



Bunchgrass Historian

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A Saga of Union Flat

By Glenn E. Hatley

The story that follows is an early-day history of the Union Flat area southwest of Pullman, Washington, and the part played by my ancestors in settling and developing the area, as told to me by my father, the late Roe Hatley.

The view of the Palouse country that met the eyes of these early settlers was breathtaking in the extreme and different from the forests and plains they had seen on their way west. These men realized the vastness and richness of this new land. The rolling hills were covered with scrub thorn trees, wild rose



Fall plowing on Union Flat with six 6-horse teams for Jim Klemgard, another Union Flat settler. Three of the drivers were Frank Murray, Rube Hollenbeck, and Charlie Kincaid.

Mr. Hatley, presently retired after 30 years employment with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, lives on his father's farm on Union Flat.

bushes, sunflowers and bunchgrass, and the waving of this foliage in the wind made it appear as a sea of green. It was thought at first that only the flat lands could be cultivated and would produce grain. They could not, of course, foresee that with the passage of time, machinery and equipment would be developed and sophisticated to a point where even the steep hilly areas would be productive.

The southeastern section of Washington was opened for homesteading in 1869. The first settlement in Whitman county occurred that same year by a group of Civil War veterans. These early pioneers designated this section Union Flat, a name by which it is still known. This was 16 years after Washington was organized as a territory and 20 years before it was admitted to the Union as a state on Nov. 11, 1889.

The first years following settlement were busy ones, devoted to breaking sod, building homes and erecting fences. Family gardens were planted and wild berries were dried; greens and water cress provided vegetables for their diet.

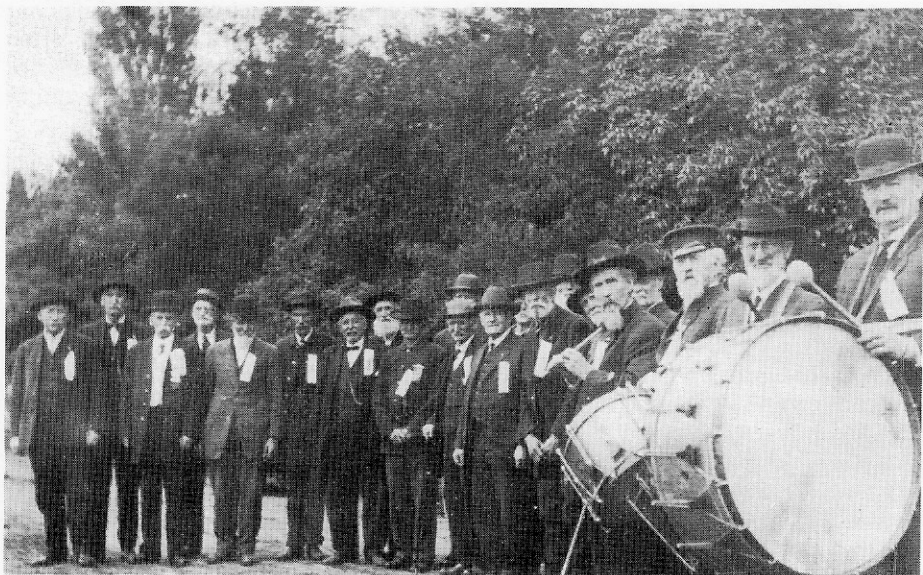
In clearing the land, three-horse breaking plows with beams of wood were used, but the abundance of roots made tilling extremely difficult and many single-tree hitches were snapped during the process. However, these settlers were sturdy, used to the hardships of frontier life and able to cope with the problems that developed. Replacing a broken single-tree with a thorn limb was a common occurrence. Small plots were planted by hand and brush harrows were used to cover the grain. Flax was one of the first crops grown as it made a tough sod break-up and made future tilling easier. Cradles were used to cut the ripened grain and the bundles were tied by hand. It was harvested by beating the heads of wheat with sticks. Reapers and binders were later used and harvesters with horse powered sweepers furnished the power to thresh the grain from the binders.

The settlers frequently captured colts from a large band of wild horses that wintered in Steptoe Canyon and spent summers on Bald Butte and in the Moscow mountains. This herd had been observed being led to and from the summer and winter ranges by a wise old mare. Later, after more fences were built, this herd became much smaller and only a few remained in Steptoe Canyon.

