, if necessary.

During a DEQ field visit if sources, pathways, and receptors are identified for heavy metal contamination and samples are collected, a PA is generally written. If there is no evidence of receptors being influenced by sources of contamination, as was the case with the Queen of the West and 'City of Florence' properties, then an Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment (APA) is written.

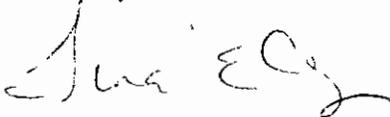
Attached is the Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment for the Queen of the West and 'City of Florence' lodes. The APA includes limited historical and geological information, photographs, and a map of the properties.

Ground water/springs utilized for potable water could be influenced by mining related disturbances and natural background metals concentrations. DEQ recommends the individuals utilizing springs or wells as domestic drinking water in the Florence Mining District have their water analyzed for potential hazards. This was a very active mining area and wells or springs in this area may be influenced from numerous historic mining activities, not necessarily associated with the Queen of the West Lode claim or the 'City of Florence' Lode claim.

**This information was used by DEQ to recommend the property status of the Queen of the West Lode and the 'City of Florence' Lode be designated as No Remedial Action is Planned (NRAP).**

DEQ looks forward to addressing any questions you may have regarding our findings. Please contact me (208-373-0563) if you have any comments, questions, or if I may be of any other assistance.

Sincerely,



Tina Elayer  
Mine Waste Program Specialist  
Waste Management and Remediation Division

Attachments

cc: Ken Marcy – U.S. EPA  
Daniel Stewart – DEQ Grangeville  
Scott Sanner – BLM  
Clint Hughes – USFS  
Queen of the West/City of Florence File



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March 28, 2012

Mr. Brian Hewson  
101 Shiloh Drive  
Grangeville, ID 83530

Subject: Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment of the Queen of the West Lode and  
'City of Florence' Lode, Elk City Mining District, Idaho County, Idaho

Dear Mr. Hewson:

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has completed a review of historical mining data and geological information for the above referenced lodes, located near Elk City, Idaho. Subsequent to that review, DEQ conducted a site visit to the Queen of the West Lode and 'City of Florence' Lode.

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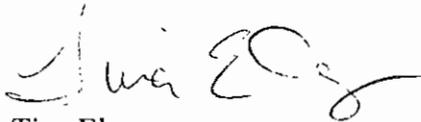
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Mine Waste Program Specialist  
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March 28, 2012

Ms. Myrna Crane  
624 Lincoln Avenue  
Grangeville, ID 83530

Subject: Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment of the Queen of the West Lode and  
'City of Florence' Lode, Elk City Mining District, Idaho County, Idaho

Dear Ms. Crane:

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has completed a review of historical mining data and geological information for the above referenced lodes, located near Elk City, Idaho. Subsequent to that review, DEQ conducted a site visit to the Queen of the West Lode and 'City of Florence' Lode.

During the site visit, mining activities such as placer mining operations, conveyance ditches, and a collapsed shaft were observed in order to provide a comprehensive analysis necessary to complete an Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment.

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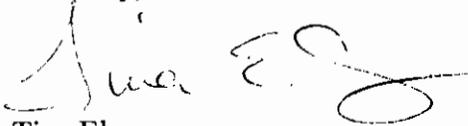
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**This information was used by DEQ to recommend the property status of the Queen of the West Lode and the 'City of Florence' Lode be designated as No Remedial Action is Planned (NRAP).**

DEQ looks forward to addressing any questions you may have regarding our findings. Please contact me (208-373-0563) if you have any comments, questions, or if I may be of any other assistance.

Sincerely,



Tina Elayer  
Mine Waste Program Specialist  
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#### Attachments

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Daniel Stewart – DEQ Grangeville  
Scott Sanner – BLM  
Clint Hughes – USFS  
Queen of the West/City of Florence File

## ABBREVIATED PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

This is an Abbreviated Preliminary Assessment (APA) for the Queen of the West Lode and 'City of Florence Lode' near New Florence, Idaho. This document provides the rationale for the determination of No Remedial Action Planned (NRAP) and that no additional analysis or site investigation is necessary for the above mentioned mines. Additional sheets are attached which contain relevant information including historical and geologic information, photographs, maps, and references generated during the site visit or desktop research.

**Preparer:** Daniel D. Stewart **Date:** 10/24/11  
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality  
300 W. Main  
Grangeville, ID 83530  
(208) 983-0808  
daniel.stewart@deq.idaho.gov

**Site Names:** Queen of the West Lode and 'City of Florence' Lode\*

**Previous Names (aka):** Unpatented Claims: Duke #1, Eve Lode 22 (2), Eve #1, Milner #3 (8), Eve Lode 35 (2)

\*The 'City of Florence' Lode parcel did not have landowner information in the Idaho County Assessor's office database. There is a list of unpatented claims in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) GeoCommunicator database pertaining to Township 25 North, Range 3 East, Sections 13 and 24. Below are the landowners who granted permission to the Queen of the West Lode.

**Site Owner:** Kristi Keeler  
**Address:** 122 School House Lane  
Grangeville, ID 83530

**Site Owner:** Brian Hewson  
**Address:** 101 Shiloh Drive  
Grangeville, ID 83530

**Site Owner:** Myrna Crane  
**Address:** 624 Lincoln Avenue  
Grangeville, ID 83530

**Site Location:** To access the Queen of the West Lode claims, head south from Grangeville on the Grangeville-Salmon Road (FS Road 221), turn onto FS Road 395 to Florence. The road passes through New Florence to the claim which lies adjacent to New Florence.

Township 25 North, Range 3 East, Sections 13 and 24

**Latitude:** 45.50677°N **Longitude:** -116.02568°W

**Describe the release (or potential release) and its probable nature:**

The Queen of the West Lode and ‘City of Florence’ Lode were investigated by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on September 22, 2011 for potential releases of heavy metals and sediment from mine waste dumps and potential discharges of other deleterious materials, such as petroleum products and ore processing chemicals. No evidence or indications of these materials were located on the sites. No surface water, ground water or airborne pathways existed.

**Part 1 - Superfund Eligibility Evaluation**

**If all answers are “no” go on to Part 2, otherwise proceed to Part 3.**

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
1. Is the site currently in CERCLIS or an “alias” of another site?		<b>x</b>
2. Is the site being addressed by some other remedial program (Federal, State, or Tribal)?		<b>x</b>
3. Are the hazardous substances that may be released from the site regulated under a statutory exclusion (e.g., petroleum, natural gas, natural gas liquids, synthetic gas usable for fuel, normal application of fertilizer, release located in a workplace, naturally occurring, or regulated by the NRC, UMTRCA, or OSHA)?		<b>x</b>
4. Are the hazardous substances that may be released from the site excluded by policy considerations (i.e., deferred to RCRA corrective action)?		<b>x</b>
5. Is there sufficient documentation to demonstrate that there is no potential for a release that constitutes risk to human or ecological receptors? <i>(e.g., comprehensive remedial investigation equivalent data showing no release above ARARs, completed removal action, documentation showing that no hazardous substance releases have occurred, or an EPA approved risk assessment completed)?</i>	<b>x</b>	

**Please explain all “yes” answer(s):**

A site inspection involving direct observations confirmed that contaminants of concern do not exist in concentrations that present a threat to human health or the environment. No mining related equipment, barrels, petroleum products, or substances were observed. No surface water, ground water, or airborne pathways exist. Little, if any, active mining now occurs. The Queen of the West Lode has been subdivided into recreational plots with a few summer/seasonal cabins present.

The ‘City of Florence’ Lode property is located in New Florence which is an active, unpatented claims mining area. There are a few historical cabins and structures on the site with historical interpretive signs. Attached to this report is an informational brochure from the Nez Perce National Forest entitled “The Lure of Gold” which describes the history of New Florence in detail and includes historical pictures. DEQ did not take pictures of the ‘City of Florence’ Lode area during the September 22, 2011 site visit.

**Part 2 - Initial Site Evaluation**

For Part 2, if information is not available to make a “yes” or “no” response, further investigation may be needed. In these cases, determine whether an APA is appropriate. Exhibit 1 parallels the questions in Part 2. Use Exhibit 1 to make decisions in Part 3.

