



The Bunchgrass Historian

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Flour Mills of Whitman County



—Photo: The Coast

The earliest flour mill in Whitman county; built at Colfax in 1873.

The Flour Mills of Whitman County

Once the early homesteaders discovered the rolling bunchgrass covered hills could be cultivated it wasn't long before grain became a primary crop.

At first they raised mostly enough for their own use with little left over to sell or trade. Enough to feed the chickens through the winter and enough for their own yearly supply of flour. Immediately there was a crying need for grist mills to process the grain. Prior to this time most of the flour had to be bought at Walla Walla along with other staple goods, or the grain taken there or to Lapwai for milling. Dr. Marcus Whitman is credited with building the first mill in southeastern Washington in 1840, and the Rev. Spalding's mill at Lapwai had been built just shortly before that time. Both mills were water-powered, as were all the early mills in Whitman county.

The milling process was simple enough. Using two round buhrs or stones twelve to sixteen inches thick and four feet in diameter to do the actual grinding the miller could adjust the space between the stones to whatever was needed. Through holes drilled in the stones, a rod was pushed up through both stones and fastened to one of them to hold it erect. A hopper above the top stone allowed grain to move down through the center hole to the grinding surface. A "collar" fitted around the outside edge of the buhrs kept the grain from flying in every direction while they revolved to do the grinding. One hole in the collar allowed the flour to be forced out as escaping air found the only draft. A spout at the opening held a sack fastened to it to catch the flour.

This issue of the Bunchgrass Historian features stories about the early flour mills together with pictures of many of them to answer the questions of where were they built? by whom? and what did they look like? □

Men Who Ran the Mills

Charles Napier Hinchliff was born in Michigan in 1857 and came to Colfax, Washington in 1878. He opened a small mercantile store in Spangle, Washington in 1879 operating it until 1881. At that time he and his brother, Edward, went into partnership and operated a general merchandise business. They also owned a sawmill and livery stable at the same time. From 1889 until 1901, C. N. Hinchliff had a grocery store in Spokane and a general merchandise store at Latah and leased a flour mill which he operated. In 1893 he moved to Elberton where he bought a flour mill and he owned and operated it until it closed. He also had the Jersey Creamery at Elberton which he later moved to Colfax. He was elected as a Whitman county commissioner in 1896 and served in that position until his resignation in May 1899.

William Hoare was a millwright and a miller by trade. He first worked in the Coolidge & McClaine flour mill at Silverton, Oregon, but went from there to the Smith and Briggs mill. He moved to Walla Walla in 1878 and late to Almota to look for land. He settled on railroad land along Deadman Creek in Garfield county. But in 1885 finding that the flour mill at Almota needed a miller he went there and operated it for a time, but moved that same year to Colfax where he bought a flouring mill which he operated for two years. Selling his interest in that, he bought an interest in the brickyard owned by James Bleeker and W. B. Spencer.

During the Chief Joseph Indian scare he was living in Almota and helped build a blockade around Spalding's Hotel, furnishing the sacks for this purpose.

FOOTNOTE: Excerpted from Spokane and the Inland Empire by N. W. Durham—Published 1912 by S. J. Clarke Publishing Company. □

The Colfax Flouring Mills

By June Crithfield

The idea for a flour mill for Colfax was first generated in 1871 by Anderson Cox, first postmaster, legislator, and surveyor. He and D. S. Bowman, agriculturist and founder of Pampa soon planned to build the mill, but Mr. Cox was not destined to fulfill those plans. He died in 1872, on a trip from Colfax to Waitsburg, south of Dusty.

In July of the next year, James Nosler, a recent hotel owner and sheriff, who was the newly appointed postmaster and a store clerk for J. C. Davenport, began trying to get support for a flour mill. After riding over the countryside for days soliciting and gaining the promise of 4,000 bushels of wheat for the endeavor, he began to negotiate with the Milton Mills of Touchet. But the deal failed in August and with that John C. Davenport took over. Homesteaders soon subscribed 5,000 bushels of wheat to the start of the flour mill.

Records are not exactly clear as to when Mr. Davenport actually erected the mill. One account states that the mill was built the following year but another article informs us that the machinery for the flour mill was delivered in October of 1873. In either case, Colfax mill was one of the two earliest mills in Whitman county.

The mill was located at the northeast end of town near site of present Brown's Thrift Store, and Mill Street is named for it. Millers for the large water-powered mill in 1877 were D. Wolford and James Cooper who operated the mill twenty four hours a day producing fifty barrels of flour in that time.

On January 5, 1878, J. A. and Mary Pickard signed an agreement with John C. Davenport which reads in part as follows:

Know all men by these presents that whereas to induce John C. Davenport to lay out and expend large sums of money to construct dams, dikes, ditches, flumes and a mill on Section 11, Township 16, North Range 43 East Willamette Meridian, to divert from Palouse River, Whitman County, Washington Territory across said Section of land to a mill or mills to be erected on said Section of land, I, J. A. Pickard did promise, agree and give license to the said Davenport to use all of my land necessary to or for said purposes without price or claim for damages and whereas in pursuance of said inducement promise, agreement and license and in faith of the perpetual continuance thereof to said Davenport, his heirs and assigns did construct said dams, dikes, ditches and flumes, race and mill by the expenditure of said money therefore for the consideration of one dollar and that above mentioned, I, the said J. A. Pickard and Mary G. Pickard, his wife, hereby convey, grant and confirm unto said John C. Davenport, his heirs and assigns the right to continue the use of said dams, dikes, race, ditches and flumes and enlarge and repair the same at the place where now constructed on the same legal subdivision of land and to divert and use all water for the motive power of said mill or mills, or mills hereafter constructed as may be useful or needed for such motive power.

