



The Bunchgrass Historian

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Settlement and Harvest Days



—Photo Courtesy Fred Olson

Sack Sewing

Sack sewing was a harvest job that took considerable skill and a good sewer did the job in less than a minute and averaged several hundred sacks a day. For all that they were not paid much over ten dollars a day.

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Settlement and Harvest Days

In this issue of the **Historian** we have included settlement stories which record early harvest procedures and illustrate equipment, because they are timely. Whitman county is just finishing a bumper harvest. But finishing it was considerably more comfort and ease than it was done in those back-when days.

The pictures in this issue show the men and women needed to harvest the grain and fruit grown in Whitman county at that time. Look closely at the clothing worn by these harvesters. Can you imagine the heat, the dust, the itch of the grain; the smell of the horses, the harness and the machinery or rotting fruit? And everywhere the FLIES! And then imagine working ten to sixteen hours a day, wearing long underwear, heavy pants and the tight-buttoned shirts. Or a dress made with long sleeves and a tight bodice buttoned at the neck, with yards and yards of material gathered into a skirt that hung to the ground and under that a full length petticoat.

Often when night came the only chance for a bath was a nearby stream or a shower under a barrel of water heated by the sun during the day. The nearest they came to air-conditioning was when a breeze sprang up and fanned the sweat on their brows.

But they got the job done, and well done at that, because they endured. The harvest was the reason for all the work the rest of the year and they looked forward to the hustle-bustle of the day and the camaraderie they enjoyed at mealtimes and after work. Many a summer romance grew into a years-long marriage and many more grew into a new romance the next summer with someone else. So it was in those days gone by; at this time of year called Harvest.

Mrs. J. S. Cochran, who is over seventy years old, comes to town on horseback, and is as "spry as a cricket." A few days ago she left at this office some specimens of the mammoth vegetables the family has raised this season. She says it shows what the Palouse country can do in a dry season.

A failure of crops near Palouse City. Only 66½ bushels of wheat per acre is the highest yield heard of up to date. Potatoes don't weigh only about 2 lbs. each and beets and turnips are no larger than an ordinary milk bucket. Some of our farmers are thinking of sending to Alaska for a supply of winter vegetables.—**Palouse Boomerang** (Palouse City), August 16, 1889.

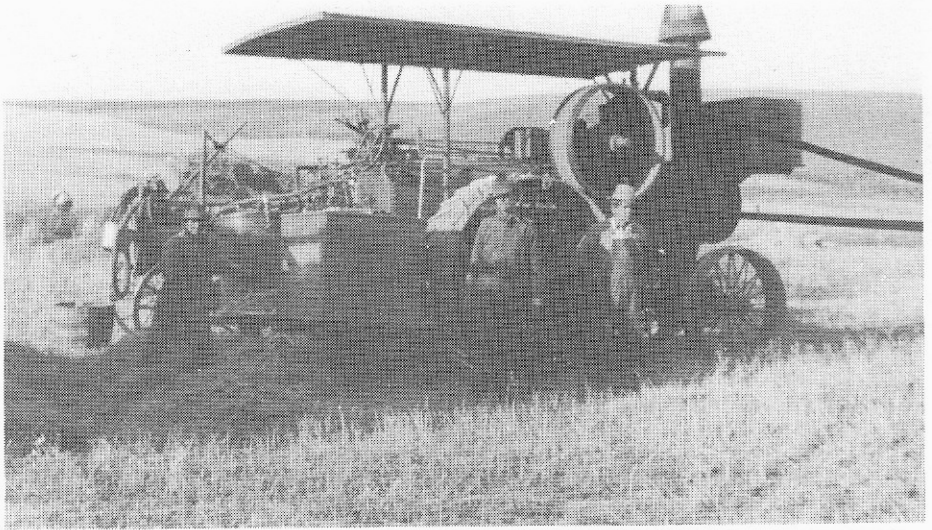
The J. H. Weeks Dairy Farm

By Maxine Patterson

This story of my grandparents' life in Pullman was told to me in part by my dad, Loyd Weeks, of Mommouth, Oregon:

My dad, Joseph Weeks married Sarah E. Jones in 1889 in Parkersburg, Iowa, and moved to Govan, Washington in 1901. There they bought one hundred and sixty acres of land, part of which had to be cleared of sagebrush. We lived there for four years and then moved to Pullman in 1906. It was quite a trip. There were two four-horse wagons, one driven by son Paul, and a heavy buggy driven by Grandpa Jones which carried Mother and the children: Verna, Elizabeth, Margaret and myself. Ralph rode a saddle horse bringing the cattle. We moved during the month of November.

We settled about one and a quarter miles south of Pullman. Dad farmed four hundred and twenty acres of his own land and usually rented some more including the Bishop place next to ours on the north. My father was one of the first in the Palouse country to buy a combine. In 1908, he purchased a big green Haines-Houser combine with a fourteen foot cut. He had his own crew of boys—Verne as driver, Paul as header-puncher, Ralph as separator-tender and I was sack sewer. The combine was pulled by thirty-one head of horses.

