

## **THE TOLL GATE STORY & THE WOODWARD FAMILY**

**By Mary Arlie Rouanzoin**

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‘Early History of Milton-Freewater, Oregon

Early history of Tollgate is vague; authentic facts are hazy and details sketchy. Apparently David J. Woodward proved up on the homestead rights to the land in 1875.

Mr. Woodward and several men from Summerville, formed the Summerville and Walla Walla Road Co., built a fence and hung a gate across the road near the headwaters of Looking Glass Creek, about a mile east of the summit of the Blue Mountains. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Woodward purchased full ownership and became sole owner and operator of the toll gate.



**Looking Glass Lake about 1920 by Arlie Rouanzoin.**

Toll was charged at the rate of \$1.00 per team and wagon, \$1.50 for 4-horse teams, and 25 cents per saddle horse. Charges were made for cattle and sheep by the head, but the amount per head is unknown today.

In return for the toll receipts, the mountain road was kept passable except during the winter when the deep snows made travel impossible.

The road referred to was the road between Summerville and Elgin on the east side of the Blue Mountains, and the Walla Walla River Valley on the west side, via Linton Mt.

There were several buildings at Tollgate in the early days, and with creek water and meadow grass available it was always a stopping place for travelers.



**The Last Toll Gate before toll road became a county road - by Arlie Rouanzoin.**

In January or February of 1896, Mr. Woodward, who had remained at Tollgate during the winter, went out to Elgin on snowshoes for supplies. After purchasing his supplies he is said to have stayed overnight in a cabin at the foot of the mountains, and next morning, although it was snowing, he snow-shoed into the stormy Blues and into oblivion. He was never found, and his disappearance is one of the mysteries of the Blue Mountains.



Apparently Tollgate was continued in operation by Mr. Woodward's widow Mary Woodward and family, until 1918 at which time the property was sold.

In 1922 the headwaters of Lookingglass were dammed up and water covered the meadow forming Langdon Lake. Many privately owned cabins have been built along the lake bank, but on the west end of the lake is Woodward Forest Camp. Thus the originator's name continues to be associated with Tollgate.

A post office was established at Tollgate in 1940 and remained open under one postmaster, (Gertie V. Hunter), for 14 years. Since 1954 mail service has been by rural carrier out of Weston.