Witness our hands and seals hereto set and affixed this 5th day of January A.D. 1878.

C. B. King
James B. Upton

J. A. Pickard (LS)
Mary G. Pickard (LS)

Apparently a new mill was built at this time by Mr. Davenport which was much larger than the first one.

The flood of 1879 did fifty dollars worth of damage to the Colfax Flour Mill and cost the life of one mill employee. High water in the south Palouse rushed through town carrying chunks of ice and rising almost on a level with the city streets. Bridges were washed out and the only means of communication was by yelling across the swollen stream. Attempting to get to the other side, William Pwoitz, an employee of the mill, tried to cross the river hand over hand on a rope strung from one side to the other. The rope stretched with his weight lowering him into the icy torrent and before he could make any attempt to go back, he was struck by an ice floe and swept away. His body was found by an Indian woman in an eddy by the flour mill several weeks later.

In 1882, Mr. Davenport sold his half interest in the Colfax Flouring Mill to E. W. Talbott. The other half of the business was owned by a Mr. Warner.

The fall of 1882 must have been a dry one because the Palouse river was so low the mill could run but four hours a day and flour was getting scarce. The river was considered the lowest it had ever been.

The Colfax Flour Mill was paying 90¢ for wheat and selling flour for six dollars a barrel retail, in 1883. Farmers were reluctant to sell wheat for under one dollar. Colfax was justly proud of her mill and the newspaper kept people informed of the condition and capacity of the mill frequently. In 1883, the mill underwent a complete overhaul and repair job. At that time the flour at the Colfax Flour Mill was being produced by the granulated system. To accomplish this the wheat first went through a reduction machine, then through a stone grinding and then into the smooth rolls and last through another stone grinding. The reduction machine, the rolls and a chopper were all new machines just installed. (The chopper was used to chop feed and could produce three tons of feed an hour. An interesting aspect of the flour milling business was the increasing demand for mill feed from the diarmen and livestock growers. This by-product of the mills was in large demand and eventually led to a number of chop mills being located throughout the county.) The granulated system was said by the manufacturer to equal the work of four or five runs of stone ordinarily used. It produced a superior brand of flour. The mill was running day and night and could produce 100 barrels of flour per day for a waiting market.

Later on in 1883, Mr. Warner and Mr. Talbott sold the Colfax Flouring Mill to a Mr. Glid, Mr. Green Holbrook and Mr. Wm. Hoare. They were to take possession on September first for the consideration of \$14,000. The new owners were producing sixty barrels of flour a day later that year and could not keep up with the demand.

The flour mill changed hands so frequently it is difficult to name all who had an interest in it from time to time. In 1884, Holbrook Brothers had owned a two-thirds interest which they sold to M. J. Sexton and W. J. Dwyer. Mr. Hoare kept his one-third interest and the name was to be William Hoare and Company. By 1886, Clarence Swift sold his one-third interest in the Colfax flour mill to F. M. Ellsworth. The mill was then the property of Ellsworth and Wm. Codd. In October of that year the Colfax flour mill and the one at Lincoln (a few miles northeast of Colfax) were both shut down. The Lincoln mill closed for lack of enough water to run it and the Colfax mill for repairs. Flour was so scarce because of this that stores had to buy their supply from Portland.

The wheat being raised at this time for milling was the Blue Stem variety. It usually sold for from 3 to 5 cents more per bushel than other varieties. In 1887, Edward Johnson, living near Almota, raised about 900 bushel of the Blue Stem variety and had 800 acres seeded to Blue Stem for the next season. The next year Charles Moys who lived near Almota raised 45 bushels of Blue Stem wheat to the acre.

The Bluestem variety of wheat was smut free and considered the very best for milling. A great deal of this kind of wheat was raised around Rosalia also.

Methods of milling had begun to change at some of the mills and credit may be given to an old German who worked in the Colfax flour mill. He invented one of the first corrugated steel roller mills which quickly replaced the stone buhr mills in the Inland Empire. He later sold his patent rights to Minneapolis concerns for a price reported to be high enough to allow him to retire. Eventually the steel rollers were installed by all the big mills in Minneapolis.



The last Colfax Flour Mill building. Picture taken 1955 courtesy Colfax Gazette.

W. H. Mastin, owner of the Grand Central Hotel, announced in 1891 that he would build a new steam roller process flouring mill which would be in operation by March of the following year. The main building of the new mill was to be 30 feet by 60 feet with a basement and one floor above the main floor. Machinery for the mill was purchased from the Wilford Company of Minneapolis. The mill would be capable of producing twenty-five barrels of flour and forty tons of feed per day. It would also be equipped to produce the best corn meal, rye flour etc. Upon completion by the large crew of workmen, the mill would employ eight men to run it. Shortly after this announcement was made, came the news another steam roller process mill would be built. The location of this mill or its backers was not mentioned.

The harvest was a bumper one if ever there was one. Storage facilities were scarce and all warehouses were overflowing with sacked grain piled everywhere

outside. Prices, however, were not good and by July of 1893 wheat prices in Chicago were down to the lowest ever. Banks were failing and foreclosures were a common thing. The endless rain during the harvest season that year spelled disaster for many farmers and hard times hit everyone. Even though prices were good for most other farm produce wheat prices were only a little better in 1894.

By 1897 the country was beginning to come out of the Depression of '93. The Colfax flour mills were shipping flour to foreign countries. The flouring mills ran day and night. Six carloads of flour were shipped to China in one week.

The harvest of 1897 was another bumper one and prices were good but because of the several years of depression, machinery had not been kept up or any new equipment purchased and farmers were hard put to handle the harvest. Contacts were made to bring in some equipment from outside the state to help with the harvest.