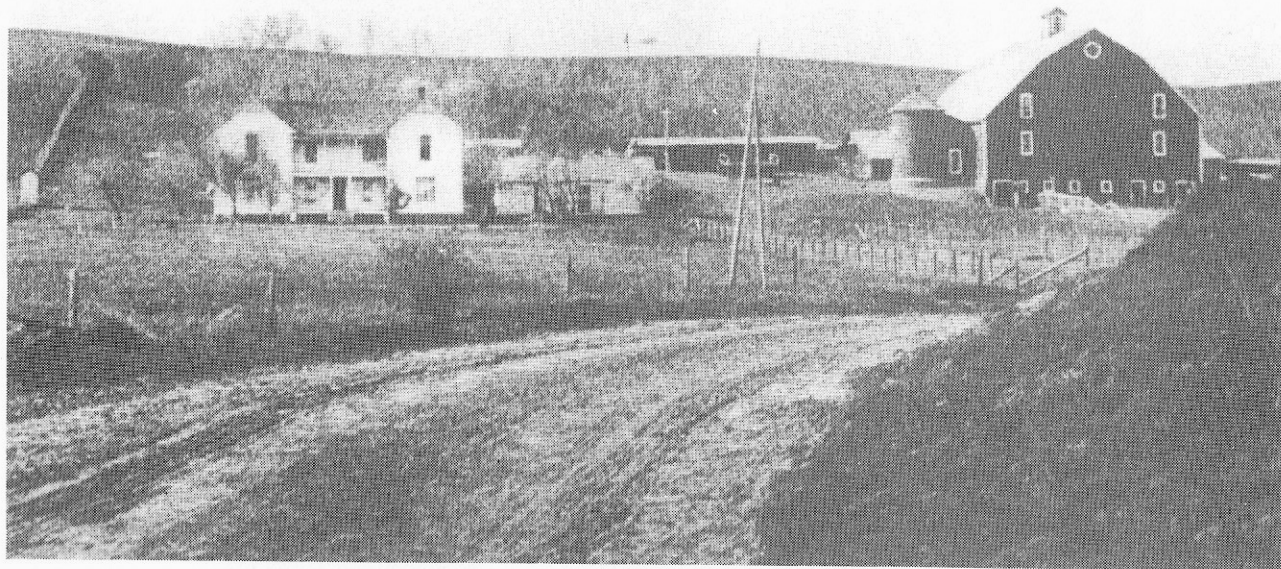


—Photo Courtesy Fred Olson

Hay or Straw Burner

This picture is typical of the straw-burners used at harvest time. Picture was taken on the Fred Olson farm west of Palouse. L. to R. men are H. McGee, Bill Gibson and A. Duwease. 1919 harvest.

During harvest we burned stubble to fuel the machines. All grain was sacked and loaded on long wagons using four to six horses and then hauled to the nearest warehouse which was Duthie's in Pullman.



—Photo Courtesy Maxine Weeks Patterson
J. H. Weeks dairy farm, house and barn, south of Pullman on Lewiston highway. Barn still stands.

We used the big combine about five years and then Dad sold it and bought two "Idaho" machines which were manufactured in Moscow, Idaho. They were pushed by eight head of horses like a header but they were a complete failure as far as the Palouse country was concerned. They were too heavy for the eight horses and did not level on that steep ground, so there was a great deal of grain wasted.

On the farm we usually had about twenty-four head of milk cows and we sold cream to the creamery in Pullman. We also kept calves, hogs and chickens. The barn on the place was built into a sloping hillside so the basement was built as a rock wall and included the stalls for the cows, a calf pen, root cellar and milk room for separator and cooling tank for the milk and cream. (This barn is still standing.) We also had a large silo alongside which held corn for the stock.



—Photo Courtesy of Maxine Weeks Patterson

The J. H. Weeks home on Lewiston Highway just out of Pullman. A Sunday baseball game was in progress. Mrs. Weeks would not allow children to play cards on Sunday but baseball was permitted.

Everyone worked in those days—even our big dog Pete. The folks bought a treadmill for him and Mother used him to run the churn and washing machine. He finally came to realize when Monday was rolling around again and he would go and hide.

When the children attended W.S.C. the boys took R.O.T.C. which meant early rising as the cows had to be milked and cream taken to town before we headed up the hill to classes. Among those who used the cream was "Dutton's Confectionary" a candy shop that made the most delicious chocolates.

The cows we kept were grade and pure-bred Red Polled Angus, which brought us an average return of thirteen dollars per cow per month. During the winter we fed alfalfa, corn ensilage and chop. From the by-products of the diary we raised forty Duroc-Jersey hogs. We kept the heifer calves; the grade steers were sold for meat. The pure-bred calves of both sexes were sold bringing about one hundred dollars each.



—Photo Courtesy Maxine Weeks Patterson

A group of young people enjoy a romp in the snow at the J. H. Weeks dairy farm. L. to R. are Loyd Weeks, Lula Burgess Lang, Walter Burgess, Owen McCroskey, Elizabeth Weeks Wiley, Paul Weeks, Celia Burgess McConnell, Howard Burgess, and Margaret Weeks Nagel.

The farm at Pullman holds lots of good memories. Our neighbors were the Burgess and McCroskey families and we had many good times together—riding horses—tobogganning—playing baseball and swimming in a big pool we had built alongside our house.

In 1915, Dad and Mother and Verne and I took a trip to Montana to see about some cheap land, as the boys wanted to go into farming on their own. Dad leased our place to Mr. Guthrie that year and we moved to Montana. I was married in 1916 and Verne was called into war service in 1917. He was sent to Ft. Lewis and then immediately to France where he lost his life in 1918 during a gas attack. Paul was with him at the end as he was helping in hospitals in France during the war. After Verne was killed the folks took over this place and farmed it until 1923. The first year in Montana was good farming, but after that it just dried up. Paul took over and the folks moved to Clarkston where Dad did some truck gardening. Mother died in 1940 and Dad followed in 1941.

I stayed in Montana until 1922, then moved back to Pullman and started to work for J. E. Hammond in the plumbing shop. Maxine and Elmore were born on the ranch in Montana and Lucile and Keith in Pullman in a house I built on Side Street. □



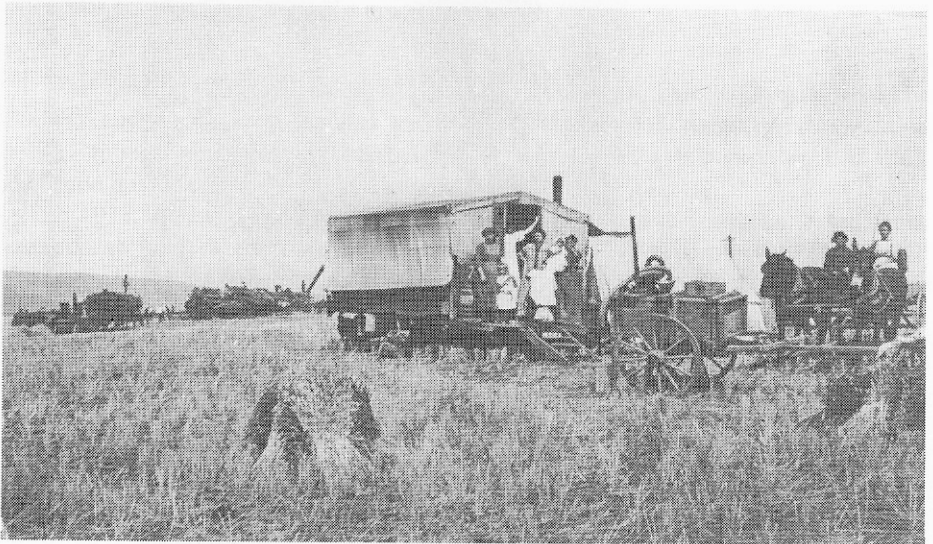
—Photo Courtesy Bruce Barkhuff

Harvest scene near Colton—The horse powered “merry-go-round” provided power for the threshing machine before the steam engine took over.