My ancestors, Riley, Nineveh and Carl Hatley, did not arrive in the Palouse country until the 1870's. When the war between the North and South was being fought and the Union Army was looking for volunteers, Riley, older brother of Nineveh, joined the 13th Tennessee Cavalry and was in several battles. After the war had ended and stories of opportunities of the western frontier trickled east, Riley, with his wife, Rachel Green Hatley, and their three small children, together with Nineveh, were among the many emigrants that crossed the plains in covered wagons to find a new life. They encountered many hardships enroute, but arrived in Colorado in 1872. After spending a year at Florence, Colorado, operating a cattle ranch and not finding it too profitable, Riley, Nineveh and another man decided to go to California to see if that state had more to offer and in 1873 the three set out on foot with only a burro to carry their bed and food packs. It was a long tedious journey that took them through the hot deserts of Nevada and California and often they were without water. On one occasion in the hot desert when their water supply had diminished, birds circling overhead in the distance lead them to believe that they would find water by exploring the area. Water was found and after they had satisfied their thirsts and replenished their supply of water they continued their trek westward.

California, however, did not appear to bring them the prosperity they had hoped for, so Riley returned to his family in Colorado where he continued to raise cattle for several years. Many of the ranchers around Florence were finding their cattle killed and a large wolf was suspected of being the culprit, but being sly and wary, the wolf would not venture close to men carrying rifles. One day as Riley was riding after his herd on his buffalo horse, Deck, he came upon the killer wolf. As the wolf started to run, Riley took chase and after a sprint of several miles the animal was lassoed and dragged to death. This episode received publicity in the Canyon City newspapers.

Nineveh, also disenchanted with California was the first of the three Hatley brothers to settle in the Palouse country. This was in 1874. His reasons for not remaining in Colorado were twofold. First his adventurous spirit wanted new



G.A.R. Encampment Held in Pullman July 4, 1912.

Union soldiers who lived in the Ewartsville community were: William Gillespie, Riley Hatley, Mark Taylor, James Ewarts, Frank Hickman, Ed Laney, and Patrick Ryan.

worlds to conquer and secondly he had been shot in both legs between the knees and thighs in an altercation with a neighbor. The bones of his legs were not damaged, however, and the wounds did not impede his life in any way. Shortly after his arrival in the Palouse country Nineveh and his bride, Catherine, filed a claim for a homestead on land now owned by Mrs. George Marshall, nine miles southwest of Pullman.

Fuel for the settlers was provided by the numerous thorn trees, but it was necessary to go as far as the Moscow mountains to obtain evergreen posts and logs to build their houses, sheds and fences. One cold October night when the menfolk were on such a journey for lumber, Catherine, who had been left with her mother and an elderly man, saw the door slowly open and an Indian's head appear through the half opened doorway. The three inside the cabin ran quickly to close the door, but the force from without was too great and several Indians forced their way into the house. The fears of the three occupants heightened when one Indian announced that "many more come." In a short time the small room was filled with 30 or more Indians who appeared to have been drinking.

The warmth of the crowded room, however, made them drowsy and soon the intruders stretched out upon the floor and fell asleep. They made no trouble for their hosts and early next morning left after asking for food for their horses. Needless to say the two women and elderly man spent a sleepless night keeping vigil over their uninvited guests.

In 1877 Nineveh joined General O. C. Howard's army and in 1878 fought in the Nez Perce Indian Wars. He returned to his homestead after the wars were over.

The road that parallels the Union Flat creek was often impassable after rain storms, even in wagons, during the 1880's. Nineveh filed a petition which made this road a local responsibility for repairing instead of a territorial road and this action was beneficial to all who traveled it.

As time passed Nineveh increased his acreage and purchased land adjacent to his homestead from the Bowers family, also early pioneers. A story is often told of the half-Indian girl who was raised by the Bowers who had a knack for breaking horses although only in her early teens. Many of the settlers brought their wild horses for this girl to tame.

The large barn on the farm presently owned by the Roe Hatley heirs was built in 1893 and considering the relatively primitive tools and equipment available at the time, it was considered quite a feat. When the building was new and the flooring smooth, dances were held there and many came from great distances in wagons and on horseback to dance quadrilles and square dances until the early hours of the morning.