According to **The Coast** magazine published in 1907, the Colfax Milling Co., owned then by C. H. & H. H. Warner, had the capacity of 175 barrels of flour a day, and they had shipped 80,000 bags of flour out of Whitman county the year before.

The pioneer Colfax Flour Mill building burned in 1920 when a belt running from the main pulleys at the top of the structure built up friction and caught fire. The loss to the milling company ran close to \$220,000 which included the value of the wheat and flour plus the building and machinery. This mill had been built in 1878 and had first been water-powered.

The Colfax Flour Mill burned for the second time in 1957. Thousands of gallons of water were poured onto the bins of feed that were burning. The intense heat of the fire caused firemen to abandon fire hoses valued at close to \$1,000 when the outside covering burned off the hoses while the water was being sprayed on the burning building. This fire spelled the end of a business started over eighty years before. □

Leading Flour Mills of Whitman County in 1907

(excerpted from **The Coast** magazine)

December 1907

Built

- 1905—Electric Flour Mill, J. M. Risley, prop., capacity 125 bbls. Palouse.
- 1875—Palouse Flouring Mill, N. B. Hunsperger, mngr., capacity 90 bbls. Palouse
(Built by Wm. P. Breeding)
- 1878—Colfax Milling Co., C. H. and H. H. Warner, proprs., capacity 175 bbls.
(Built by John G. Davenport) He built an earlier mill in 1874.
- 1903—Tekoa Mill & Grain Co., L. J. Lauritzen mngr., capacity 125 bbls.
Pullman Milling Co., Gustafson Bros., mngrs., capacity 50 bbls.
- 1889—Oakesdale Flouring Mill, J. C. Barron, propr., capacity 100 bbls. daily.
Garfield Roller Mills, F. G. Leonard, propr., capacity 75 bbls.
- 1903—Winona Milling Co., John T. Billups, mngr., capacity 100 bbls.
- 1884—Farmington Roller Mills, H. G. Taylor, propr., capacity 50 bbls.
(Farmington mill built by Hicks and McGifford)
Elberton Roller Mills, C. N. Hinchcliff, propr., capacity 100 bbls.
(had been called the Elberton Flour Mills in earlier years.)
- 1883—Colton Flour Mills, recently repaired and rebuilt, capacity 50 bbls.
(Built by John B. Standley)

Flour Mills at Elberton, Winona and LaCrosse

By Mary Pickard Moody

Like some older towns and businesses, the modern day of transportation closed the small places and left some of the towns deserted. Such was the fate of Elberton and Winona.

The Elberton Flour Mill was first built up the Palouse river across from the Holmes sawmill. It was owned by C. N. Hinchcliff. Ed Chase had another grist mill a few miles above it near a bridge on the Palouse City-Colfax road. The Hinchcliff mill was moved to Elberton in about 1886 and owned by Hinch-



—Photo Courtesy: Paul Bockmier
Early Elberton Flour Mill

cliff brothers, C. N. and Jim. It was first operated by Noah P. Hunsperger. Millers were Allen C. Parker, Evans Kelly, David Pickard, Logen Gurnsey and a man named Wattle.

A few years later they moved the mill down by the elevator so it would be near the railroad. Moving the business was a tremendous task in that a mill race and ditch had to be excavated and constructed to the new location. Plagued with water problems the mill was closed in 1908. The dam had washed out one year and the continued shortage of water in the river when the cutting of timber destroyed the watershed in Idaho were prime factors involved. It was operated a few years using electric power then closed.

Mr. Kelly moved to Winona and was the miller there for the Winona Flour Mill Co. One helper was George Bafus, who became his son-in-law. The mill burned in 1918 but was closed before that time because there was not enough water to continue operating.

The LaCrosse Flour Mill Co. was started in 1920 by Nelson Grewell and Ed Knowlton. It was run by a Fairbanks-Morse engine which was trucked to La-Crosse from the Snake river. The millers were Ole Moen and Ed Caldwell. Mr.

FOOTNOTE: Mrs. Moody lives in Spokane and is an ardent history researcher. The text and pictures on Page 8 were kindly presented by her.



The Elberton Flour Mill building at new location.

Caldwell was badly injured in an accident with the machinery in the mill and had to leave.

There were no bakeries in the early 1900's and each household baked their own bread and pastries. The first bakery bread I can remember was in 1910 when my mother took a vacation and I baked my first bread. It was such a failure my father said he would bring home some bakery bread shipped in from Spokane. A town bakery was started in LaCrosse in 1911 by William Pickett.

Most of the old flour mills were turned into elevators to store wheat. □



The LaCrosse Flour Mill building

Palouse Flour Mill

Wm. P. Breeding built and began operating the first grist mill at Palouse in 1874-5. He apparently stayed in this business for many years. The mill was built on the south side of the river below the hill which sprouted the first frame buildings of a town, that was to be Palouse City. In 1880, the decision was made to move the town to its present location which had once been a marshy sand bar. The flooding Palouse river kept the main street of the town a deep mire for weeks in the spring. Sidewalks were built four and five feet off the ground to keep pedestrians out of the mud.

Breeding is given credit for the dam built in the river at the upper end of town about the time he built the first grist mill. The grist mill was powered by the water of the Palouse river and stone buhrs were used to grind the wheat into flour for the settlers. Wheat that was not needed for flour was hauled from Palouse to Almota, a goodly distance in the days of wagons and wagon roads. At Almota it was shipped to outside markets by steamer.

The Palouse City Flouring Mill became the property of M. Cockerline and Sons of Aumsville, Oregon, after an administrator's sale on May 7, 1883. The property sold at the time for \$5,900. Not considered a promising business venture at the time, no one locally bid on the mill.

