

THE VILLAGE OF OATMAN, ARIZONA



About 1902, Ben Paddock discovered the Vivian Mine. The property came into possession of the Vivian Mining Company in 1903; the community of Vivian began to evolve. There were several stores, two banks, a Chamber of Commerce, and about 150 people.

With the discovery of the Tom Reed gold mine in 1908, the town became known as Oatman. The post office name was changed from Vivian to Oatman in 1909, and a sense of prosperity and renewed excitement began to permeate the area.

Oatman allegedly was named in honor of Olive Oatman, a white girl, who along with her younger sister MaryAnn was taken captive by Native Americans near Yuma in 1851 after her family was attacked while traveling by wagon on their way to California. They were both later sold to the Mojave Indians. MaryAnn died in captivity during a famine. Due to the efforts of her brother, Lorenzo, the only surviving member of her family, she was discovered living

with the Mojave's near the vicinity of Oatman and returned to Fort Yuma after negotiations with the military.

The opening of the United Eastern mine in 1913 really started Oatman's boom. Buildings mushroomed everywhere as the population climbed to 10,000 residents.

Oatman's heyday years ran well into the 1930's with more than 1.8 million ounces of gold being mined. The last of the mines were closed in 1942 as being non-essential to the war effort. Mining interest was renewed after the war and it continues today though on a much smaller basis and can be rather sporadic. The closest working mine is the Goldroad Mine about 3 miles east.

Today Oatman is considered a living ghost town (Population: 125) with a variety of interesting shops on historic Rt. 66. Tourists travel from all over the world to visit this unique little village, mingle and feed the wild burro herd that wanders the streets, and partake in daily and annual Chamber of Commerce sponsored activities such as the staged gunfights, Bed Races, Halloween Haunted House, Christmas Brush Decorating contest and the Fried Egg Contest.

Another Version

The Beginnings of the Town of Oatman

By Roman Malach

Quoted from a letter to the Editor of the Mohave Valley News June 7, 1978

"Inaccurate information about the town of Oatman beginnings appeared recently in your supplement newspaper. I checked the Mohave County tax records to find when the first mine in Oatman appeared on the tax rolls. I exclude the Vivian and Snowball mining areas, which were established earlier than the Oatman area, and were located a few miles from Oatman of today.

"In 1906, the Blue Ridge Gold Mines Company (later Tom Reed Mine) appeared for the first time on the rolls. Blue Ridge Camp and Tom Reed Mine names appear on the earlier maps, including one published in 1909. The Blue Ride Gold Mines Company listed on the tax rolls the following property: complete 10 stamp quartz mill with boiler engine, enclosed in a building tanks, valued \$9000; gas hoisting plant, pump and small building, \$800; boardinghouse, bunkhouse, office and assay building, \$1000. The company had ten mining claims, each valued at \$100: Ben Harrison, Ollie Oatman,

Thomas B. Reed, Bessel, French American, Nancy Hanks, Pasadena Rising Star, Grey Eagle, Bald Eagle and Black Eagle. Ten mining claims, if 20 acres each, represented 200 acres of land. It is known that Tom Reed Mine Company sold many lots on which some of the present Oatman buildings still stand. The headquarters of Blue Ridge Gold Mines Company was in Pasadena, California, and later called the Tom Reed Mine.

“The ‘Mineral Deposits of the Mohave County’ book, by F.C. Schrader, published by U.S. Topographical Survey has a map of the present Oatman mining area; Oatman was not marked on that map, but ‘Blue Ridge Camp,’ near it ‘Tom Reed Mine’ and ‘Blue Ridge Mine.’

“In February 1916, Al Swenson filed his application for the Oatman townsite, and gave sworn statement that approximately 300 residents were within the limits of his proposed Oatman townsite. U.S. Land Office immediately started the examination of the Swenson’s application. A land office inspector came to the Oatman mining area, and found that in the Oatman Mining District were in the process of formation the following townsites: Tent City, Rice Fraction, Oatman City, Mazona, Ryan, Fairview, Bennet, Old Trails, South Oatman, Forty Nine Camp, Times, North Oatman and Gold Road. Almost every mine operator proposed a townsite on unpatented mining claims and was selling lots.

“According to the land office inspector, the Oatman camp, as proposed townsite, was situated in a narrow gulch next to Tom Reed mine. The General Land Office rejected Al Swenson’s applications for the Oatman townsite.

“In 1971, the last opinion about the Oatman townsite was made by the Bureau of Land Management in Phoenix, which stated ‘no townsite for Oatman’ due to enormous number of conflicting mine claims.

“One has to accept that Oatman town name started to appear after 1909 in addition to Gold Road above it, and Mazona and Old Trails below it, all three as separate mining camps.”

**OATMAN POST OFFICE
MOHAVE COUNTY, ARIZONA**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>
(Originally established as VIVIAN)		
James H. Knight	Postmaster	03/01/1904
Name changed to OATMAN on June 24, 1909		
Lenore M. Clark	Postmaster	06/24/1909
John B. Hughes	Postmaster	10/08/1910
Mrs. Minnie Isabel Fuller	Acting Postmaster	06/30/1954
Mrs. Lucille E. Bean	Postmaster	02/10/1956
Mrs. Lucille E. Bean's name was changed to Mrs. Lucille E. Fourtner on May 11, 1971.		
Mrs. Yoshito O. Roberts	Officer-In-Charge	06/30/1972
Yoshiko O.(Roberts) Patchak	Postmaster	09/02/1972
Joyce C. Portal	Officer-In-Charge	03/08/1991
Deloris A. Elstob	Postmaster	07/27/1991
Charles Ed Williams	Postmaster	08/20/1994
Ruth I. Widden	Officer-In-Charge	08/29/2003
James J. Duke	Postmaster	12/27/2003
Ruth I. Whidden	Officer-In-Charge	12/21/2004
Ruth I. Whidden	Postmaster	02/19/2005
Mallie Brogdon	Officer-In-Charge	03/14/2014

**Converted to a Remotely Managed Post Office under the
direction of the Bullhead City Post Office on July 12, 2014**

Information from the USPS Archives in Washington, D.C.