A blacksmith shop and postoffice was built on Union Flat in 1879 across the road from the present Roe Hatley home. The postoffice was named "Irene," after an early-day resident supposedly, and was in operation from September 1879 to June 14, 1890. The only postmaster's name was James W. Offield. This was a mail route from Colfax to Lewiston and the mail was delivered three times a week. There was also a corral and shed, used for placing stagecoach horses, near this station. It was here that horses were changed for the stage route from Walla Walla to Lewiston.

A short distance from this station a schoolhouse was built in the 1880's and called the Irene school. In the beginning the school term was only three months as teachers were not always available.

In the early spring of 1877, Riley decided to join his brother, Nineveh, in what had become the Washington Territory. He and his wife and four children, Mary, Sherman, Minnie and baby Nora, along with his father and mother-in-law, Amos and Julia Green, joined a caravan of 40 wagons that was embarking for the Northwest. Both Rachel and her mother drove teams of horses hitched to the covered wagons, while their husbands rode saddle horses and drove the livestock. Riley who was a good marksman kept the party in buffalo, deer and elk meat as the train headed north to its destination.

One night as camp was set up for the night close to a wild berry patch the women, overjoyed at the prospect of having fresh fruit, quickly set out to pick berries, but as they entered the patch their screams pierced the air and the men rushing to their aid found bears calmly eating berries. With rifles in hand the men chased the animals from the scene and the women resumed their quest.

The wagon train arrived at Walla Walla late in the summer of 1877, where most of the families remained. The Campbell and Ricketts families of Pullman accompanied the Hatleys and Greens to their final destination.

Upon arriving, Riley and Rachel filed for a homestead on land about nine miles southwest of Pullman on Union Flat, and Amos and Julia Green homesteaded in the Busby district southwest of Pullman.

Land was not surveyed at first and at times homesteaders could not agree on land borders, and this caused many arguments. In one such instance Riley and another new arrival settled their dispute by each building a fence where they thought the line should be with the understanding that neither was to farm the space between the two fences. Settlers allowed their stock to roam the unfenced countryside. Often it was necessary for Mary, the eldest daughter of Riley and Rachel, whose duty it was to bring the milk cows home for their night's milking, to ride horseback as far as the Wawawai Canyon to round up her charges.



Original Riley Hatley farmstead on Union Flat

The spring after their arrival in the Northwest, a girl, Louella, was born and three years later in 1881, a son, Monroe (Roe), was born.

Medical help was practically non-existent in those days and children were brought into the world with the aid of mid-wives. Only in extreme emergencies was a doctor called upon to come and care for the sick. With Pullman, the closest town, a good nine miles distant, this was understandable since it was necessary to go on horseback to let the doctor know he was needed. A good fast saddle horse was essential for this purpose.

Smallpox was a serious and dreaded disease and no one would enter a house where a patient was confined unless they themselves had had it. In several cases houses were burned after the incumbents had died or recovered from this highly contagious disease.

Wild prairie chicken, sage hen and rabbits were plentiful and made up a large portion of the pioneers' meat. Often in winter when prairie chickens would fly to a thorn tree close to Riley's house to eat berries he would stand in the doorway and shoot several days' supply at one time. Rachel was well known for her prairie chicken stew.

(Continued on Page 14)

A Letter from Washington Territory in 1882

Leitchville, W. T. Oct. 29th 1882

Dear Father & Mother -

Sad indeed were we to read your letter today that told us of little Brother Charles' Death - but now why grieve he is safe in the gold safe from the trials and temptations of this unfriendly world. Oh Poor little one how he must have suffered. I was glad to hear that the rest of you were all well. Did you have any of Charles' Pictures. if so I want one I went down to Colfax ~~two~~ ^{two} weeks ago and had my baby picture taken. it is very dark but he would not sit still long enough. I only had four taken. Mother I send you one he is the best baby I think I ever saw - Mother I went down to Lizzie Baker's and stayed all night. I like her the best kind. ~~He~~ ^{It} has a Lacey slab.