In 1892 the Breeding mill was being operated by J. H. Wilsey and the miller's name was Smith. Just prior to the panic of 1893, Charley H. Towner placed rollers in the mill. During the panic, the mill went into receivership as did so many of the businesses of the day and toward the end of the period, J. C. Schumaker became manager and owner of the mill.

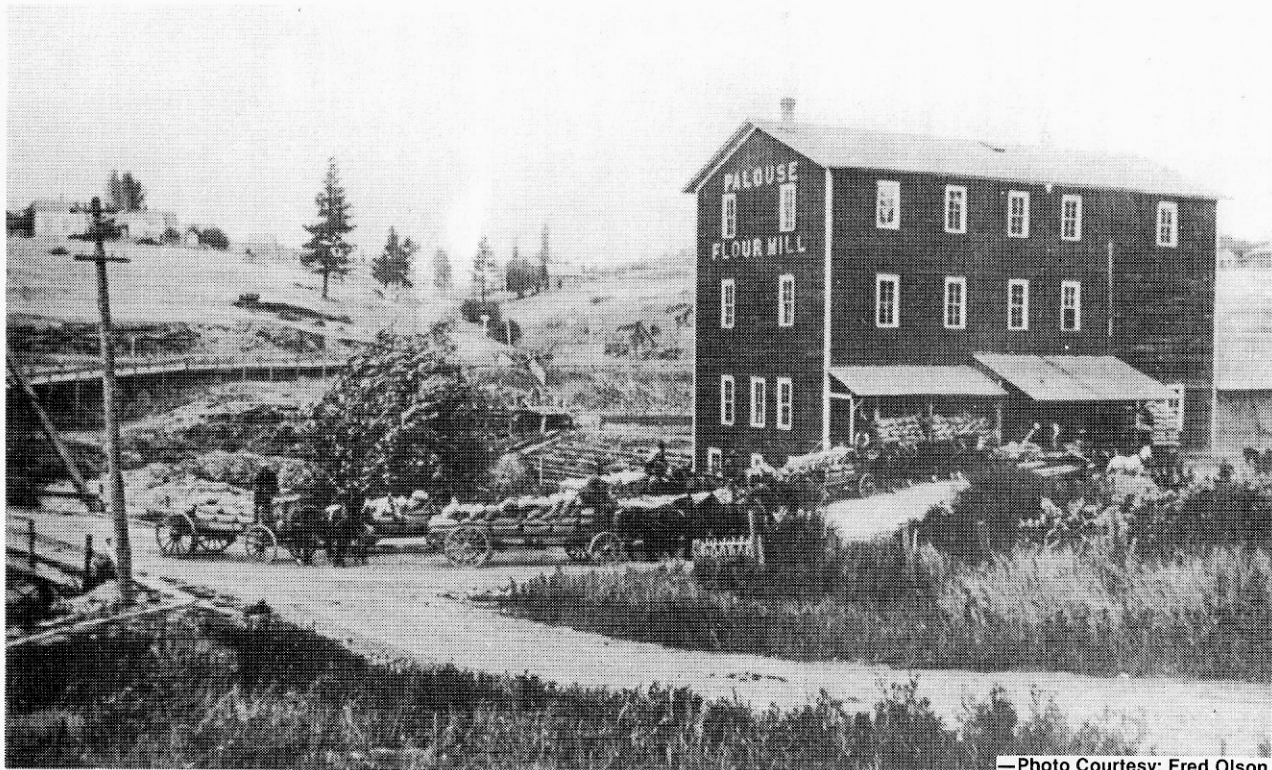
The other flouring mill which was located on the railroad near the depot, was operated by William Gray and two of his sons, in 1892.

After the panic of 1893 the country was some four years dragging itself out of the depression but the harvest of 1897 saw wheat prices turn upward. It was time to celebrate the return of better times. Someone conceived the idea of a carnival in which every business in town would present a "float" or some other form of advertising which would not be too costly. Since the city boasted two flouring mills why not use flour sacks to doll up some of the local pretties. The Republic bought forty yards of fine muslin and with a can of blue ink printed that week's issue of the paper on the muslin to be made into a gown for one of the girl's. The flouring mills made good use of the flouring sacks advertising the names of the mills and the operators of same and crying the virtues of their brand of flour. H. M. Boone, early-day grocery man, used the labels from his stock of goods for an idea to advertise his wares.

According to the July 11, 1902 **Palouse Republic** the Palouse Flour Mill changed hands again and the new owners were Voltz and Metcalf of Kalispell, Montana, who purchased it from J. C. Schumaker. The report stated, "extensive improvements in the machinery and the quality of the products, would be made.