<b>If the answer is “no” to any of questions 1, 2, or 3, proceed directly to Part 3.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
1. Does the site have a release or a potential to release?		<b>x</b>
2. Does the site have uncontained sources containing CERCLA eligible substances?		<b>x</b>
3. Does the site have documented on-site, adjacent, or nearby targets?		<b>x</b>

<b>If the answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 above were all “yes” then answer the questions below before proceeding to Part 3.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
4. Does documentation indicate that a target (e.g., drinking water wells, drinking surface water intakes, etc.) has been exposed to a hazardous substance released from the site?		
5. Is there an apparent release at the site with no documentation of exposed targets, but there are targets on site or immediately adjacent to the site?		
6. Is there an apparent release and no documented on-site targets or targets immediately adjacent to the site, but there are nearby targets (e.g., targets within one mile)?		
7. Is there no indication of a hazardous substance release, and there are uncontained sources containing CERCLA hazardous substances, but there is a potential to release with targets present on site or in proximity to the site?		

**Notes:**

No wells or drinking water sources existed on the properties DEQ inspected. Mrs. Crane indicated a neighbor has a developed spring as a water source. (Myrna Crane, *pers. comm.*)

Ground water/springs utilized for potable water could be influenced by mining related disturbances and natural background metals concentrations. DEQ recommends the individuals utilizing springs or wells as domestic drinking water in the Florence Mining District have their water analyzed for potential hazards. This was a very active mining area and wells or springs in this area may be influenced from numerous historic mining activities, not necessarily associated with the Queen of the West Lode claim.

During the site assessment, DEQ used references from several different documents including U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) maps, county tax rolls, and historical reports that have spelled numerous claim names, town sites, and/or geographic features differently from one and another. DEQ’s use of the different spellings is to remain in context with the reference used for each given section of text or written in this report.

**Exhibit 1 – Site Assessment Decision Guidelines for a Site**

Exhibit 1 identifies different types of site information and provides some possible recommendations for further site assessment activities based on that information. The assessor should use Exhibit 1 in determining the need for further action at the site, based on the answers to the questions in Part 2. Please use your professional judgment when evaluating a site. Your judgment may be different from the general recommendations for a site given below.

<b>Suspected/Documented Site Conditions</b>		<b>APA</b>	<b>Full PA</b>	<b>PA/SI</b>	<b>SI</b>
1. Releases or potential to release are not documented at the site. <b>Yes</b>		Yes			
2. Uncontained sources with CERCLA-eligible substances have not been documented as being present on the site. (i.e., they do exist at site) <b>Yes</b>		Yes			
3. On-site, adjacent, or nearby receptors are not present. <b>Yes</b>		Yes			
4. There is no documentation or observations made leading to the conclusion that a sensitive receptor is present or may have been exposed (e.g., drinking water system user inside four mile TDL). <b>Yes</b>	Option 1: APA	Yes			
5. There is documentation that a sensitive receptor has been exposed to a hazardous substance released from the site. <b>No</b>	Option 2: Full PA or PA/SI	No			
6. There is an apparent release at the site with no documentation of targets, but there are targets on site or immediately adjacent to the site. <b>No</b>	Option 1: APA SI	No			
	Option 2: PA/SI	No			
7. There is an apparent release and no documented on-site targets and no documented targets immediately adjacent to the site, but there are nearby targets. Nearby targets are those targets that are located within one mile of the site and have a relatively high likelihood of exposure to a hazardous substance migration from the site. <b>No</b>		Yes			
8. There are: no indications of a hazardous substance release; uncontained sources containing CERCLA hazardous substances; but there is a potential to release with targets present on site or in proximity to the site. <b>No</b>		No			

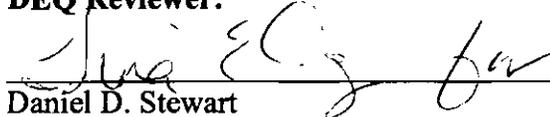
**Part 3 - DEQ Site Assessment Decision**

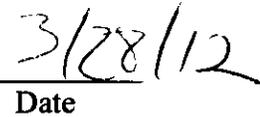
When completing Part 3, use Part 2 and Exhibit 1 to select the appropriate decision. For example, if the answer to question 1 in Part 2 was “no,” then an APA may be performed and the “NRAP” box below should be checked. Additionally, if the answer to question 4 in Part 2 is “yes,” then you have two options (as indicated in Exhibit 1): Option 1 -- conduct an APA and check the “Lower Priority SI” or “Higher Priority SI” box below; or Option 2 -- proceed with a combined PA/SI assessment.

**Check the box that applies based on the conclusions of the APA:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No Remedial Action Planned (NRAP)	Defer to NRC
<input type="checkbox"/>	Higher Priority SI	Refer to Removal Program
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lower Priority SI	Site is being addressed as part of another CERCLIS site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Defer to RCRA Subtitle C	Other:

**DEQ Reviewer:**

  
Daniel D. Stewart

  
Date

**Please Explain the Rationale for Your Decision:**

There are no direct airborne, surface water, or ground water pathways to any potable water sources or residences. As shown in the photographs at the end of this report, both of the entire claims were placer mined and the disturbed areas are vegetated and well stabilized. No evidence of mineralization remains at the claims. The closest residence is over one mile away in another drainage system.

Mrs. Crane mentioned the original discovery/shaft is located approximately 35 yards behind the red cabin shown in Photo 1. Mrs. Crane said the shaft is collapsed and covered with timber and wood, but is a definite safety hazard and is quite deep. (Myrna Crane, *pers. comm.*) DEQ recommends the shaft be filled in or, at the very least, fenced off to eliminate it as a safety hazard.

No wells or drinking water sources exist on the property we inspected. Mrs. Crane indicated a neighbor has a developed spring as a water source. Ground water/springs utilized for potable water could be influenced by mining related disturbances and natural background metals concentrations. DEQ recommends the individuals utilizing springs or wells as domestic drinking water in the Florence Mining District have their water analyzed for potential hazards. This was a very active mining area and well or springs in this area maybe influenced from numerous historic mining activities, not necessarily associated with the Queen of the West or ‘City of Florence’ claims.

The 'City of Florence' Lode property was traversed multiple times while attempting to locate the other claims at the Queen of the West Lode. There is a mixture of BLM and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land with a number of unpatented claims spanning over the whole area.

**As a result of DEQ's research and observations, it is recommending the Queen of the West Lode and 'City of Florence' Lode sites be designated as NRAP.**

**Attachments:**

- Historical and Geologic Information
- Site Conditions and Photographs
- Maps
- References
- Nez Perce National Forest Brochure

## **Historical and Geologic Information**

Numerous sources were used during desktop research prior to visiting the site. DEQ could not improve or expound upon these reports by writing additional historical or geological text, therefore they were directly referenced and cited.

**Mine History:** The following information, although not specifically addressing the Queen of the West Lode Claim, describes the mining activity in this area which would include the Queen of the West Lode and the 'City of Florence' Lode.

Lindgren (1900) describes the area as follows:

### ***History and Production***

*The Florence camp was discovered in the fall of 1861, being one of the first of a number of celebrated placer mining districts in Idaho. The gravels produced large amounts of gold during the few first years, but were soon exhausted.*

*The total production cannot be determined, but is estimated to be from \$15,000,000 to \$30,000,000. The production from July, 1868, to July, 1869, had already sunk to \$200,000; during 1871 only \$100,000 was produced; during 1872, \$78,000. From this date the camp is rarely mentioned in the Mint reports, and during many years the Chinese were in undisturbed possession, washing over old tailings. The report for 1881 estimates the production at \$45,000; in 1882 it was \$35,000; in 1884, \$40,000; in 1885, \$44,000; in 1885 \$44,093 of gold and \$803 of silver; in 1887, \$38,499 of gold and \$1,551 of silver. Soon after the camp became practically deserted.*

### ***Geology***

*The geology of the district is very simple, granite being almost the only rock occurring in it. The surface in the vicinity of Florence is everywhere crumbling and decomposed.*

### ***Placer Deposits:***

*Over the whole area of the Florence Basin, about 5 by 8 miles, placer gold was found abundantly in nearly every one of the many branching creeks. All these were filled to a depth of a few feet with sand and sub angular gravel. The gold is coarse and also more or less angular, and has a finesse of from 66 to 705, the remainder being chiefly silver.*

*Though all of the creeks and streamlets were very rich, one of them, named Baboon Gulch, is mentioned as having produced an extraordinary amount of the yellow metal. The age of the gold bearing gravels is somewhat in doubt. In all probability they are very old and were most likely formed during the Neocene period.*

The following information provided by John C. Reed (1939) details the area where the Queen of the West is located. This northeast corner of the claim reaches Summit Creek and the claim lies adjacent to New Florence.