The Cook Wagon—1919

Mrs. Roy Smith at the right and helper take a breath of air between meals.



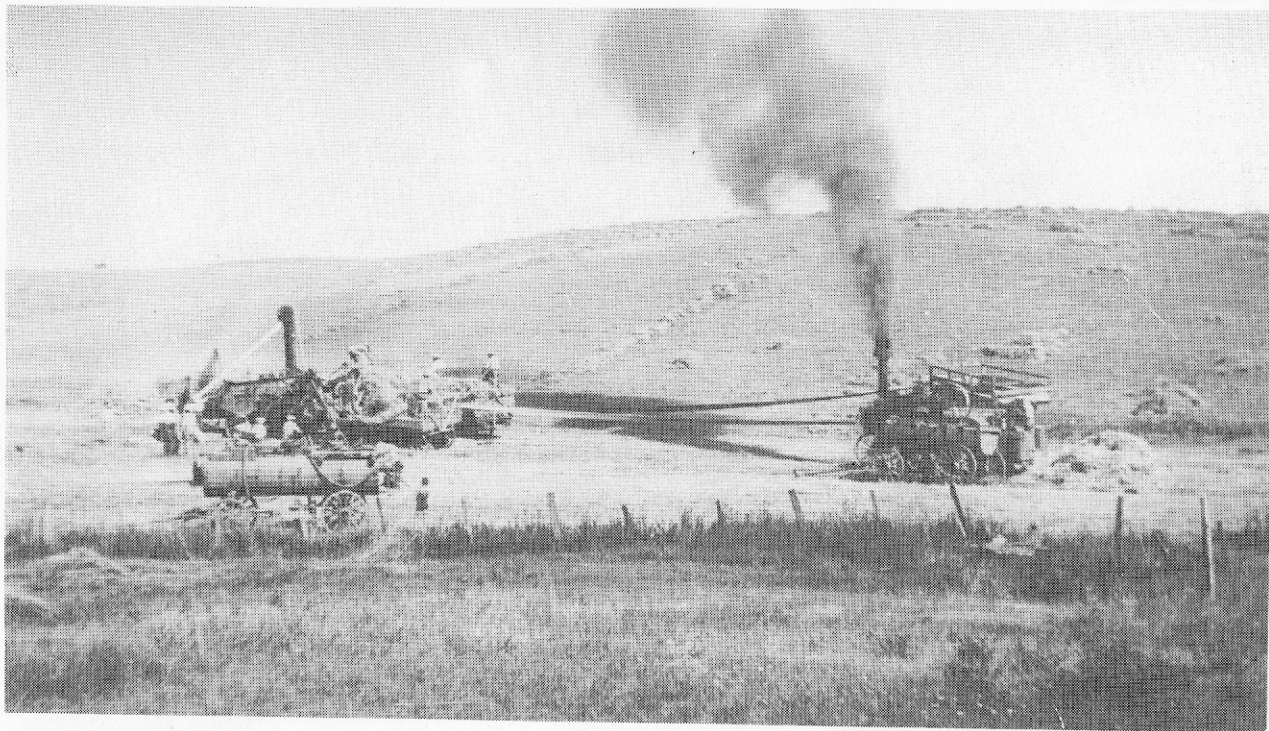
Another Cook Wagon

Where meals for the harvest men were served in the field.



Bundle Wagons, Harvest of 1916.

—Photo Courtesy Fred Olson



—Photo Courtesy Paul Bockmier Collection

Straw-Burner, Steam-Powered Threshing Machine.