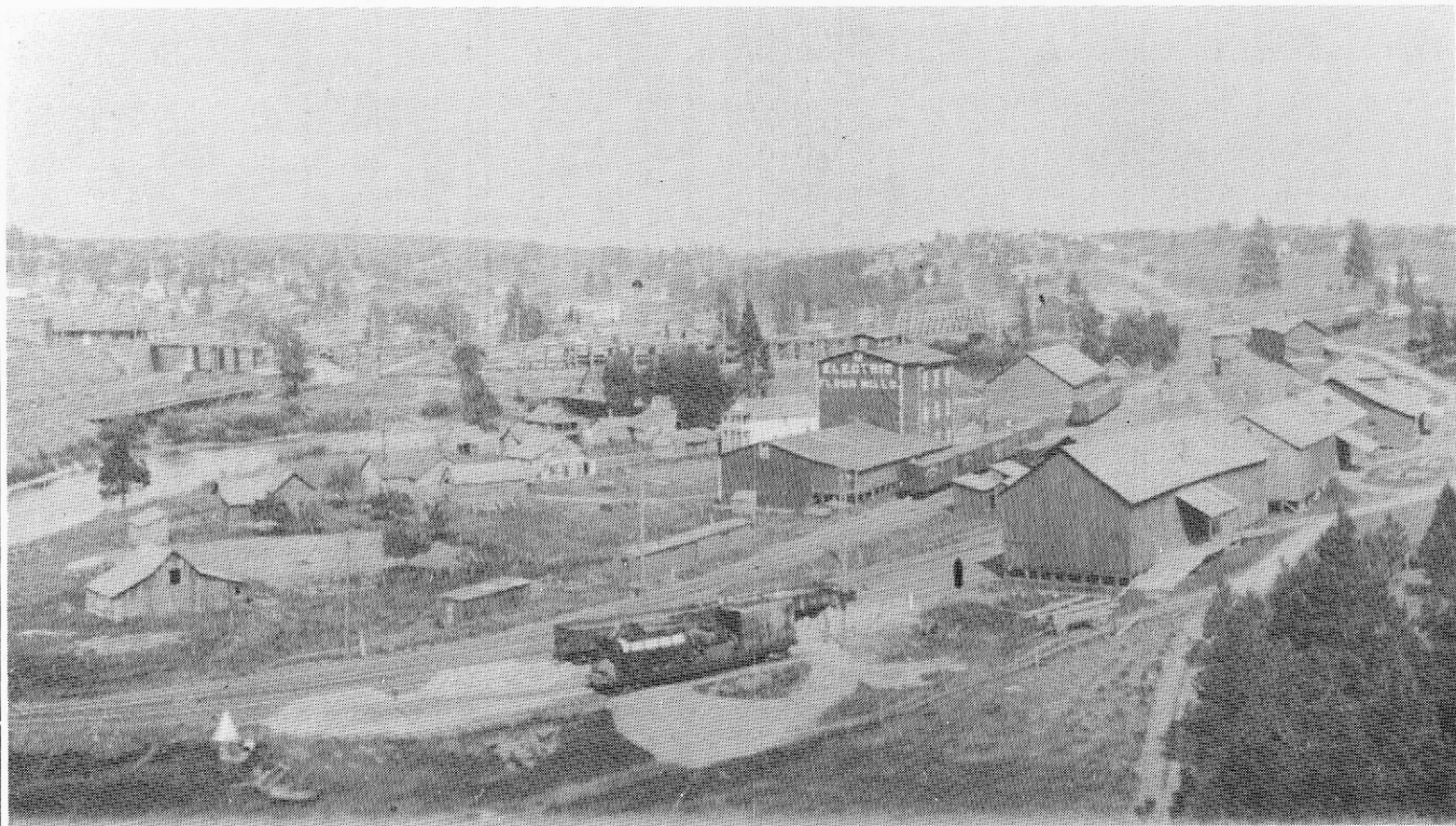
The Palouse Flour Mill closed in 1924. □

C. A. Rands, who for the past three years has occupied the position of miller in the Palouse Roller Mills, has resigned his position and will go to work in the Gray & Gray mills at Oakesdale. **Palouse Republic**, May 9, 1902.



—Photo Courtesy: Fred Olson

Farmers line up their wagons to unload wheat at the Palouse Flour Mill.



The Palouse Electric Flour Mill owned by John Risley in 1905. Picture taken June 14, 1916 by Paul Bockmier.

PALOUSE FLOUR MILL.

To the Wheat Raising Public
of Palouse and Vicinity:

Beginning on August 1, and until further notice, we will
give in exchange

33 POUNDS OF OUR BEST FLOUR

sacked for each bushel of No. 1 milling wheat, sacked. We
will grind wheat and barley for feed at \$1.25 per ton.

VOLTZ & METCALF.

A. E. WILLARD, President.

H. D. KAY, Vice-Pres.

L. J. LAURITZEN, Manager.

The **Tekoa Mill & Grain Co.**

Flour

All Kinds of Mill Feed, Oats and Wheat
Coal and Wood Yard in Connection

TEKOA, WASHINGTON.

*The Winona
Flour Milling Co.*

MANUFACTURES

PERFECT STOCK FLOUR

*Made of Choicest
Blue Stem Wheat*

WINONA - - - WASHINGTON

...USE...

Risley's Best

The Best Flour in the State



ELECTRIC FLOUR MILLS

PALOUSE

WASHINGTON

We are indebted to Ruth Carson of Johnson, Wash., for loaning us her
copy of **The Coast** magazine, Pub. Dec., 1907, Seattle, Wash.

H. H. WARNER

C. H. WARNER

Colfax Milling Company



The Largest Mill in Whitman County



MANUFACTURERS OF
THE ROYAL ROSE FLOUR

A Patent Flour
Made from

CHOICE BLUE STEM WHEAT

COLFAX

WASHINGTON



ALBION CHOP MILL

Flour and Feed Exchange

C. O. MATSON, Proprietor.

Bran, Shorts and Flour for Sale

ALBION

WASHINGTON

ELBERTON FLOURING MILLS

C. N. HINCHCLIFF, Prop.

MANUFACTURERS

"BLUE STEM BLEND"

AND

"LINCOLN PATENT"

ELBERTON

WASHINGTON

**GRAY
&
GRAY**

Will buy your wheat or give you
in exchange the best of Flour,
at rates equal to any. They
keep Bran, Shorts and Chop-
ped Feed.

The J. C. Barron Flour Mills

By Nickolas J. Manring

The rough, sawed timber framed J. C. Barron Flour Mill stands three-and-one-half stories in height in the northern portion of the small farming community of Oakesdale. The entire flour mill building is a composite of four semi-detached structures. They are: the flour mill proper (1890), former steam generating plant (1890), crib elevator (1898) and a grain and flour warehouse (circa 1890). The rectangular-shaped adjuncts to the milling operation were erected as wings to the mill proper and, as such, yield an irregular-shaped plan to the entirety.

