

Where the heck is Robe, WA?

As we look at old area maps, we find Robe marked in at least three different spots over the years. The early maps show it right at the mouth of Robe Canyon, along the Everett & Monte Cristo Railway, next to what was the largest mill in the area. Though there were several owners over time, this mill was best known as the Johnson-Dean (sometimes "Johnson-Deane") mill. This early picture shows the small town strung along the rail line, with the smoking mill in the background. The small building at the right is marked "Post Office". The Stillaguamish River is just a few yards to the left (south) of the rails.



Between 1894 and 1908, Robe had seven postmasters, starting with William Robe, followed by Starr, Cady, Stokes, Smith, Otto, and Theurer. In Sept 1908, Christian Nichols became postmaster. Nichols owned a store near the west end of the large trestle on which the rail line crossed the river for the second time after leaving Granite Falls headed to Monte Cristo. The Post Office ultimately moved to the store, and the town of Robe moved on local maps.



But the rail line slowly disappeared, and by the mid-30s, the rails were being picked up and sold for scrap iron. That meant that trucks and automobiles replaced rail travel, and the road from Granite Falls to Robe Valley was vastly improved, along with the nice bridge installed near the Falls in 1934). So, the Post Office moved out to the highway, where Mrs. Susie Buchanan served as postmistress until the Robe Post Office was discontinued in 1954. She operated the Post Office from her house, alongside what we call the Mountain Loop Highway today.



So, when looking at a map, you may see Robe in different places. And now you know why the trail at the top of Sand Hill that leads down to the old Johnson-Dean mill site along the river is called the “Old Robe Trail”. It’s not because the trail is old . . . it’s because it goes to the “old” location of Robe, WA !