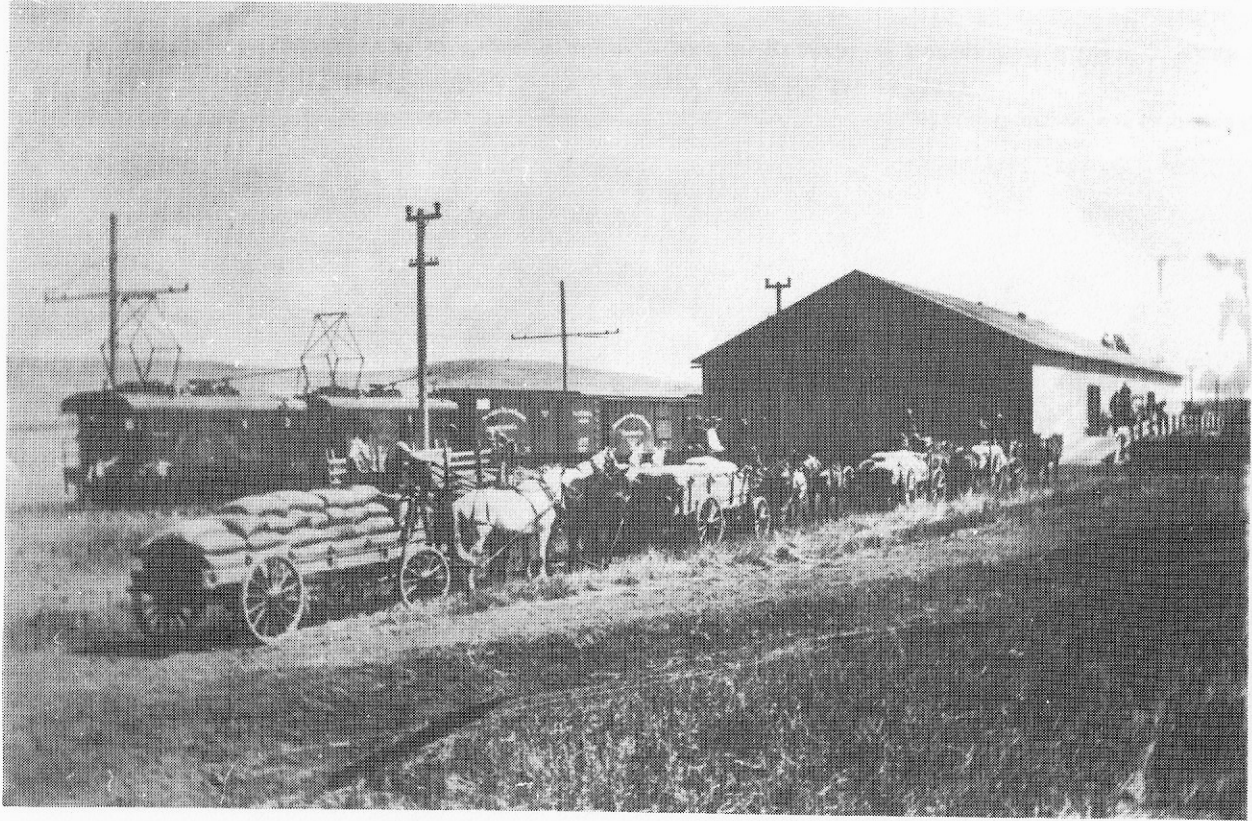
Photo Courtesy Fred Olson

The Water Wagon—A necessary piece of equipment during harvest when the danger of the straw stack catching fire was ever present. Men and horses also appreciated the water wagon.



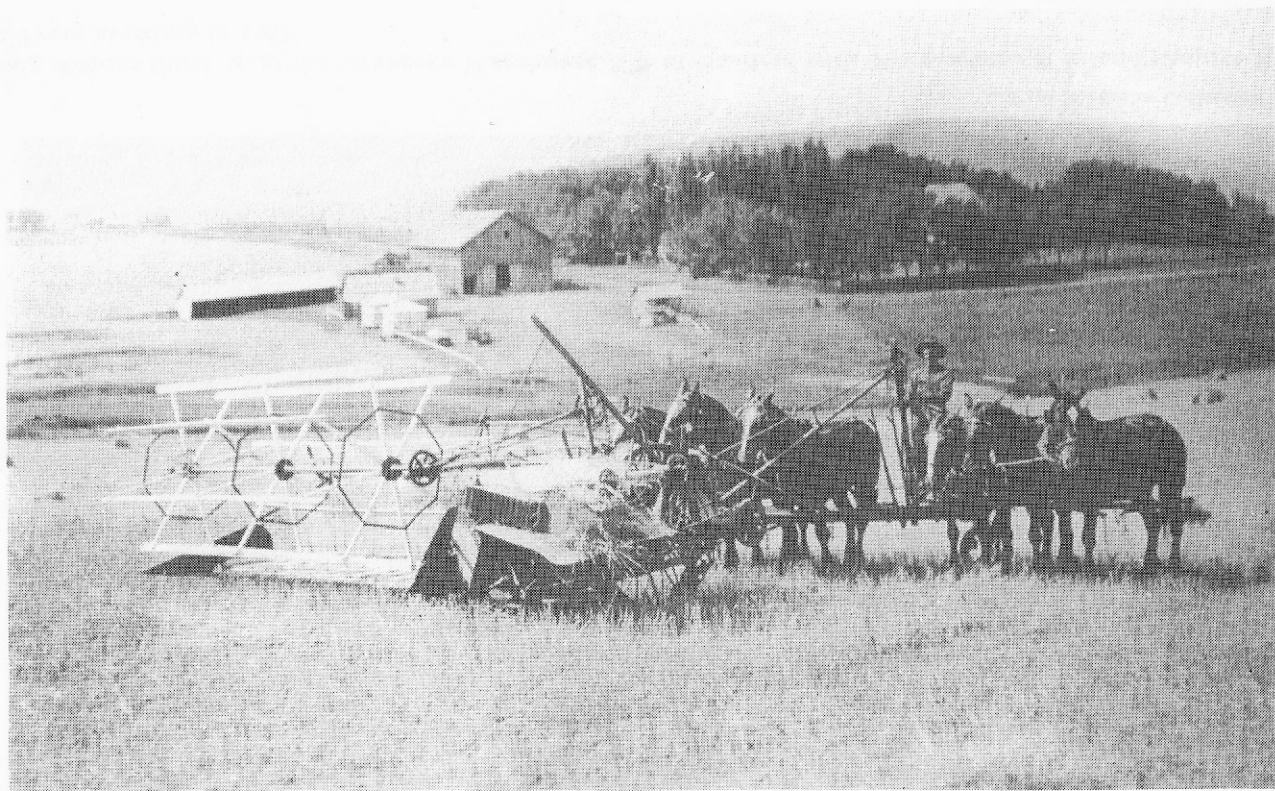
—Photo Courtesy Fred Olson

Harvest Scene of 1913 or 1914—Note enormous straw pile in back of crew and bed rolls in right foreground. Olson farmed, west of Palouse.



—Paul Bockmier Collection

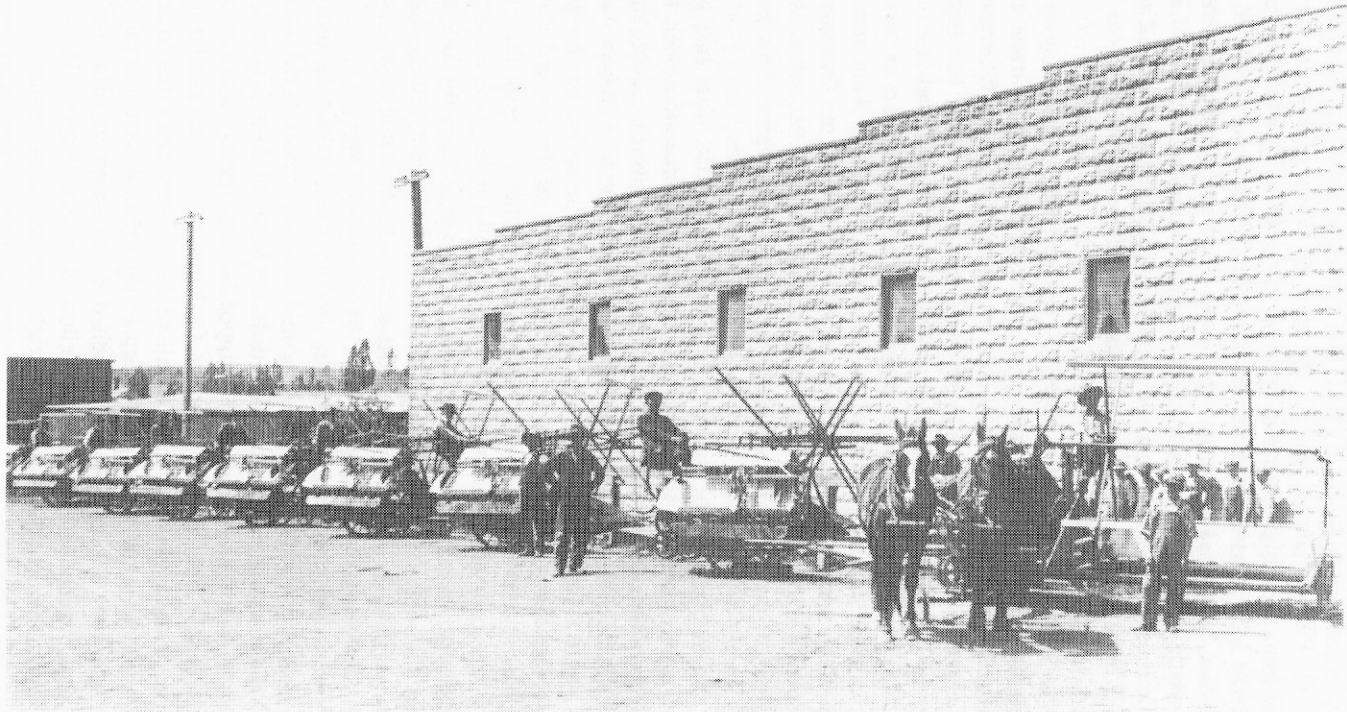
Grain wagons lined up at the Crabree Warehouse NW of Garfield with The Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad Freight Train at siding in 1907.