The mill proper rests on a foundation of stretcher bond brick which was manufactured in Oakesdale. The crib elevator, originally on wood piers, is now supported by a concrete foundation laid by J. C. Barron soon after his purchase of the property. The warehouse and the steam plant rest on wooden sills. Exterior siding is seven-and-one-half inches rustic shiplap. Flooring for the mill proper is fir. The original cedar shingles of the roof have been replaced with both composition shingles in part and by galvanized steel in part. The original paint, red with white trim, has been covered with white paint, now deteriorating.

To the immediate west of the mill run spur tracks of the former Northern Pacific Railroad; to the immediate north and east run spur tracks of the former Spokane and Inland Railroad.

The crib elevator extends 50 feet from the east face of the mill proper and is 40 feet in width. At the west end of the building on the ground floor is a nine feet wide driveway. A pit beneath the driveway and a floor designed for dumping grain allow for unloading grain from farm wagons. The pit drains into a belt-and-cup elevator which transports the wheat to the top of the building for distribution to the eight flat-bottom bins, three small hopper-bottom bins and the two grain cleaners. The capacity of each flat-bottom bin is 2,500 bushels. Heavy wooden ramps extend 20 feet from the exterior walls to the ground north and south of the interior driveway. Two exterior wooden sliding doors, running the full height of the first story, provide access to the driveway from the exterior on the south. On the north is a similar pair of doors, one sliding and one hinged to the east facade of the mill proper.

Although portions of the first floor level of the elevator have been remodeled since 1898, the original eight by twelve inch support posts are still in place, as are many of the original wooden spouts which provide for gravity drainage from the overhead bins. The original four flat-bottom bins have been divided to form the current eight bins. A smaller, exterior sliding door is centrally located on the east face, providing access to a twelve by twenty-three feet exterior scale. A small, single story, irregular-shaped, gable roofed head house projects centrally above the roof at the west end of the elevator. The enclosure contains the upper portions of the belt-and-cup conveyor. Three windows are located as needed.

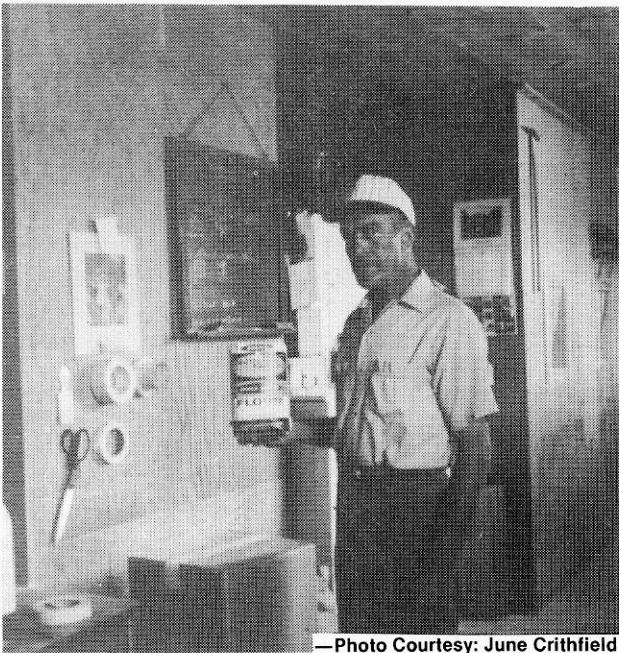
The single story grain warehouse at the north of the mill proper measures 65 by 36 feet. The framing members are 36 feet long beams joined with mortise, tenon and wooden pegs. A gable roof is covered with worn composition shingles. The original vertical board and batten siding is covered on the north and west facades with galvanized steel. A large, recessed, rectangular wooden exterior sliding door and two, double hung windows are centrally located facing north. A smaller, but similar door may be found at the west end of the warehouse.

FOOTNOTE: This article was prepared in support of the nomination of the J. C. Barron Flour Mill to the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Manring is now a law student at the University of Tennessee.



—Photo Courtesy: June Crithfield

The J. C. Barron Flour Mill as it stands today.



—Photo Courtesy: June Crithfield

Joe Barron holds package of his Nutri-Grain Flour milled in the small mill adjacent to his home.

These doors were placed to facilitate loading rail cars and wagons with the finished flour, which was stored in cloth sacks in the building. Access from the flour mill proper is provided by a large doorway at the east end of the south facade of the warehouse. Because of the difference in floor height, a rampway provides a continuous surface between the two parts of the flour mill building.

The one-and-one-half story steam plant is 40 feet wide and extends 50 feet to the south of the mill proper. Cornice boxed eaves and verges project two feet. The roof is of medium gable pitch. A number and variety of old windows and doors appear around the wing. Direct access to the mill proper from the steam plant, used since 1907 as an apartment, is via a doorway between the ground floor of the steam plant and the basement of the mill. Other openings between the two structures once accommodated the long, wide drive belt, but have since been sealed.

The flour mill itself measures 40 by 68 feet. Double hung, four pane windows are spaced regularly along the north, west and south facades. Basement windows are 14 inches above the ground and are slightly smaller than the otherwise similar upper windows. Lugsills and entablature characterize the exterior window moldings.