Written by Frances Boone Keith of Leitchville (a stage stop near Colton on the Colfax-Lewiston road named for Mike Leitch), to her parents Elizabeth Ann and David R. Lewis in Oregon. "Will" was William C. Batty and "Dan" was Daniel W. Boone. The George Barkhuffs farmed land adjoining the Keiths.

in Colfax they are going to move to town in
a short time - Aunt Margaret went down to
the Valley last summer on a visit Gizzie
was looking for some of them up this fall
Our crop this summer was very light -
still we will have enough to do I guess
our garden done well we have an
abundance of potatoes Squashes, cabbage
and Rutabagas and some parsnips we have
just made a keg of krom it is not good
yet - We got a fat pig and killed last
week - Then Lou got three more of Mites
brother, to fat for this winter - we have
more than a side of our bacon yet
but we wont eat it - and I raised lots
of Beans and dried 30 lbs of corn so I guess
we wont starve this winter. Still I miss
the fruit we could have got apples at Colfax
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{1}{2}$ ct but we did not have time to
go and get them I hear they are $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$
at Walla Walla Mr Barkhuff has gone
for a load will be back tomorrow - they
are two cent at Lewiston.

Still - Mother since I commenced this
Lomeries, circling the sitting room and

knocked the Lark down and broke
it so I could not finish it. Then
before we could get more the
children took the Diphtheria. Hattie
was very bad it even come out
to the very edge of her lips - till
they were so swollen she did not
look natural - but I got some Carbols
-ac Acid of Mrs Barkhuff before
we sent for the Dr. he said I
had used it stronger than he
did but was a good thing as it had
stopped it from going any further
down. then the boy took it in
about five days after Hattie it
did not show much in his
throat but it come on his mouth
and lips very bad. So we went
back and get more medacine
and he sent Iron for all
so Mabel and Bessie did not
have it at all. I was so glad they
all get through it all right. Will
was working here and he quit
right away so there would not

be any danger of them taking
it they are all well as far as I know
Will and Dan was to have gone to
the Mts last Monday I don't know
whether they went or not they were
going to stay and work about a
month I was going over there
to day but ~~the~~ so windy I did
not go. There has been an abundance
of rain here this fall and not over
an inch of snow yet and it did
not lay on. Lon will go to plowing in
the morning again, if it dont freeze
tonight. I must tell what we get -
new this fall a new Stallion a new
heating stove. me a new shawl blanket
and waterproof ^{boots} for us all new
Gum Boots, Lin new overshoes, comfort
& gloves some new colics, new bedtick
Rice; coffee, Tea, Syrup and shoes for
the children - Baby cant walk yet and
only has six teeth and he has been quite
cross since he was sick I do hope and
trust that you are all well now please
do write to us soon and let us know
how you are

He Laid the Last Brick on "Big Ben" Before Coming to the Palouse

Layne Moys Stormont

My great-grandfather, John E. Moys, came to America from London, England in 1851 and great-grandmother, Elizabeth Rodgers Moys, came a year later, 1852, with their eight children. The oldest was 19 and the youngest was six months old. My grandfather, Charles Richard Moys, was three and one-half.

John E. Moys was a brickmason and laid the last brick on top of "Big Ben" clock in London. Also he helped build the first brick house in Chicago. After three years in Chicago, working at the brickmason's trade, he moved his family west and finally settled just north of Emporia, Kansas.

"J. Moys A.D. 1868" is the inscription on the stone house built here by John E. Moys. The house was still being lived in when I visited the old homestead in 1967. It had been wired for electricity but the water was still obtained from the hand pump on the back porch.

The youngest son, Edward C., and family drove through to Washington and John E. Moys and wife came by train to San Francisco and by boat to Portland in 1877 and settled on the hill near Almoda. Their glowing reports of the new country, the mild climate (they plowed all the winter of 1877-78), and the abundant crops stirred the pioneer spirit of those left behind and John's son, Charles R. Moys, wife and two babies followed the next year. The two babies were my father, Edward L. Moys, two years old, and his brother, George L., six months. Both were born in Americus, Kansas.

In the spring, May, 1878, a party was made of Charles' family, his sister's family, the Clark Colvins, Chris Naffziger and his partner, a Mr. Schoville, the two families of Chris Naffziger's sisters, named Weiderich and Kauffman. This group joined a wagon train, making 104 wagons starting west. They headed direct west for Denver. From Denver they drove north through Cheyenne and Laramie.