—Photo Courtesy June Crithfield Collection

John Crithfield driving a pusher-type binder ca. 1917.

This type of binder was impractical in Palouse country and in general as horses had difficulty when turning or going up hill.



—Photo Courtesy Chas. Blickenderfer

Moline binders delivered to the E. E. Paddock store at Farmington in July 1920.

The Pierson Ranch

By Ethel Gosney

The J. O. Pierson family came to the state of Washington from Nebraska in 1901. They came by emigration train arriving in the little town of Sprague, Washington. Edythe Mae Pierson was born that same day, February 15, 1901 at the home of Bill and Mae Shawgo. The family stayed only a few weeks in Sprague then moved to Odessa where Dad was engaged in the construction of several houses. I remember Mom was left alone a lot with only the two hunting dogs Debs and Coalie to guard the family. Would you believe, Dad had brought those two dogs along from Nebraska! They were his pride and joy!

However, Dad was a farmer at heart and wished to raise his family in the open country. He had \$3,000 from the sale of his farm in Nebraska to invest and in the fall of 1901 purchased a half section of land in the rolling hills of Whitman County. He paid George W. Case, Sr., \$2,500 for the 160 acres Mr. Case had homesteaded and bought 160 acres of railroad land for \$1,600. Now the railroad land included a quarter section owned by the O'Neils which Dad purchased a year or two later and still later the other half section of railroad land once owned by Tom and Granville Hagerman. They sold to Doc Heglar who in turn sold it to Dad. This last purchase had buildings on it but the house had burned down, so in 1916 when Walter and Nannie Porter got married they decided to build their house there. This was done in about 1917.

Upon the hill back of the house on the home place Mr. Case had planted 15 acres of beautiful orchards. This plot was bordered on three sides with tall poplar trees. This windbreak provided shelter for nesting doves, larks and prairie chickens. Especially the prairie chickens hatched out in great numbers each spring. It was not unusual for Dad to have to move their nests in spring to keep from plowing them under. Many species of birds built their nest in the orchard every year. I remember robins, canaries, blue birds, orioles, gold finches . . . with their cute hanging nests and always several humming birds nested in the back of the orchard each spring. These had the smallest nests and birds I have ever seen. We kids never tired of watching the eggs hatch and the mother birds feed their young. Sometimes a hawk would invade the orchard and all the smaller birds would band together and with much screeching and darting drive the hawk quickly away.

Sometimes when wind and hail hit the area we would take tubs and gather big hailstones along the windbreak so mother could make ice cream. What a treat!

The orchard was comprised of many different kinds of fruit. Those I remember best were: the Transparent and early stripped harvest apples; Wealthy apples that made such good cider in fall; Whitney Crabapples . . . so good to eat . . .; pink cheeked Snow apples that hung on all winter for kids and birds to enjoy; King apples for good apple butter and back deep in the orchard were several trees of big greenish apples that were too sour to eat called Beatty hammers. But Dad's favorites of all the apples were the Belflours and yellow Newtown Pippins. He would watch over these and hand pick them at just the right moment of perfection.

Another of Dad's favorite fruits were the apricots. There were several kinds and sizes of them in the big orchard and across the road and up on a hilltop were five acres of trees we called the Apricot Orchard. These were really big and special. Lush to can and lush to eat right off the trees. Mom made lots of apricot jam.

Over the hill from the house was the cherry orchard. There were Black Republicans, Governor Woods and Royal Annes. These pink cheeked Royal Annes hung in great clusters clear to the tip of the branch and were delicious.

Down back of the barn were the pie cherry trees. The wonderful pies these made!

On the flat and side of the hill were the prunes and plums. Some had been grafted by Mr. Chase and had golden and dark plums on the same tree. We especially liked the Peach Plums to eat raw. They were superb! There were Italian prunes, French prunes and Dad's favorites, the Petites. Mom made gallons of prune butter each fall and I can still see Walter dunking a hunk of bread covered with prune butter in a tall glass of rich milk!

Late in the fall we always hitched up old Mack to the buggy and went up on the hill to pick pears. One year Earl got his leg broken riding on the spokes of the wheel. We had big Bartlett pears that canned so nicely or made pear honey; huge winter Pyramids or 'Nellies' that were stored for winter use and right at the brow of the hill several trees of Flemish Beauties. These Mom used for preserves. And who could ever forget the peach trees . . . always first to bloom in spring with their delicate pink blossoms, followed by the black eyed pear blossoms.

I remember Dad used to cultivate the orchard every summer and all the kids helped hoe around each tree. We went barefooted in summer and would race from one tree to the next to keep the ground from burning our bare feet! I wonder how much hoeing we accomplished!