*Summit Creek: The principal head of Summit Creek lies north of the Hileman Cabin in the NE ¼ of Sec. 13, T. 25N, R 3E. The creek flows south and east past the location of the old town of Florence, gathers numerous tributaries, including Florence Creek, which rises near the new town (New Florence) and joins Sand Creek in the NW ¼ of Sec. 19, T 25N., R. 4E. Summit Creek and all of its tributaries have been almost completely mined. The stream has a very gentle gradient and in its entire course falls less than 100 feet.*

*Near the head of the stream much of the mined material was weathered bedrock. The new town (New Florence) was built on worked ground near the head of Florence Creek. At several places the placers extend to and over the Miller Creek-Meadow Creek divide. The heads of some of the small streams that flow into Summit Creek show remnants of older gravel. In 1936, Theo. Holt and associates were ground-sluicing at the site of the old town of Florence.*

Mrs. Crane graciously provided the following excerpts and information to DEQ to be included in this report. In addition, she allowed DEQ to read various other documents, articles, and legal papers relating to the Queen of the West and the Florence Mining District.

*Information provided by Mrs. Crane indicated the original claim plat was issued in 1885 to Charles Cone. It consisted of two shafts, an open cut and encompassed 19.238 acres.*

*Idaho County Free Press, July 31, 1896. The original shaft sunk on the Queen of the West Claim was dug by Evan Evans and is down around 20 feet deep in depth.*

*Idaho County Free Press, 1898. According to the May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1898 map of the claims in Florence-the State road went through the Queen of the West Lode-south over the breaks and down to the Salmon River near Cow Creek-with a wire bridge across the river-it was the State road to Warren.*

*Idaho County Free press Feb. 2, 1900. Harry Cone, brother of Charles Cone who originally staked the claim (Queen of the West Lode Claim), announced the claim has been sold to Eastern capitalists.*

*Mrs. Crane stated that many years ago when she would visit the Queen of the West when her father lived on the claim, the entire area had been turned over and washed. No trees were left and basically every square inch has been prospected/placered for gold.*

*Myrna Crane's father, Martin Bardoff, bought the entire Queen of the West claim in 1971 from Samuel and Lillian Layne. Mr. Bardoff subsequently subdivided the property, selling off parcels.*

## Site Conditions and Photographs

All of the Queen of the West area photographs in this section were taken by DEQ on September 22, 2011.

Very little if any active mining now occurs on the Queen of the West claim. The claim has been subdivided and is used primarily for recreation. As shown in Photo 1, several recreational cabins have been built on the claim. The original discovery/shaft is located approximately 35 yards behind the red cabin shown. The shaft is collapsed and covered with timber and wood, but is a definite safety hazard and is quite deep. (Myrna Crane, *pers. comm.*)



**Photo 1.** Recreational Cabins.

Photo 2 shows a dog hole with ditch that perhaps was developed as a spring/water source. No drainage exists above/upstream of this ditch. It is one of many trenches and water conveyance sources throughout the Queen of the West claim area.



**Photo 2.** Dog hole with ditch.

Photo 3 is a picture of a historical (manmade) water conveyance system to allow placer mining. These ditches are common throughout the claim area and through the Florence Mining District.



**Photo 3.** Historical (manmade) water conveyance system.

An overgrown water conveyance ditch is shown in Photo 4. The ditch lies to the left and against the base of the lodge pole pine in the foreground of the photo. These ditches were hand dug and are prevalent throughout the Queen of the West claim area and Florence Mining District. Since the mining district is relatively flat and water is somewhat scarce, these ditches and the water they conveyed were essential to facilitate mining in this area.



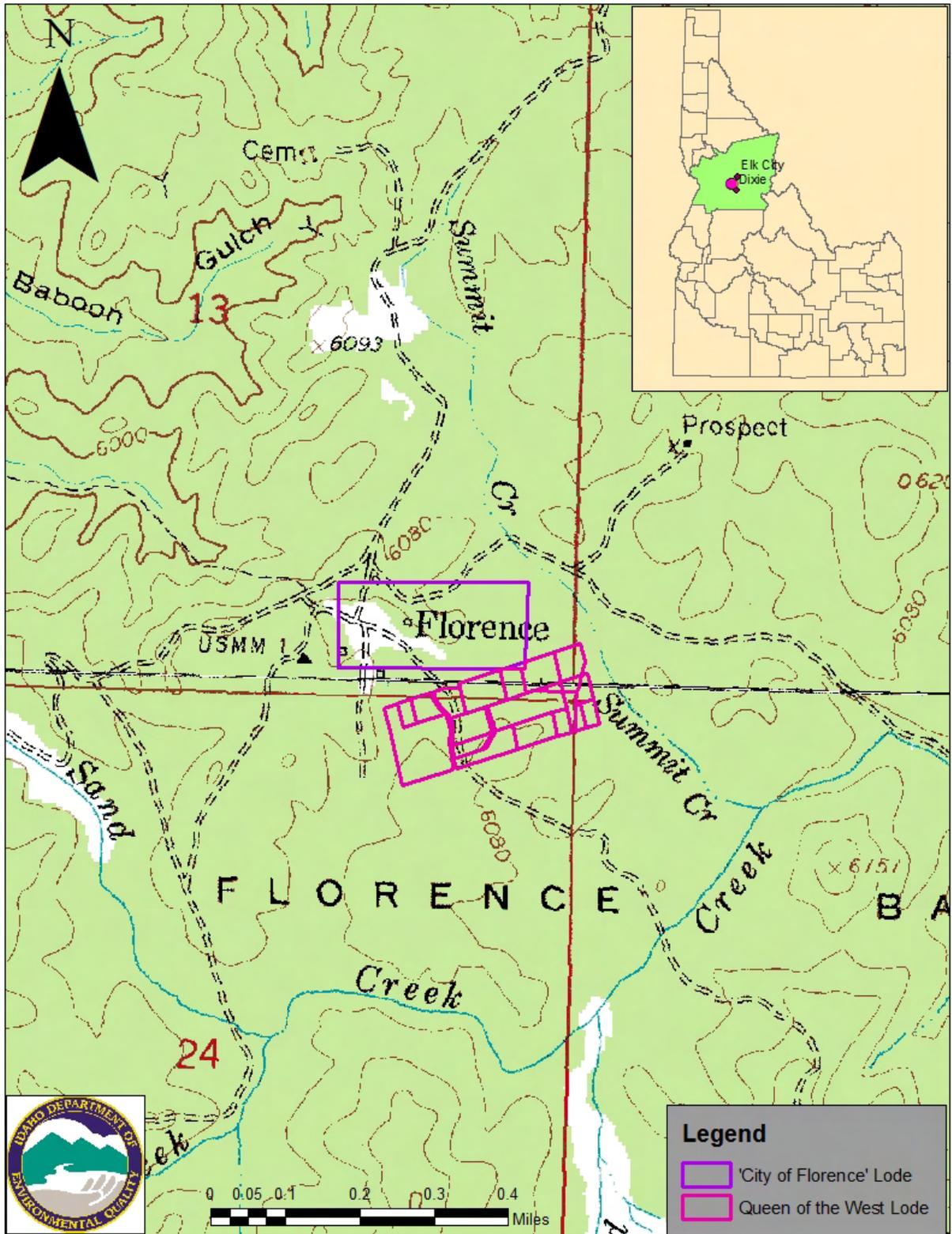
**Photo 4.** Overgrown water conveyance ditch.

Photo 5 is an example of how well vegetated the Queen of the West claim is now and the Florence Mining District in general. Historical literature indicates this claim and others in the mining district were extensively mined, disturbing and turning over essentially the entire ground surface. Additionally, virtually all trees were removed.



