

Mabel was founded in 1880 with the building of the Workman's water-powered sawmill and the establishment of a post office. The Workman Mill was not a large operation and employed only a few men. Lumber produced by the mill was sold in the local area, and the mill was not able to compete in outside lumber markets because of inadequate transportation. At this time, Mabel was not yet a logging camp, and, consequently, its population was small. In the late 1890s, the Workman Mill was sold to the Hyland family.

They converted the mill from water to steam power and built a tram track from Mabel to the Hyland side track in 1899. With the added efficiency of a steam-operated mill and tram track transportation, the Hyland Mill finally became a competitor in outside lumber markets. At the same time, Mabel became a lumber camp and experienced a growth in population. But in the early 1900s, the Hyland Mill was sold to the Sunset Lumber Company and was no longer operating by 1910.

The Coast Range Lumber Company was built in 1910. During its operation (1910 to 1924), Mabel reached its peak in physical size and population, which grew to around 400. Mabel then consisted of a company-owned store, cookhouse, bunkhouse, houses, and surrounding land. It also had two churches, a school, and a post office (fig. 6.2).

A railroad, the Wendling Branch of the Southern Pacific, replaced the Hyland tramway. About fifty laborers of Japanese descent were imported to work in the mill for low wages. These people were located in an area segregated from the main settlement of Mabel.

In 1924 the Coast Range Lumber Company was forced to sell to the Dollar Steamship Company. The Dollar Company immediately shut the mill down and never operated it again. Though never used, the mill was physically maintained, and watchmen were on duty day and night. Apparently the company was using the mill for income tax purposes, and in 1942 the Federal Government ordered the mill scrapped under threat of confiscation. The Dollar Company dismantled it in 1942.

With the closing of the mill, Mabel decayed as a community. People who worked in the mill left Mabel to seek new job opportunities elsewhere. The store closed in 1925, followed by the post office in the early 1940s. The railroad was dismantled at the same time the mill was torn down. A few of the company houses continued to be occupied by people who would pay the rent by doing odd jobs around the non-operating mill.

In 1952 several houses remained in Mabel; however, many were unoccupied, and several had been moved from their original locations. The building that served as a school during the Coast Range Lumber Company era was converted to a grange in 1945.

The Mabel of 1967 little resembled the Mabel of 1924. The houses that remained were once part of the Coast Range Lumber Camp, but the similarity ended there. Since 1924, the number of houses and people had greatly decreased, and only fifteen people occupied the seven remaining houses in 1967. Many of the houses had been destroyed, and their debris littered Mabel's landscape.

The church that existed in 1952 no longer stood, and only a cemetery remained near its site. A rock depot occupied the location where the Coast Range Mill pond had been. Land and houses once a part of the Coast Range Lumber camp were owned by a local resident who rented the buildings. The inhabitants of Mabel still relied on timber for their livelihoods in 1967, but in a different capacity than the inhabitants of earlier years. Now the men traveled many miles to their logging jobs.

Mabel has continued to change since 1967. In 1989 four of the five remaining Coast Range houses were gone. Two were replaced in 1975 by new dwellings and, in addition, another two houses were built and a mobile home added. No new houses have been constructed in the last ten years, and Mabel's population is estimated at thirty people today.

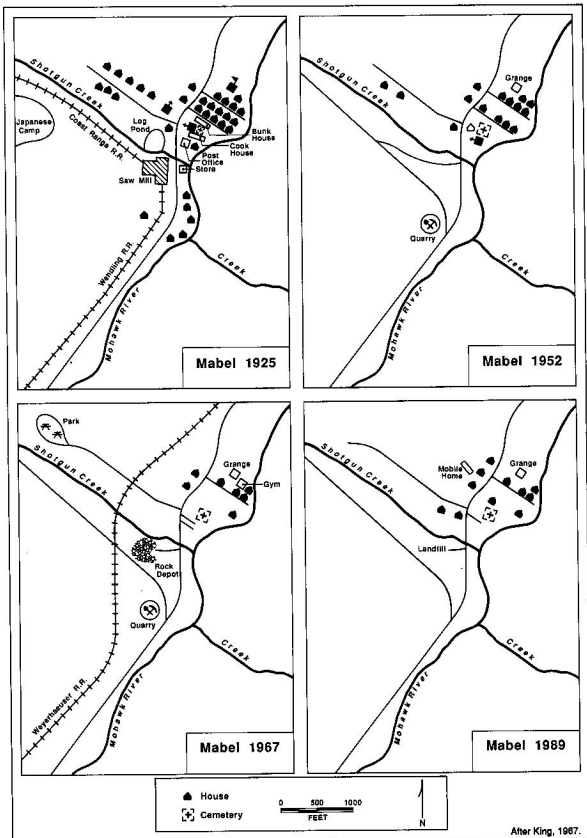


Fig. 6.2