

# Residents of Agness in front of Post Office

*By Hazeltine Brothers*

In 1897, a post office was established in the mining town of Agness, thirty-two miles from the mouth of the Rogue River in Curry County. Mailboats delivered mail and supplies to the outpost from the port town of Gold Beach. The town's first postmaster, Amaziah Aubery, named the town for his daughter. According to *Oregon Geographic Names*, by Lewis A. and Lewis L. McArthur (OHS Press), the unusual spelling may have been the result of an error.

Many of the people in the photograph belong to the Rilea family. George Rilea, who stands at the far right, owned a store and served as the Agness postmaster from about 1907 to 1940; his wife Mary, standing on the steps, was the assistant postmaster for almost as many years. Their daughters were Martha (far left), Clara (seated on the middle step next to the barrel, arms crossed), and Myrtle (seated on the barrel). They also had a son Thomas, a decorated Major General who served in both world wars and became Oregon's adjutant general in 1941 and director of selective service in 1948.

Mail is still delivered to Agness by jet boats. When the Rogue River Mail Boat Company takes tourists on the river it delivers the mail from Gold Beach to Agness and back, six days a week in the summer and three days a week in the winter. The company is only one of two rural mail routes in the country that still delivers mail by boat.

The photographer may have been either Martin or George Hazeltine, brothers who worked throughout the West between the 1850s and 1900.

**Further Reading:** Meier, Gary. *Whitewater Mailmen: The Story of the Rogue River Mail Boats*. Bend, Oreg., 1991.

Atwood, Kay. *Illehe: The Story of Settlement in the Rogue River Canyon*. Ashland, Oreg., 1978.

Seyl, Susan. "Images through Time: The OHS Photographic Archives." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 99, 1998: 164-88.

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