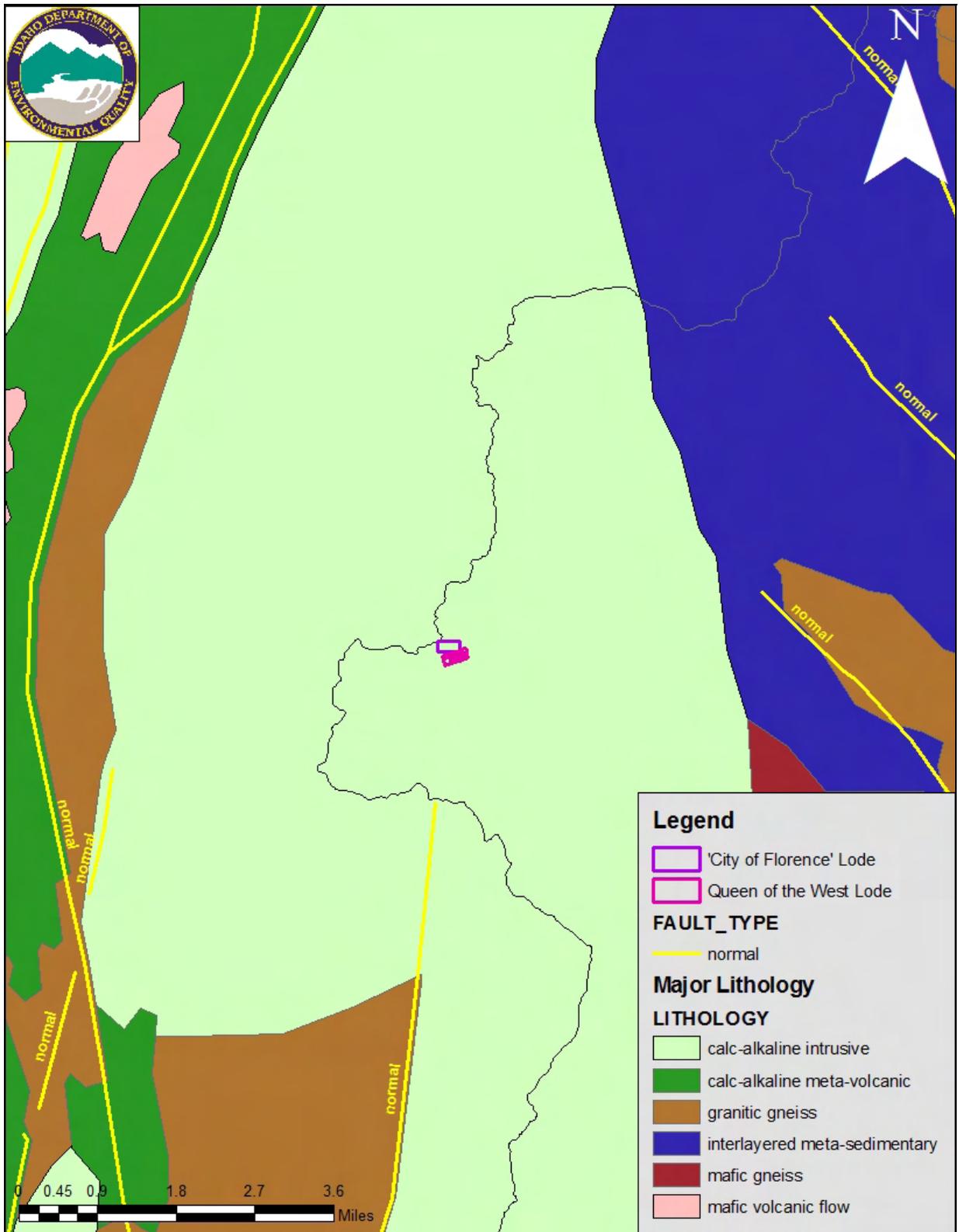
**Photo 5.** Well vegetated Queen of the West claim area.

## Maps



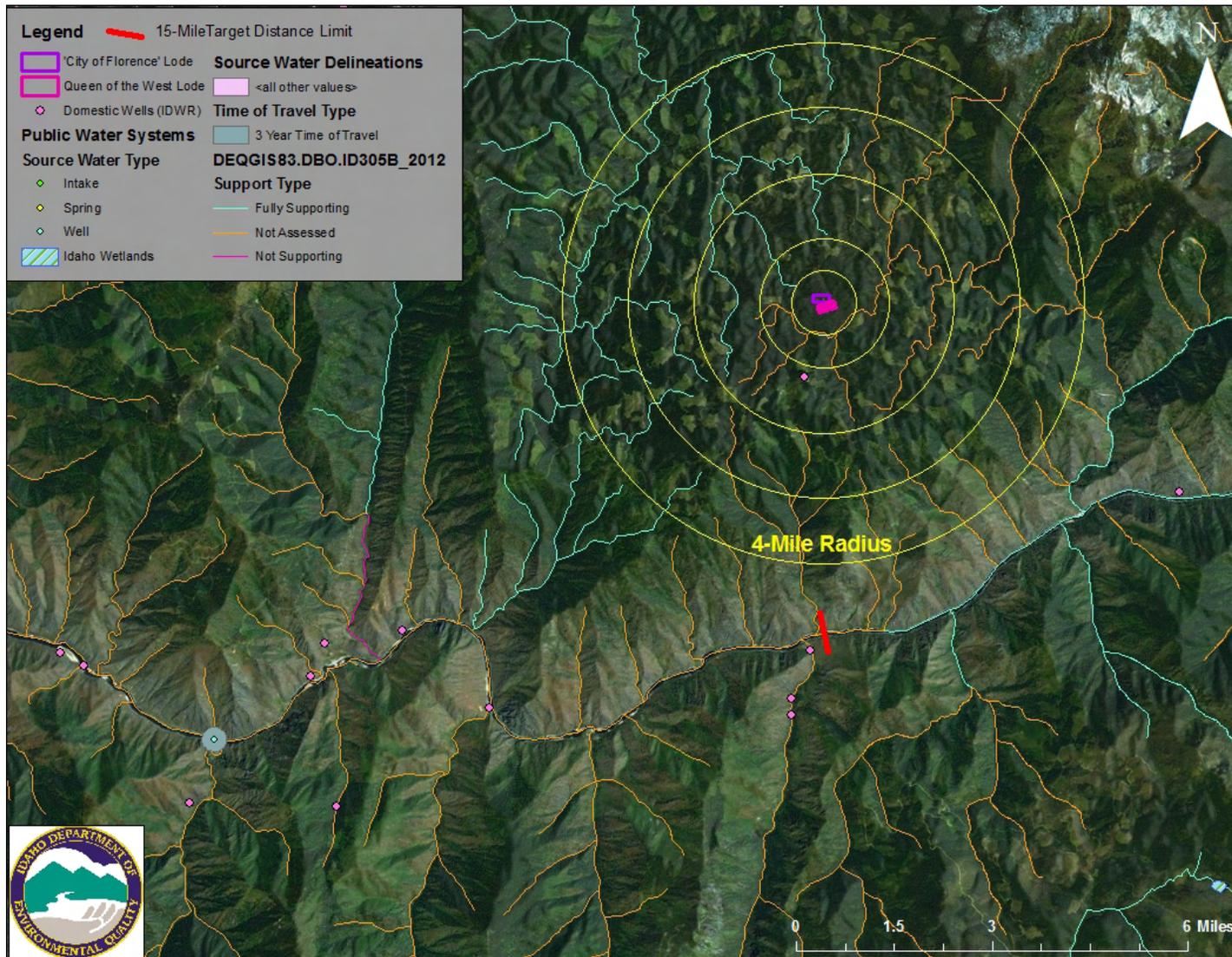
**Figure 1.** Location of the 'City of Florence' Lode and Queen of the West Lode in Idaho County, Idaho (Map Source: USGS 24k Quads)