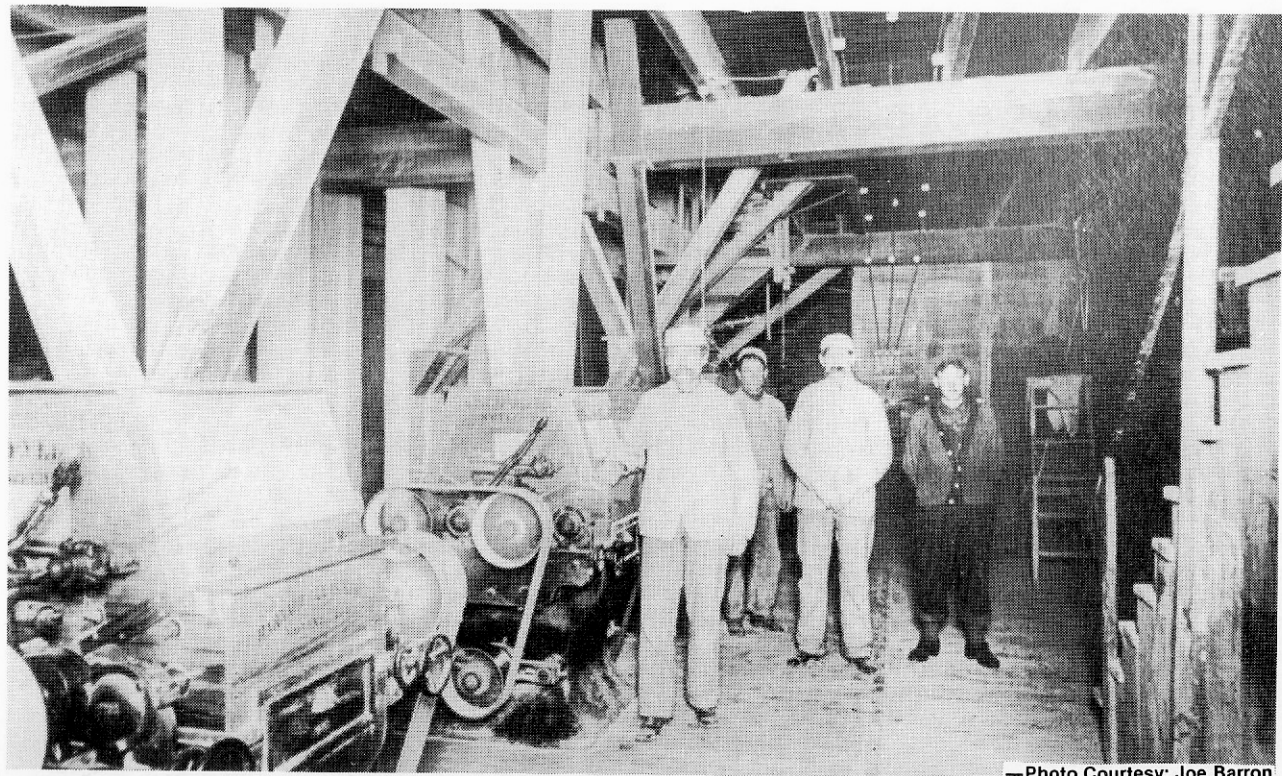
A long, round, metal spout projects downward from the upper north facade and was used to load grain into Spokane and Inland Railroad cars.

A large, double, vertical plain wooden door is centrally located in the west facade on each of the top three floors. A large beam extends several feet beyond the structure above the center of the uppermost door. By means of a pulley secured to the west end of the beam, heavy machinery can be brought into or removed from the building.

Two straight stairways—one leading to the basement and one leading to the second floor, are located along the south facade on the first floor. A number of nine by nine inch posts are spaced regularly on the floor and support the twelve by twelve inch, 40 feet long ceiling joists. Jointing is mortise and tenon with wooden pegging. A small electrical control room, an interior alteration, is found in the southwest corner. Near the southeast corner is the flour mill office. A twenty-one by seven-and-one-half feet room, it contains four windows of varying sizes. A stretcher bond brick chimney terminates below the ceiling on the east wall. The floor is covered with linoleum and the original furniture is in place.

Machinery on the first floor includes four sacking machines, two for flour and two for livestock feeds; a small stone buhr mill (dated 1871); four double stands of roller mills; a feed governing device for the first break roll; a feed mixer and a Carter disc cleaning machine. The roller mills contain seven by twenty inch cylindrical rollers and were among the first to employ ball bearings, circa 1909. In addition, one roller mill for livestock feeds is located at the east end and is powered by a smaller motor. Of these machines only the stone buhr is still in use. Originally for the manufacture of graham flour, the device is now occasionally employed for milling corn. A wooden trunk exhaust system and numerous wooden spouts connecting machines on the upper and lower floors are also located on the first floor.

Twelve feet above the first floor is the second floor. The northwest corner functioned as a workshop. Various tools and benches remain in place. The northeast corner contains the straight stairway to the third floor. Four small, hopper-bottom wooden bins are located near the center of the building, directly above the flour roller mills. Machinery includes reel sifters; a purifier, used to separate germ from the other parts of the wheat grain and a cyclone dust collector. The dust collector stretches to the ceiling, contains a number of cloth filters and dates from before the mill was purchased by J. C. Barron. Other small



—Photo Courtesy; Joe Barron

Interior of the J. C. Barron Flour Mill

bins, a water storage tank and an exhaust fan may be found on this level. The drive shaft for the second floor machinery is near the ceiling, suspended by hangers. On the second floor of the elevator wing is a seed treating machine.

The third floor contains a flour bleaching device; wheat scourer; bran duster; tubular dust collector; two flour agitators and a large plan sifter. Many parts of the sifter contain small, porcelain knobs. Two cleaners—one a cylinder type and one a sieve type, are located in the elevator wing. Access to the tops of the elevator bins as well as the narrow stairs to the head house are located on the third floor.

Additional machinery found on the basement level includes a small hammer mill, added during the 1930's; livestock feed scalper; wheat washer-dryer; 15 horsepower motor; water pump for the wheat washing process and a number of wooden grain augers.