Near Hayes City, Kansas, they had a horse thief scare. The stealing was usually blamed on the Indians and outlaw whites took advantage of this fact. While shoeing their horses the blacksmith asked if they were not afraid of having their horses stolen. They replied that they posted a guard and he was instructed to shoot first and call a halt afterward. They chained and padlocked the horses to the wagon wheels and were not molested.

When they reached the North Platte the melting snow made the stream too high for fording. The ferry cost \$3.00 per wagon and money was scarce. During the cool night the river receded and they forded in the morning. Later they had to cross another river and they improvised a ferry of the wagon boxes secured by a long rope and swam the horses across. Much of their goods got wet and the next day clothing and bedding were scattered over the bushes to dry. They ferried the Snake river three times.

At Boise, the Governor of Idaho held the caravan for two weeks because of hostile Indians. During this time the men worked in haying and the horses and the tired women and children had a much needed rest. Cooking was done on a camp fire and biscuits were baked in an iron pot with a lid with raised edges.

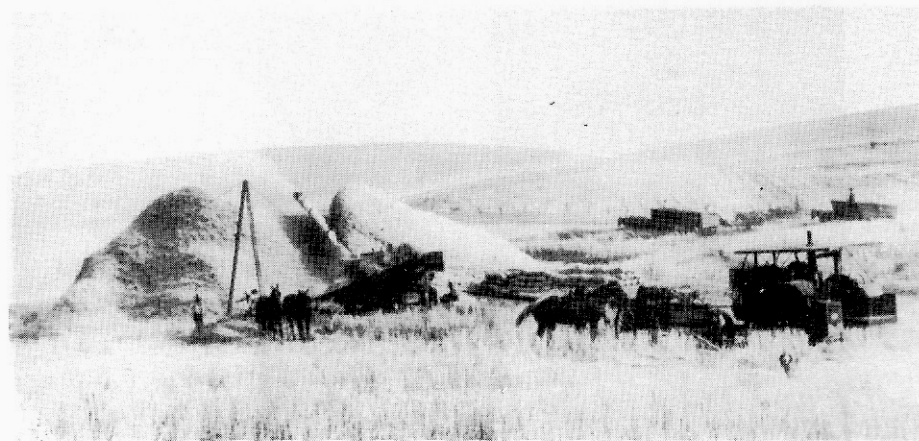
Layne Moys Stormont now lives in Colfax.

The pot was set on the coals and more live coals heaped on the lid. They cooked this way for some time after they reached Almota.

When they reached the Umatilla river they saw an Indian threshing wheat in a very primitive way, winnowing the grain by pouring from one hand to the other. These Indians were friendly and asked for tobacco and matches. There had been a small battle at Weston, Oregon that summer. The party became separated in the Blue Mountains which they crossed at Meacham, a trading post. The Moys family crossed the Snake river at Penawawa August 11, arriving at John Moys' near Almota August 12, 1878. At Walla Walla the dust was hub deep from hauling wheat to the narrow gauge railroad that ran from Wallula to Walla Walla.

Charles R. started west with only three horses, driving two and leading one and changing off. Grandmother drove the team often while grandfather walked, carrying a sack, as far away from the train as possible and cut every little bit of green vegetation, even thistles, to feed to the horses in the evening. This got the horses through in good condition and they were able to do the plowing that fall, while some of the others lost some of theirs from lack of food.

The hills near Almota looked rough but after the long journey they did not seem so bad. That first summer they saw Early Rose potatoes nearly a foot long grown in this new land. The tired travelers were well content and three days after arrival Mr. Moys filed on the land still owned by the family. Mr. and Mrs. George Gault, a granddaughter, are now farming it. The farm just below this one was homesteaded by Mr. Moys' brother, Edward C., and is now owned and farmed by a grandson, Bud Moys.



The first winter my grandparents and family lived in a little sod house in the bank. The next summer grandfather went to the mountains and hauled lumber and built a house.

For years the crop was spring grain raised every year. Being close to Almota, the shipping point for all Whitman county, gave them an advantage in raising wheat. The neighbors formed a partnership and purchased a header that cut all their grain. Each had a relatively small crop. The grain was headed and stacked and threshed later. Mrs. John Moys, Sr. used to walk three miles down the steep hills to Almota to take her butter and eggs to exchange for necessary provisions and carry these home again, toiling up the steep narrow road, which has been abandoned for many years. Grandfather drove to Walla Walla once a year for their winter supplies.