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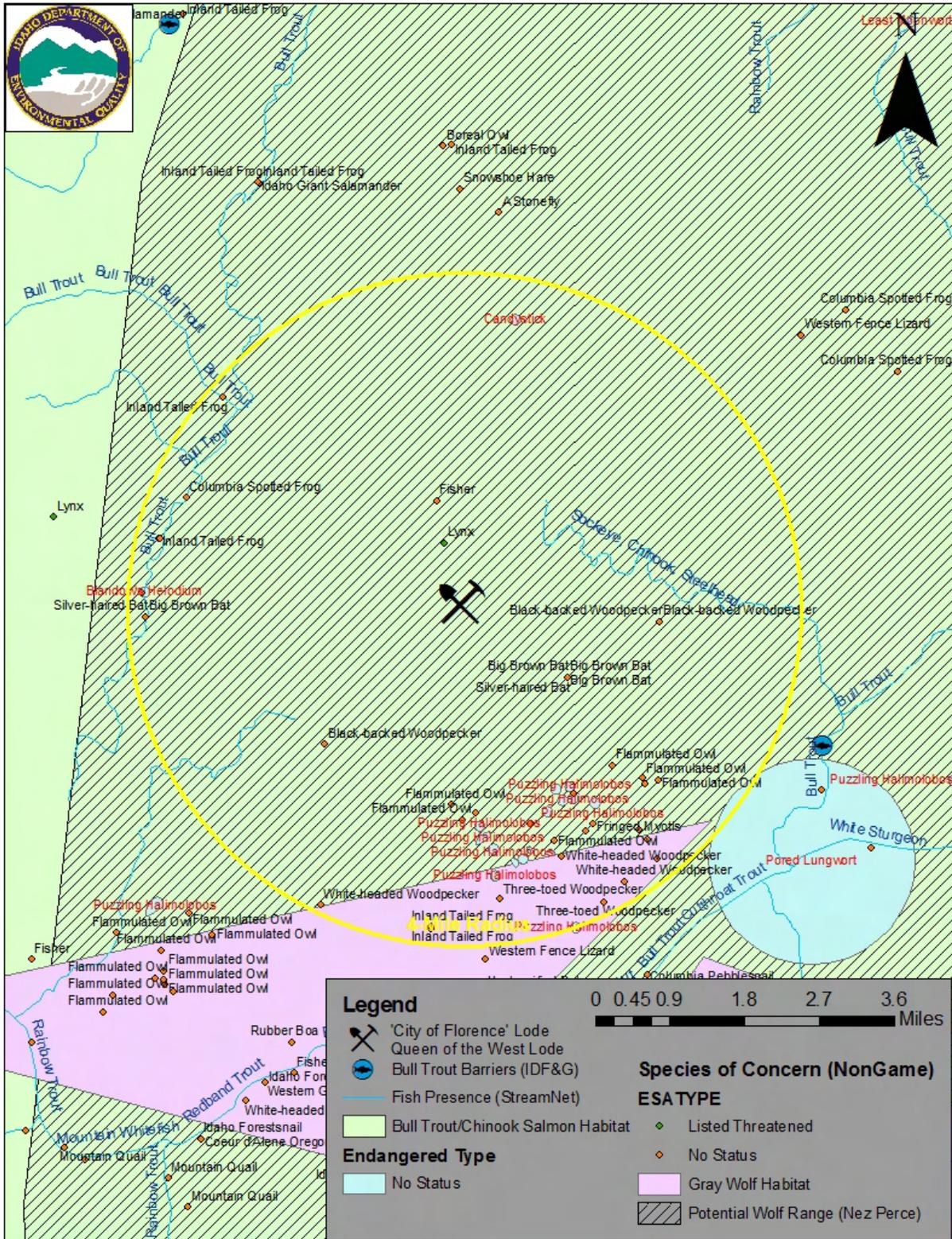
**Figure 2.** Major Lithology of the 'City of Florence' Lode and Queen of the West Lode and Surrounding Area (Map Source: SDE Feature Class, USGS 1995. Idaho GIS ArcSDE 9.2 Geodatabase)

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**Figure 3.** There is one domestic well within a 2-mile radius, however, it is separated by structural geology. There are no Public Water Systems within the 4-mile radius, 15-mile TDL. There are no significant wetlands within a 2-mile radius or in the general area. Sensitive streams located in the vicinity of the 'City of Florence' Lode and Queen of the West Lode are also shown. (Map Source: Idaho GIS ArcSDE 9.3 Geodatabase, ArcImagery 2012)

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**Figure 4.** Sensitive Species Within 4-Mile Radius and Surrounding Area of the 'City of Florence' Lode and Queen of the West Lode. Species of Concern: Non-Game Animals and Plants. Fisheries Within 4- Mile Radius and Surrounding Area. (Map Source: SDE Feature Dataset, Animal Conservation Database. Idaho GIS ArcSDE 9.2 Geodatabase)

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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Nez Perce National Forest



## *The Lure of Gold*



*Old Florence in the 1890's, color enhanced  
J.A. Hanson Collection-Idaho State Historical Society*

*This interpretive  
project was funded  
by the North  
Central Idaho  
Resource Advisory  
Committee under  
the Secure Rural  
Schools Act.*

*The History of Florence, Idaho  
and the  
1861 Discovery of Gold*



In August of 1861, gold was discovered in the small creeks and gulches around the Florence Basin. Miners began trickling into the area. What started as a small tent city with 50 residents grew into a bustling, strategically placed (in the center of the new gold diggings at the head of Baboon Gulch) city of 9,000 by the following year. This "boom" ultimately led to the establishment of the Summit Creek Mining District.

By late summer this quick growing town boasted a saw-mill, ten butcher shops, seven bakeries, eight lawyers, six gambling saloons, a few "hole-in-the-wall doggeries" (saloons), a dance house, Masonic Hall, and a jail. A few of the log cabins, particularly the saloons, had fancy fronts and glass windows but others let in the light through muslin coverings. In preparation for winter the miners began constructing cabins with logs dragged to the site on hand sleds from over a mile away.

What began as not much more than a meek miner's camp swiftly turned into a thriving town, with two main intersecting town streets named Main and Miner and a third named Pine.

### *...and her name is Florence*

Although how this mining town originally received her name remains shrouded in controversy, in November of 1861, Florence received her name. By December the town was laid out and a city government established.

Incredible amounts of gold dust were produced in Florence and in 1862 alone, six to seven million dollars worth of gold had been extracted. By the summer of 1862 this little miners camp had flourished into a boomtown.

### *Winter in the wild, wild west*

The winter of 1861 & 1862 at Florence became known as the worst on record. It snowed 113 days in a row. Snow depths of 10 feet were reached. Miners were forced to stop mining when their rockers froze. Supplies ran short and miners lived for weeks on a diet of flour and water or "spruce tea" made by melting snow.



John Clark's Hotel, Old Florence.  
photo courtesy of Idaho County  
Bicentennial Museum

Although the deep snow kept pack trains from reaching Florence, some supplies did make it --packed in on the backs of men referred to as "Boston Jackasses."

After the long winter, the first pack train did not reach the town until May 16, 1862. In addition to having brutal weather, Florence was considered one of the roughest towns in the West during the winter of 1862-1863. Alonzo Brown, a store keeper who once lived in Florence, said: "Men had a habit of getting drunk at the saloons and shooting into stores and tents as they went by. I slept in the store on the floor, and to protect myself from the stray bullets fired by drunken men, I piled up a stack of flour as wide as my bed and about four feet high and made down my bed behind the flour. The town was filled with the worst element of the Pacific Coast, and thieves and gamblers from the East."

*"Not infrequently some drunken ruffian draws his revolver and begins to shoot in the midst of the vast crowd, often killing or wounding some one and creating a fearful stampede... There is no law here, or none that sees, abates, retards or punishes crime. Scarcely a day passes that someone is not killed or wounded."*

*-P.W. Gillette (diary) June 15, 1862*



The riches of Florence attracted not only men looking to make a fortune in gold, but also the ruffians who followed in their wake—dishonest gamblers, outlaws and thieves. Men referred to as *highwaymen* held up travelers stealing all their valuables on the main travel route between Lewiston, Oro Fino and Florence.