Down below the barn at the base of the orchard was a little meadow. This was our favorite play area. Sometimes Dad pitched a tent for the harvest crew to sleep in and after harvest it made a dandy play house till time to take it down for winter. Then all the play junk was moved to the hay loft. 'Course the barn was a good place to play hide and seek in and Walter and Earl rigged up a trapeze bar and three rings to fly through the air on . . . if you had the nerve!

There were many species of wild flowers on all the north sides and fence rows. It was a paradise for kids in spring. Dad was the first farmer to break out the sod on the north slopes when he began farming his land. It was hard work to plow that tough "nigger wool" and Dad used a walking plow and two horses.

I remember when Mom first had running water and a sink in the old house. They put a barrel up just outside the window and we had to pump water to fill that barrel several times a day! Then about 1912 they rigged up a barrel by the old windmill which served till the new well was drilled up on the hill for the new house.

In 1916-17 Uncle Oscar came to visit and he and Dad built the beautiful new house we all love so well. The old house was torn down having served its purpose, but in memory I shall never forget those happy carefree days of my early childhood . . . down at the ranch.

"Those magic hours of happy childhood years . . .
Are but a fragile dream . . . as twilight shadows near"

Ed. Note:

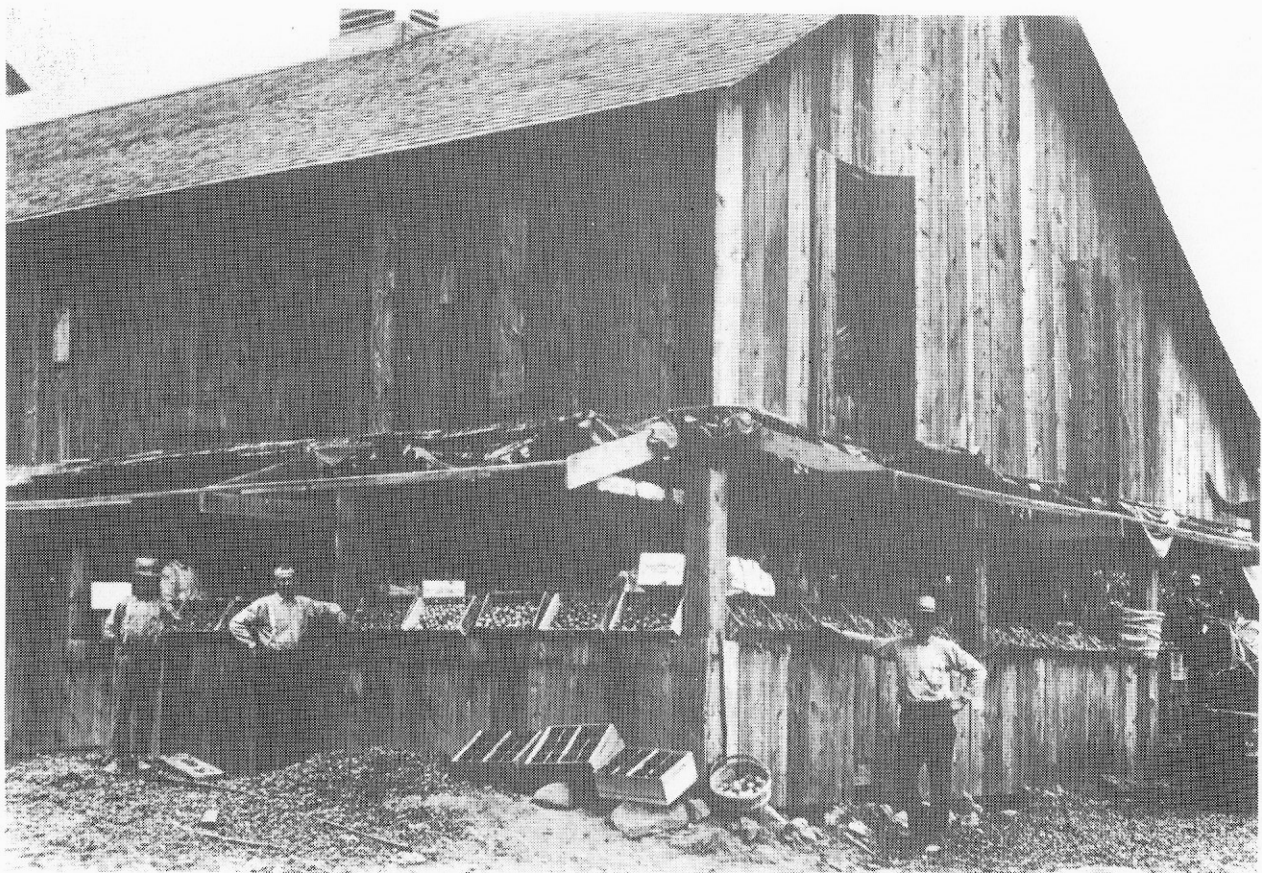
Although Mrs. Gosney, in this article, has beautifully described the orchards of fruit she remembers so well, her father also raised grain on the farm.

This article is from a taped interview with Mrs. Kay Kenedy Turner.