From right to left: Edward L. Moys in driver's seat, next Bertha Douglas, his fiancée, Lydia Moys, Layne Douglas, and George L. Moys. Picture taken in 1902.

School Days, School Days,
Golden Rule and Autograph Days

Edith.

If ever a husband you
shall have,

And by these lines should
see,

Tell him of your fun in
school

And kiss him twice for me
yours truly,

Dec 6th 189. J. H. Brockway.

Friend Edith

Let the road be rough and wide

and its way far out of sight

For it hardly strays or wearies

Trust in God and do the right

Your friend & schoolma

Mar. 29/89

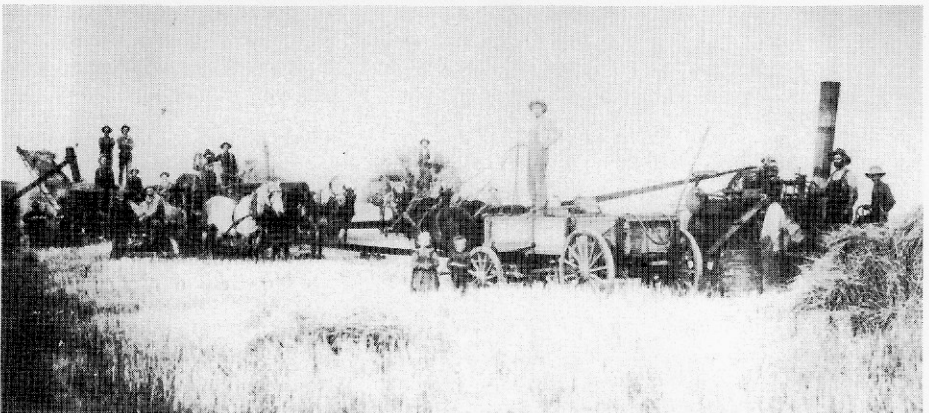
- Nettie Sutt

Although game was in abundance, it was essential during these early times for settlers to make an annual trip to Walla Walla for staples and supplies. They would use four horse teams and it would take several days. One cold winter day when supplies were running low, Riley and three other men started on one of these journies and upon arriving at the Snake river crossing at Central Ferry found the river entirely frozen over and the ferry not in operation. They successfully drove their teams across the ice. One week later upon returning, however, they found the ice weakened from the warmer weather. Nevertheless, two of the men elected to drive their teams across and made it to the other side of the river despite the hazards. Riley and another man thought it too dangerous and waited for the ice to melt. This wait was longer than expected since it took several weeks before the river was free of ice blocks and the ferry could operate safely.

Sherman, the eldest of Riley's sons, broke a great deal of sod for his father using three horses and a bottom plow. It was only possible to plow two or three acres a day even by working a long hard day owing to the toughness of the sod. Numerous mice and garter snakes, as well as prairie chickens and owls were flushed from their homes when the sod was broken. The owls would return to their nests, but the prairie chickens once disturbed would abandon their nests forever.

When Roe was a youngster of three and playing one day in the furrows his brother Sherman had plowed, a large piece of sod which had not completely turned over turned back on him and pinned him under it. Fortunately, Sherman missed his small brother and soon enough to extricate him from his difficulties, and it was found that he was more scared than hurt.

As more ground became cultivated and greater amounts of wheat, barley and oats were planted it became apparent a more efficient system of threshing was needed. In 1886, Riley ordered a steam engine he had heard was being manufactured at Stillwater, Minnesota. The big engine was shipped down the Mississippi river and around Cape Horn, South America, to Portland, thence up the Columbia and Snake rivers to Almota. There was great excitement the day the steam engine was pulled up the Almota hills to the ranch by four horses. It is believed to be the first power driven motor used in the West, and neighbors came to view the new invention with great interest.



Threshing crew with Bert Hatley, Joe Clauson, Sherm Hatley, Riley Hatley, and Joshua Perkins, Mrs. Riley Hatley's father. Children: Ada Clauson and Art Stout. 1901.