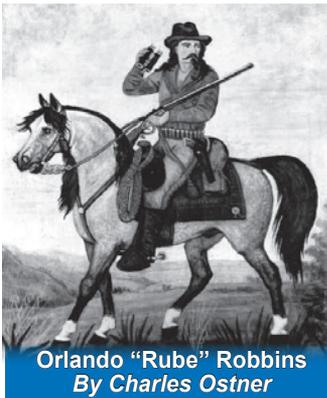
One such highwayman, the legendary Henry Plummer, is rumored to also have been in Florence. In the spring of 1862, two of Plummer's pals, Cherokee Bob Talbotte and Billy Mayfield drifted into Florence. They brought with them a "woman of ill-repute" known as Red-Headed Cynthia. Both of the men were interested in the fiery redhead and a showdown of sorts seemed inevitable. When confronted by the two men regarding her alliance, Cynthia chose Bob, now a business man and owner of the newly acquired Boomerang Saloon. Billy left town the next day, never to return.



On January 2, 1863, Orlando “Rube” Robbins and Jakey Williams shot and mortally wounded Bob during a gunfight on the street in Florence. He died three days later. The men were hastily tried for the act four days later and cleared of the crime. Robbins later became a well-known deputy US Marshall in the Boise area and was often referred to as the “Wyatt Earp of the Boise Basin”.

Little did Bob know that within a few short months he would lie in a grave on “boot hill”, mortally wounded in a gunfight at age 29, defending the reputation of the red-haired beauty. Cherokee Bob had taken over the Boomerang Saloon when he first arrived in Florence by throwing out the owner, and claiming the owner’s deceased partner was in debt to him.

It was here Florence's high-waysmen would gather in order to gain information about the plans of wealthy travelers and shipments of gold dust. It wasn't long before Florence’s most notorious resident and outlaw, Cherokee Bob, met his bloody fate.



Orlando “Rube” Robbins  
By Charles Ostner



*The tombstone of Cherokee Bob as it appeared in 1935. Photo courtesy R.G. Bailey Collection*



*Cherokee Bob's grave marker as it appears today.*

Over time, many of the head stones of souls buried on "Boothill," Florence's cemetery, have degraded and have had to be replaced. Different versions of Cherokee Bob's grave marker can be seen in these photos.

Although the Civil War was being fought thousands of miles away at the same time Florence was booming, the Florence gold rush had an impact on the national economy during the Civil War years. With the South providing the largest export item in the United States, cotton, the North faced a devastating loss of revenue. The North turned westward in search of resources to fund the war and aid the failing economy. Gold became the answer and Idaho gold mines were a key producer. Many historians believe that Idaho gold mines directly contributed to the victory of the war by the North.



The Civil war also had quite an affect on the residents of Florence. In 1862, Main Street in Florence was referred to as the "Mason-Dixon line" by Southern sympathizers and understood to be the dividing line between the factions. As the 4th of July neared, tensions between the two sides intensified. Fearing a fight, residents came up with a plan to avert bloodshed. Two committees were formed—one of southern sympathizers and one of northern—and hired

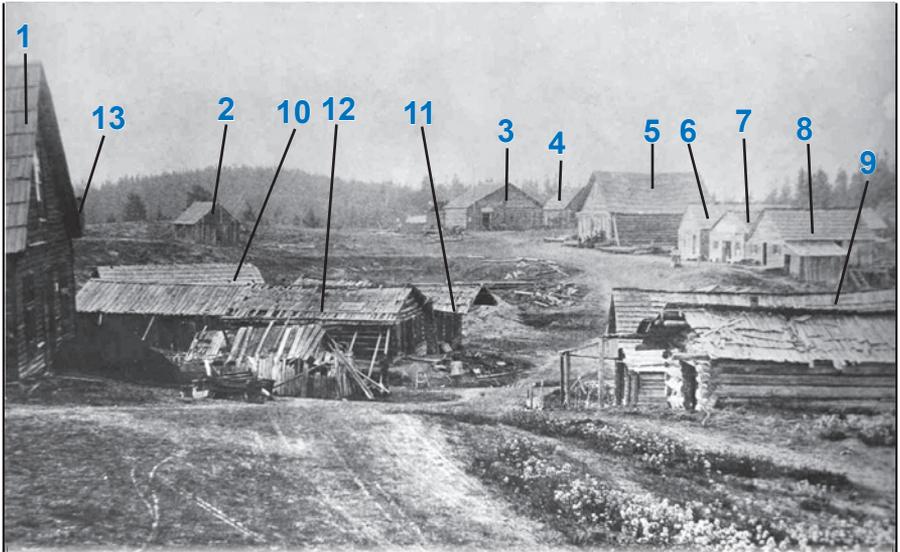
Charles Ostner. A miner and former Heidelberg, Germany art student, Ostner was given the task to prepare a fitting tribute to the country to be unveiled on Independence Day, 1862. Residents brought snow and piled it in the center of Main Street. Every night the growing pile of snow was drenched with water creating a large block of ice. Hidden behind a tarp, Ostner went to work and on the 4th of July hostilities were avoided when his work was unveiled: a sculpture of George Washington on horseback; an American symbol that proved satisfying to both factions.



Charles Ostner, Idaho State Historical Society photograph



In 1869, Ostner carved the same likeness in yellow pine and presented it to the Idaho Territory. The statue was refurbished and covered in gold leaf, and today is featured in the Idaho State capitol building.



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*

**Old Florence (1896)**

**Contributed by Martin Bardhof**

## *Idaho Firsts in Florence*

### *Idaho County's 1st County Seat*

In December 1861 the territorial legislature created Idaho County and Florence became the first county seat. By 1875, Mount Idaho, built largely as a stop for traffic to the gold fields, was developing into a prosperous town, promising to be a more permanent settlement than Florence, and in 1875 won a special election for county seat. In 1902 Grangeville was designated as the county seat and remains so today.

Jaspar Rand served as the Florence City Justice of the Peace in 1862. Justice Rand handled cases varying from cattle theft and murder to performing wedding ceremonies. Because of the frequency of claim jumping and theft, a vigilance committee for Florence was suggested as early as February 1862. According to Florence court records, thirty-two cases were held in November and December of 1862 and fifty-eight from January to August of 1863.

## First Library in Idaho

Sitting wrapped in a blanket by the fire with a good book provided a welcome diversion from the dark, long, and cold wintry evenings in the remote mining camp. In the winter of 1862-1863, one enterprising Florence store owner operated a rental lending library as part of his business, offering about 115 books for loan, including novels, drama and poetry, and non-fiction such as history and politics. Sixty-two men and one woman borrowed books, paying \$3 a month for the privilege. In 1868, \$150.00 was raised to finance a library to serve the continued desire for reading materials by Florence's residents.

C. Binard Jr		
	Commenced	12 <sup>th</sup> 1862
Dec	13	Commenced up of Congress
"	13	Cooper Friends P. 2
"	17	Woolfns Hood
"	38	Dorsh light
"		Gabriel Poire
Jan	14	Furrows Expedition
"	12	Com 5 worth
Feb	11	Sales of Eng Hist
"	12	Commenced 3 m
"	21	Spanist Comp
"	26	Kings Own
Mar	1	Statesman Manual
"	3	What I can do
Apr	1	King & Mining
"	17	Quo reading

A page from an 1862 Florence store ledger not only shows the credit sales of groceries to miners, but also has entries for the circulation of books. Courtesy of University of Idaho Library, Special Collections