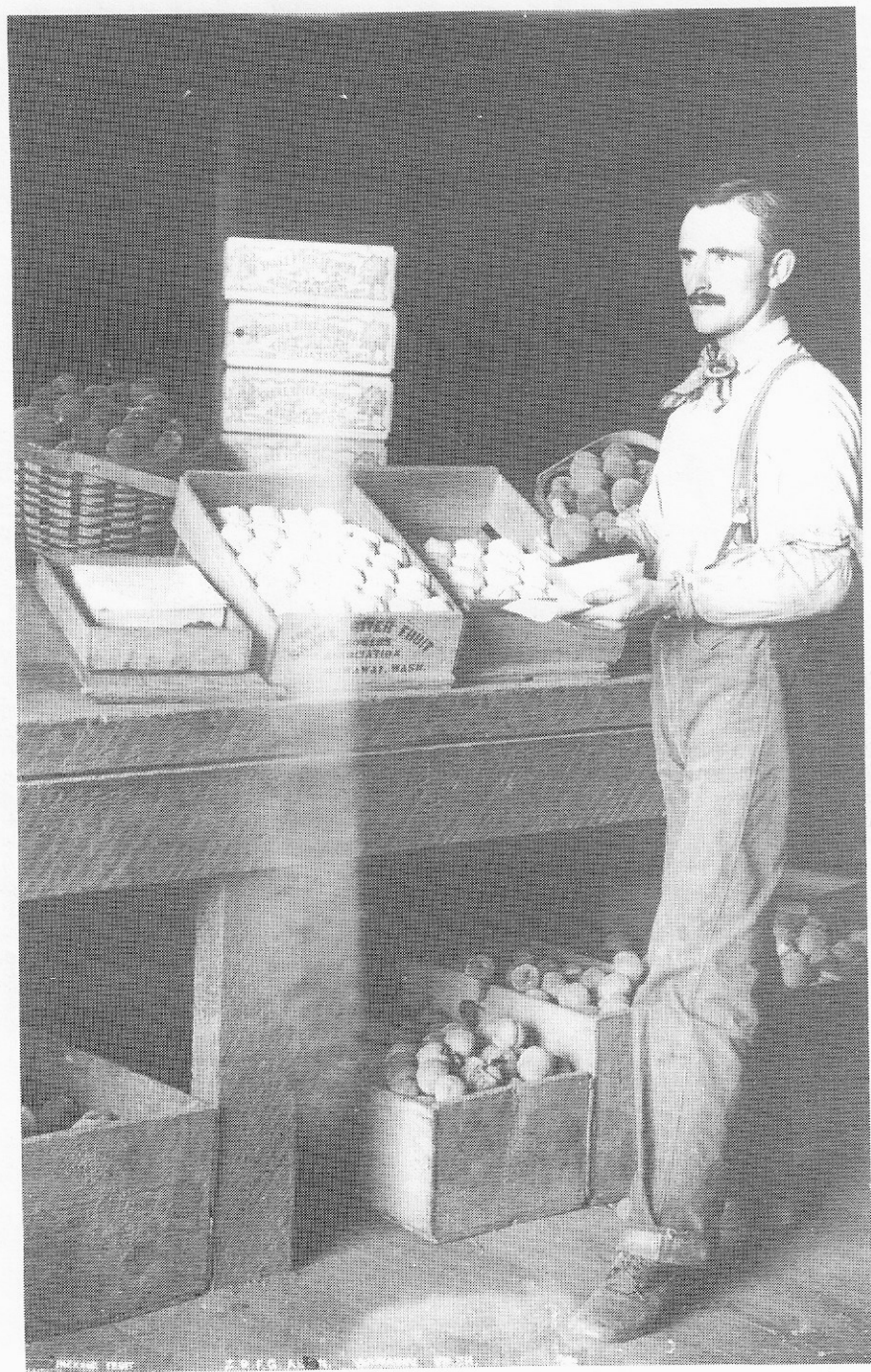
Fruit pickers pose for photographer at Wawawai in 1897.

—Photo Courtesy Bruce Barkhuff



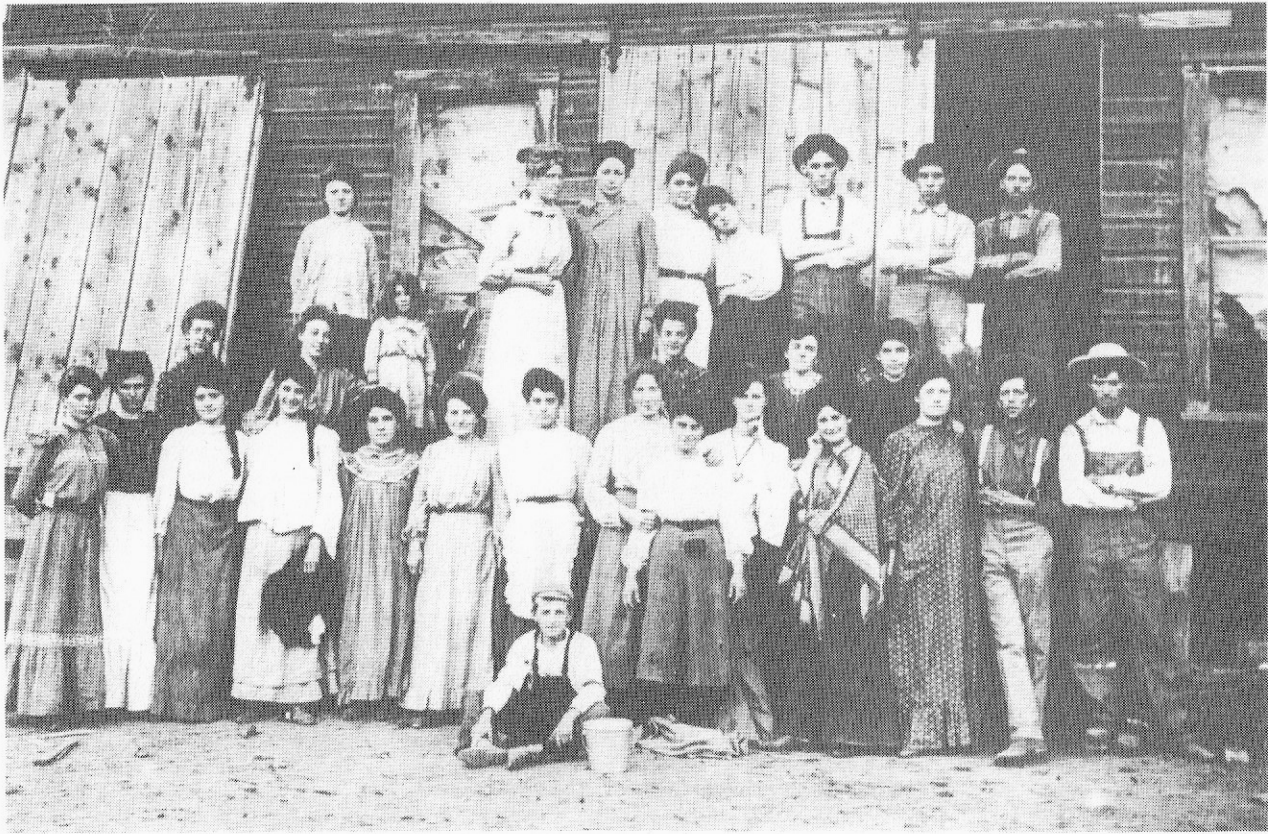
Bishop Brothers Packing House at Bishop in 1897.