On one occasion, Riley hired a wandering individual of dubious character who was very quick tempered and became incensed at the slightest provocation. When a young boy who was cutting twine did not please this man, he promptly threw the boy into the gaping jaws of the thresher. Another harvester standing close by quickly pulled the frightened boy out before he was injured. Riley fired this harvest hand on the spot and chased him from the farm.

In 1881, William (Carl), younger brother of Riley and Nineveh, his father, William Hatley, and a sister, Emily, arrived from Tennessee and all filed for homesteads consisting of 160 acres. Emily had lost an arm in a grist mill when a child, but regardless of her handicap performed many duties usually performed by men. She was not to enjoy her homestead for long, however, since she suffered an untimely death shortly after coming to the Northwest. One day while visiting her brother, Riley and his family she threw her head back to laugh at a humorous story someone had told at the dinner table, and died suddenly of a heart attack.

William Sr., father of Riley, Nineveh and Carl, proved his claim, but because of his advanced age returned to Tennessee. He passed away soon thereafter and was buried beside his wife, Anna Ford Hatley.

Carl lived alone on his homestead for a short time before sending for his wife, Clementine Taylor Hatley, and their small daughter, Ellen. Their first child born in the Palouse country was Landon, who was born in 1884.

Claim jumping was common in early times and one night when Carl was alone in his cabin three men entered and ordered him to leave his homestead. In the skirmish which followed they upset the stove, which fell on Carl. He was, nevertheless, able to pull a small knife from his pocket and chase the three intruders from the cabin. The same men returned several months later and found Carl sitting alone on his small front porch with his chair tipped back against the wall. They ordered him to raise his arms, but as he righted his chair, he made a motion as if to raise his arms, and instead brought a 44 revolver from his pocket and shot at the men's feet. They fled and never returned.

By 1893, all three of the Hatley brothers had added more land to their original homesteads, but disaster was to follow, particularly for Carl and Nineveh. It began to rain in July, 1893 and continued unabated until late October with the result that farmers were able to thresh but little of their grain. What was threshed rotted in the fields in sacks. The crop failure made it impossible for them to meet their financial obligations and both Carl and Nineveh lost their holdings, including their homesteads in the fall of 1893. Riley was able to save 500 acres.

In 1894 Riley saw the need for a more substantial house and a new home was built one-half mile from the original cabin. It was not long after the completion of the new house that Rachel, who had been ill since the death of a baby daughter, decided to take her four youngest sons and walk to the top of the hill opposite the new dwelling. The hill still was in native bunchgrass. It was a warm sunny April afternoon. Rachel stood with her 12-year-old son, Roe, while the three younger sons ran about in the grass. She stood for a long time drinking in the view where she could see for miles in any direction. Roe waited for her to speak, noticing how frail and tired she looked. Finally, in a low soft voice, Rachel said, "This is where I wish to be buried." Less than a week later, on April 13, 1894, Rachel died and was buried on the hill she chose for her eternity. (Riley some years later married Nora Perkins. Their children were Mac, Ray, Zelma, Ronald, Mabel, Nila, Weldon and Norman.—Editor.)



Bunchgrass Historian

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-1889-

EDUCATIONAL NOTES

School Superintendent Bean made out his annual report this week from which the following is gleaned:

Funds on hand at beginning of year	\$19,592.11
Received from apportionment	39,259.95
Received from special tax	9,030.95
Received from other sources	11,192.98

Total From All Sources	\$79,075.99

Paid out in teachers wages	27,815.42
Rent and repair of school houses	3,376.72
Paid for school furniture	2,104.32
Paid for school house sites	473.40
Paid for school buildings	13,334.45
Paid for other expenses	3,106.60

Paid for All Purposes \$50,210.91

Funds to credit of schools	\$20,206.83
Value of school houses and grounds	2,062.00
Value of school furnishings	10,676.00

Nine new schoolhouses were built in the county this year, a total of 108 in the whole county. School was taught 5½ months.

Average pay for male teachers per month was \$64.00 and for female teachers per month it was \$41.00. The county employed 60 male teachers and 62 female teachers. There were 3,829 children in school.

(Teachers were to keep the building clean, chop and carry wood, build fire and pack water when necessary in addition to teaching the three R's and maintaining strict discipline.) Reprinted from the **Colfax Commoner** September 1889.