School in New Florence, 1898.  
Ace Barton Collection

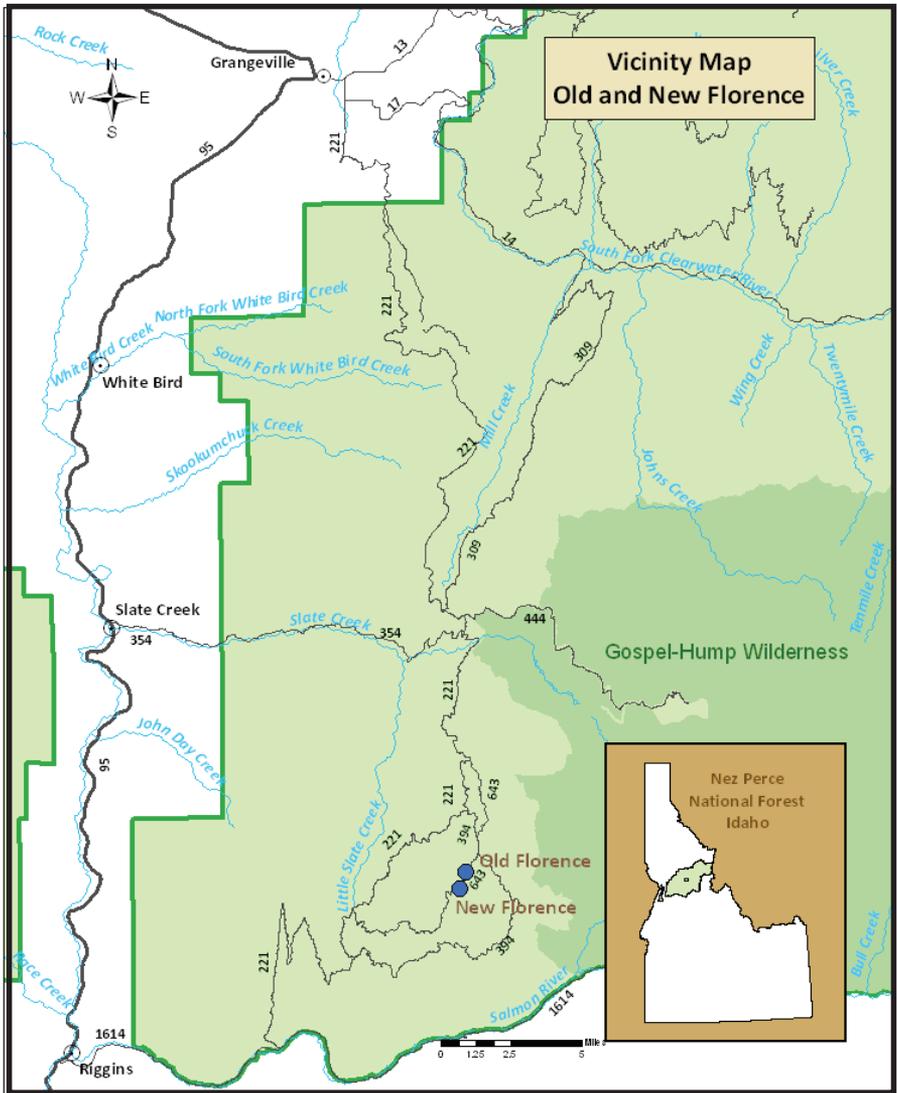
## First Public School in Idaho

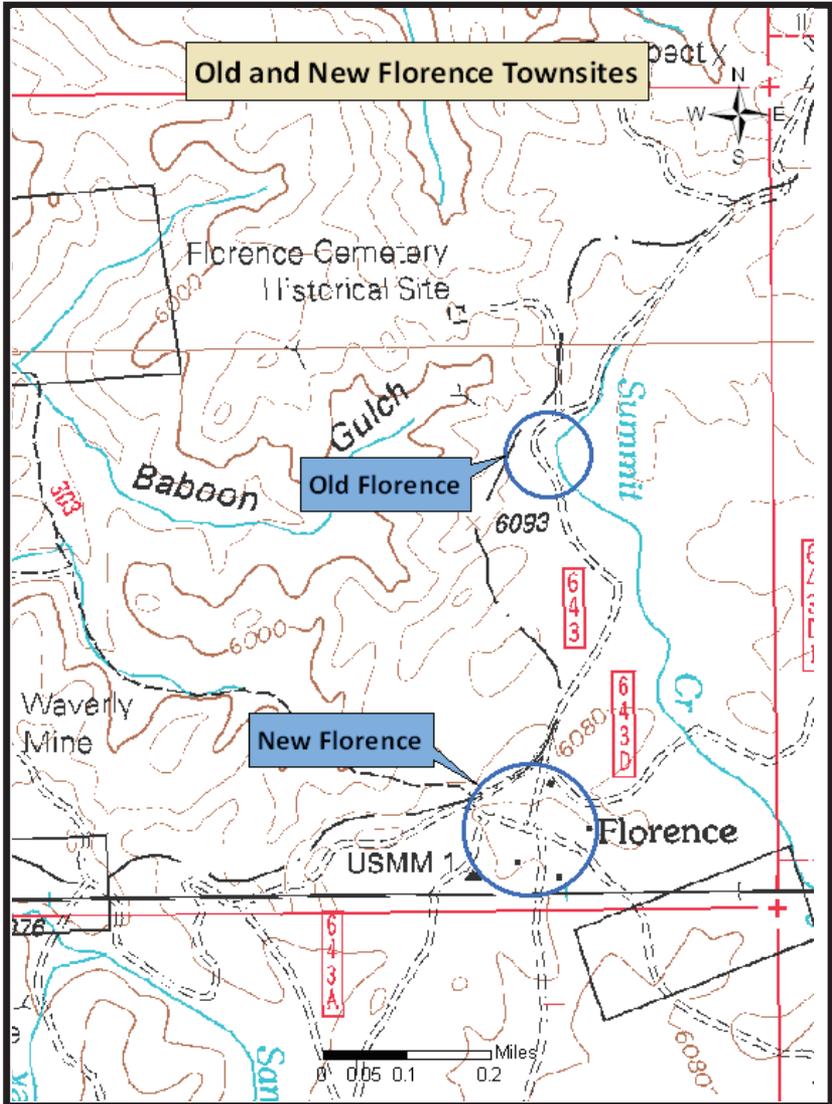
The first public school in Idaho was located at Florence in 1864. At the first session of the territorial legislature the public school law of California was adopted with minor changes to fit conditions in Idaho. Major Frank Fenn's father, who was a member of the assembly, returned to Florence that winter and formed a public school district there. A small, 12' x 14' hewn-log building with a whipsawed board floor and shingled roof was erected as a schoolhouse. Mrs. J.H. Robinson from Ohio was the first school teacher and was paid \$100 per month for teaching six scholars including Major Fenn, two of his siblings, and three other young boys.

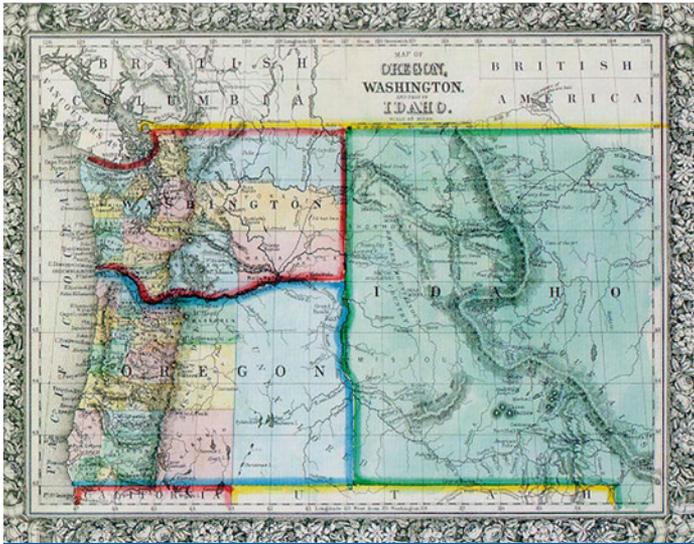
—Idaho Daily Statesmen 1905.  
Major Frank Fenn, prominent Idaho legislator, military leader and Forest Service Officer

## First Masonic Hall in Idaho

In 1862, at the reputed cost of \$10,000, the first Masonic Hall of Idaho was built in Florence by Masons with help from a few *Odd Fellows*. Although no Masonic Lodge was ever formed, it served as a Masonic "Club," and was shared with the *Odd Fellows*.







Greater Idaho in late 1863 or early 1864. Courtesy of the Special Collections Division, U of W Libraries, n979.5

### Idaho's First State Wagon Road: The Milner Trail



Moses E. Milner, 1874.  
Courtesy of  
Kansas State Historical  
Society

In 1890 the Milner Trail, originally built by Moses E. Milner in 1862, was reconstructed becoming part of Idaho's first state wagon road from Mt. Idaho to near Payette Lake.

changes of White Bird Hill and the high ridge above Florence. The Milner Trail between Mount Idaho and Florence was authorized in 1864 by the territorial legislature as a toll trail, with charges of \$3 per wagon and horse or mule, \$1 per horseman and 50 cents per loaded pack animal.