—Photo Courtesy Bruce Barkhuff



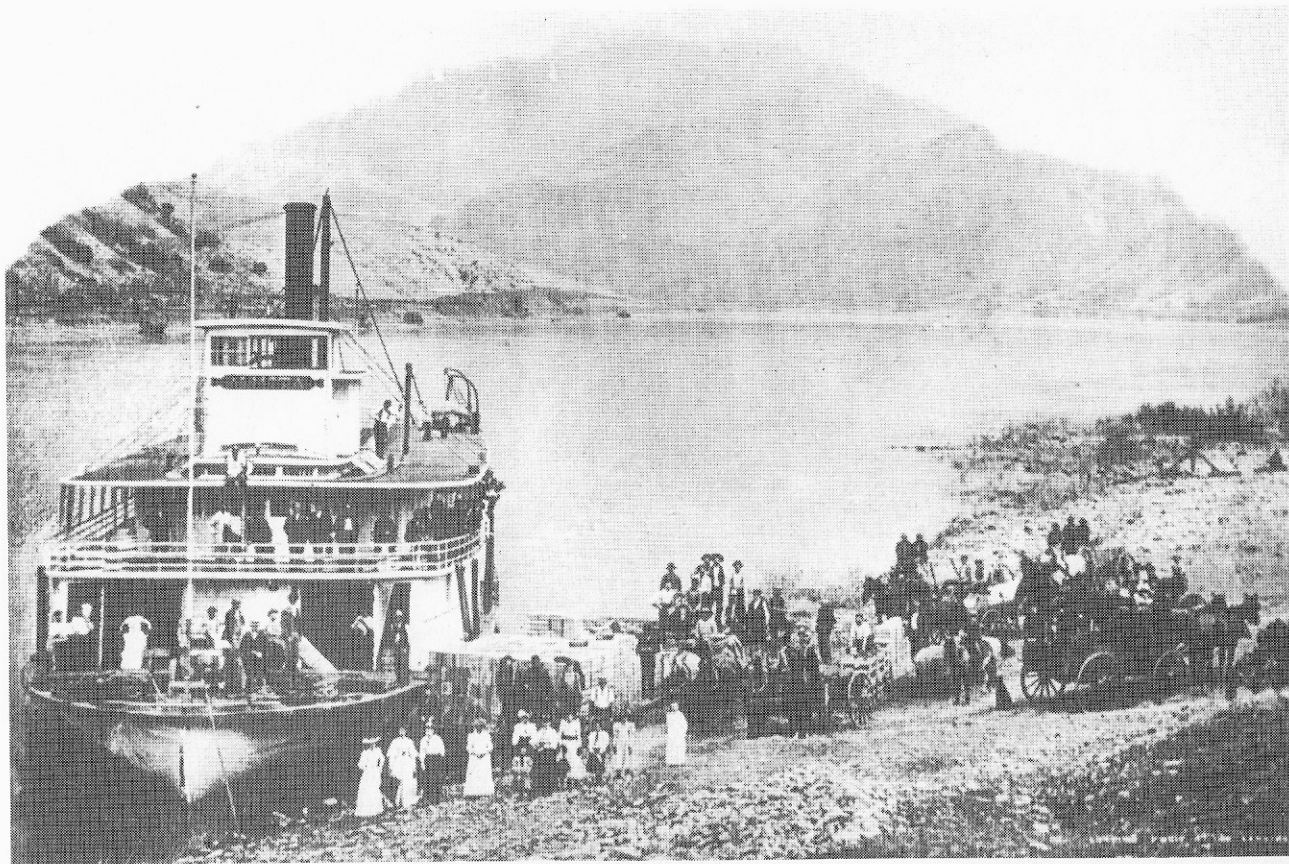
—Photo Courtesy Bruce Barkhuff

Packing Fruit for The Snake River Fruit Growers Association at Wawawai in 1897.

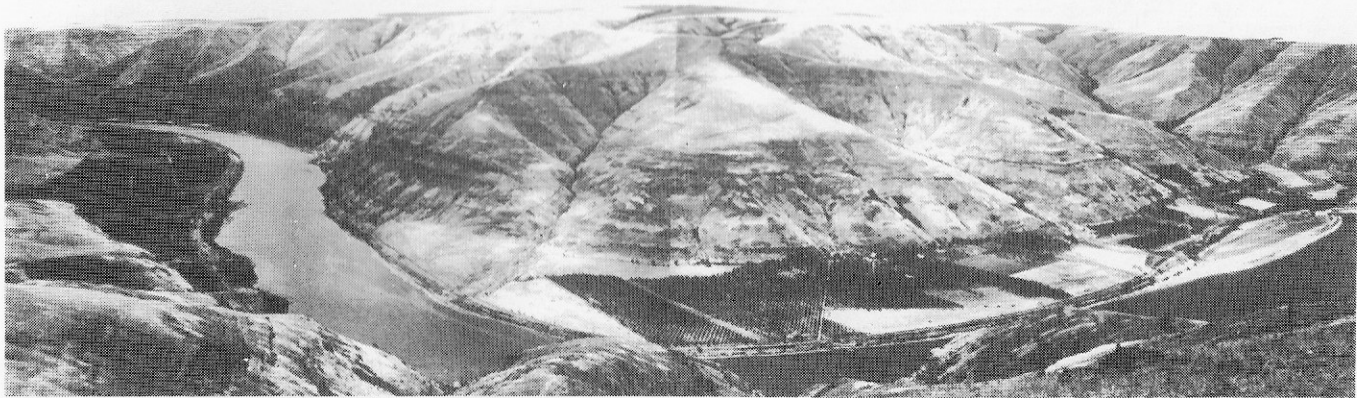


—Photo From June Crithfield Collection

**Wm. LaFollette packing house crew in 1904 at Wawawai.
Young Tabor LaFollette is in back row third from right.**



The Steamer *Almota* picks up the Snake River Fruit Growers Association fruit at Wawawai in 1897. The river boats always brought the box shook, nails and paper supplies needed in harvest.



**Panoramic View of Fruit Orchards on the Snake River in 1932.
Orchards to the left are at Wawawai and those to the right are in Garfield County.**



**Peach Trees Blooming in J. W. Long
Orchards at Bishop in 1968.**



**One week later they are pulled for
Lower Granite Dam Project**

Whitman county lost an estimated 730,000 boxes of fruit a year when the orchards along the river were all pulled, ending an industry that had thrived for more than eighty years.