Born in Kentucky, Moses Milner was a colorful character (aka "California Joe"), traveled widely, trapped in Missouri and Wyoming, was a pioneer in Oregon, mined in California, Idaho and Montana. He later served as scout in the U.S. Army. He worked with men like Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Wild Bill Hickock and Generals George Armstrong Custer, Phil Sheridan, and George Crook.

Today much of the road remains in its original location. In fact, Forest Service Road #643 traveling through the old Florence townsite, was the original Milner Trail and also served as the main street of Florence.

The Milner Trail ascended from Mount Idaho south along the hogback ridge to the Adams Way Station and into Florence, avoiding the great elevation

### *Chinese Miners*

Typical of Idaho mining towns, the original laws of mining districts denied Chinese the right to own or operate mining claims. Chinese miners began coming to Idaho in 1864 as the richest claims were worked out and the Idaho legislature passed an act allowing Chinese to mine in Idaho if they paid a monthly license fee. White miners and the Summit Creek Mining District voted to officially admit Chinese to the mining district in 1869 (when the best deposits had been exhausted). In 1870, Florence had twenty-one male and one female (a prostitute) Chinese residents and by 1874, the Chinese dominated the camp. In 1885, two-hundred Chinese worked in Florence. They remained in the Florence Basin until the late 1890s.



Chinese miners near the mouth of Slate Creek  
*Idaho State Historical Society photograph*

### *The Nez Perce and the Miners*

The 1861 Florence gold strike was one of several gold discoveries made in the Clearwater and Salmon mountains during the 1860s. Thousands of miners rushed into central Idaho, the first major influx of whites into traditionally Nez Perce territory.

The Treaty of 1855 between the Nez Perce and the United States government roughly defined the Nez Perce Reservation as bounded “by the upper part of the south fork of the Palouse River, Alpowa Creek, the Salmon River Mountains, and the spurs of the Bitter Roots”. The Nez Perce were assured that no one would be permitted on the reservation without their consent.



Nez Perce encampment.  
*Photo by Dr. Edward H. Latham,  
Courtesy of Nez Perce National Historic  
Park archives*

The incursion of miners into the territory with the strikes at Oro Fino Creek and Pierce City in 1860 violated the treaty and prompted an informal agreement in the spring of 1861 between the tribe and the U.S. Indian Department opening Nez Perce land north of the Clearwater River to mining while prohibiting agricultural settlement. This new agreement was not ratified nor did it amend the 1855 Treaty. Shortly after the addition of this unofficial proviso to the 1855 treaty, Lewiston was established and gold strikes at Elk City and Florence occurred south of the Clearwater River.

The encroachment of thousands of miners upon the reservation caused hardships for the Nez Perce. Although some Nez Perce initially benefited from assisting and trading with the gold seekers, many eventually became victims of fraud, theft, and the loss of hunting grounds and crucial natural resources. Tensions ran high between the miners and many of the Nez Perce including Eagle from the Light (Tipyele' hne qaa'awpoo) and his band who had inhabited the region along White Bird Creek and adjacent to the Florence mines for generations. Another agreement was negotiated on December 31, 1861 at the council of Slate Creek in which the miners promised to respect Indian rights and the Nez Perce permitted another illegal intrusion onto their reservation.

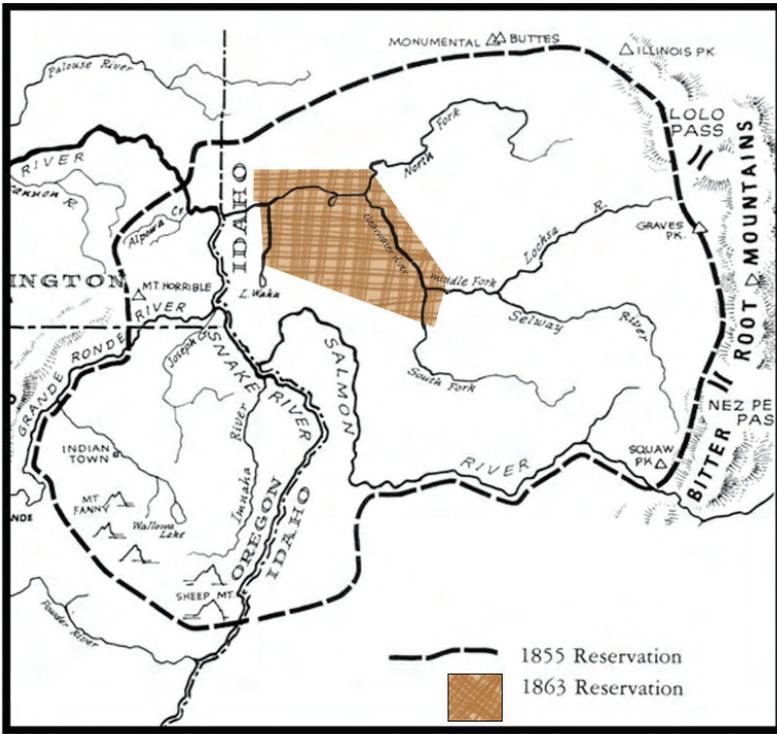
Under extreme pressure from the government, some Nez Perce leaders agreed to a new treaty in 1863 relinquishing all of the gold bearing regions and more. Not only did the treaty reduce the reservation to a fraction of its original size, it led to a split between treaty and non-treaty Nez Perce—those who had refused to sign the treaties.

In the spring of 1877, Chief Joseph led a group of non-treaty Nez Perce who had resisted Euro American settlement on their traditional lands in the Wal-lowa Valley of northeastern Oregon, across the flooding Snake and Salmon Rivers to the 1863 reservation in the territory of Idaho. Ongoing tensions between the Nez Perce and the United States Government tragically culminated in the Nez Perce War of 1877.



Survey of tribal lands; Nez Perce Reservation.  
*Photo by Jane Gay, courtesy of Nez Perce  
National Historic Park archives*

## Map of the Nez Perce Reservation



1918 photo of heroic Nez Perce woman, "To-Lah," also known as Tolo, who trekked 26 miles from Slate Creek to warn Florence of the 1877 Nez Perce uprising. Photo by Allen H. Hilton, courtesy of Nez Perce National Historic Park archives

## *Old Florence Meets New Florence*

Florence's prosperity was brief, and by August of 1862 many left the area in search of richer claims. In the summer of 1865, the remaining residents of Florence were burning unoccupied houses for firewood and much of the ground was placer mined. By that winter only one man was in residence at Florence, a gambler named Billy Courtney who was hired to keep the snow shoveled off the roofs of several buildings in town.

Although the big rush was short-lived, mining activity continued in the Florence Basin. By 1865 Chinese miners had entered the basin, remaining until the late 1890s. In 1896, promises of renewed quartz and placer mining brought hopeful miners back to the basin for a second big boom.

Due to friction between the new wave of miners and the owners of the original townsite, a new town was established about one-half mile south of Florence. *New Florence* was located where roads leading to the major mines of the Summit Creek mining district converged with the Milner Trail, by then a state wagon road.

In 1924, the Submarine Gold Placer & Quartz Mining Company shipped in a large steam shovel to work the placer grounds in 1924, literally obliterating much of what was left of Old Florence. By 1933, of the original buildings, only one remained partially standing--a hurdy-gurdy house.

Today, all that remains of Old Florence are hints of the once thriving boom town--the cemetery, historic photographs, and a treasure trove of tales that read like an old western novel.



Forlorned Old Florence, 1907.  
*Rodney Glisan photo*



Residents standing amidst placer piles in the streets of New Florence, 1896. *Idaho State Historical Society photo*



Resident of New Florence.  
*1898 Ace Barton Collection*



Sheep grazing in New Florence, 1926.  
*K.D. Swan photo*

*All prehistoric and historic artifacts and structures, either on the ground surface or buried underground, are protected by various laws and regulations. If you find evidence of past use of the area by prehistoric or historic people, please do not disturb or remove the artifacts, sites or features.*

## For More Information

### **Nez Perce National Forest**

104 Airport Road  
Grangeville, Idaho 83530  
(208) 983-1950

### **Salmon River Ranger District**

304 Slate Creek Road  
White Bird, ID 83554  
(208) 839-2211

*This brochure is a companion publication to "Florence Tells Her Secrets," a Self-Guided Tour of the Florence Basin, also available at Nez Perce Forest offices. Both of these brochures are also located on our website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/nezperce>*

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