The predominant power for the milling operation came from a 30 horsepower electric motor in the basement. The motor turned a long, ten inch wide, double ply drive belt. The main belt turned a long drive shaft which powered, via leather belts, the machines located on the floor. Additional belts served to transfer power to the long, east-west oriented drive shafts on each of the upper floors.

The various machines and bins of the flour mill are connected by a number of square-shaped, clear-grained, beaded fir gravity chutes, manifesting a high degree of craftsmanship. The spouts are lined with metal and most have been finished with shellac.

Alterations since the 1890's have been few. Among the more significant are: interior changes in the steam plant wing; addition of an electrical control room in the mill proper; reroofing and repainting; addition of an east-facing, exterior scale; dividing the original four elevator wing bins; partial ground floor remodeling of the elevator wing and residing of the north and west facades of the warehouse.

The town of Oakesdale was established in the mid-1880's by James McCoy and was for several years little more than a small farming village. Among the first significant commercial enterprises was the flour mill built by J. G. Porter during the late summer and autumn of 1890. With the completion of a Northern Pacific Railroad spur track to the mill building in early December, the mill was running and flour was being produced on contract to local farmers and merchants.

When virtually every other frame commercial building in Oakesdale was razed in the fire of July 5, 1892, the flour mill miraculously escaped unscratched. By the mid-1890's the Oakesdale Milling Company, then the name, had gained a reputation for producing one of the Pacific Northwest's finest flours. In December of 1895 with J. A. Henry as the miller, the operation was running 24 hours per day. Wheat to be ground into flour was brought in from as far away as Genesee, Idaho. Although a prospering mill, the output was kept small, with a daily capacity of 80 barrels (at 196 pounds per barrel).

To store grain for flour production a crib elevator was appended to the east face of the mill in 1898. The capacity of the four wooden bins was 20,000 bushels of wheat.

Throughout the late 1890's, however, and until 1907, the mill was characterized by financial problems. As well as frequent changes of ownership—including a sheriff's sale of the mill in 1897 and the temporary closing of the mill early in 1898, a number of liens and mortgages were made against the pro-



—Photo Courtesy: Joe Barron

J. C. Barron successfully ran the Oakesdale flour mill for over 30 years, contributing significantly to the economic stability of the town. During the 1920's the enterprise was expanded to include the coal business. Several coal sheds, dating from this period, stand east of the mill and are in the process of being permanently dismantled.

perty. This trend ended with the February 1907 sale of the mill to Joseph C. Barron.

Just prior to 1907 the power supply was changed from the original steam to electricity. At the time of the purchase of the flour mill by J. C. Barron, the steam plant wing of the building was altered to accomodate residential use, which has continued until 1974. For the past three years the steam plant has been vacant.

Various pieces of milling equipment were added or updated throughout the 1890's and the early 1900's, leaving the mill with a composite of variously manufactured machines in addition to the basic roller mills. All of these pieces remain in excellent condition.

Joseph C. Barron (1866-1955) was a second generation miller, his father having operated a water-driven grist mill in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. Although a student of the ministry, J. C. Barron fell back upon milling during the late 1880's and operated flouring operations in Crawfordsville, Indiana and in Asotin, Washington before coming to Oakesdale.

One of the last operating flour mills in Whitman County, the J. C. Barron Flour Mill went out of business in 1939, unable to successfully compete with larger, inter-state mills. At the time of World War II the grain storage and cleaning portions of the mill building were once again employed. This use continued for several years after the end of the war.

The mill building, the last such structure extant in Whitman County, is currently owned by Joseph Barron, a son of J. C. Barron. Mr. Barron operates a small-scale milling business elsewhere in Oakesdale, but is called upon occasionally to utilize several of the smaller machines in the old mill. The J. C. Barron Flour Mill stands essentially as it appeared while in operation; no machinery or other milling accessories have been removed or altered. The mill office, in fact, remains intact with the original desk, chairs and safe.

The J. C. Barron Flour Mill, with both an unaltered late-Nineteenth-Century exterior and interior, stands as a rare glimpse of a local industry typical of those which played a significant role in the economic history of eastern Washington. The building is a vivid reminder of an era of small, thriving flour mills, which were once located throughout Washington's Inland Empire. □

Barron's Mill Inventory July 5, 1926

180 Bbls. Flour (Blend) @ \$6.70	\$1206.00
46 Bbls. Flour (Hard) @ \$6.90	317.00
41 Bbls. Flour (HM) @ \$6.00	246.00
45 Bbls. Flour (Blend O) 6.00	270.00
23 Bbls. (Jutes) gunny sk. 6.00	138.00
12 Tons B & S	285.00
83 Sks. Wheat	205.00
1700 R. Oats	25.00
1700 Corn Meal	40.00
500 C. Corn	12.00
26 Tons Coal	260.00
25 Cords Wood	225.00
200 Fence Posts	30.00
1700 Shingles	60.00
15 Sks. Egg Mash	35.00
10 Sks. Gr. Oat Groats	26.00
385 Bush. Wheat	450.00
36 # Twine	27.00
1000 Flour Sacks	85.00
1200 Grain Sacks	120.00
Bank	1377.00
Cash	145.00
Estimated Good Accts	4500.00

Colton, N. T. Sept: 11th 1888.

11/1	Fuel a/c	29.80		67.50
11/5	To J. R. Marshall	29.80	29.80	
	Can 2021 shipped to St. Louis			
	8 cords of Jesse Davis			

11/19	Jesse Davis	32.00		
11/3	To Fuel a/c	32.00	32.00	
	bed him 9 cords wood			

11/12	D. G. Ferguson			
	By 211 Bullop sacks	0.05	0.05	10.50

Sept: 12th 1888.

11/17	Jesse Davis			
	By 60 ^{1/2} Bush: Wheat	60	60	36.19

11/19	Scott Palmer			
	By 56 ^{3/4} Bus: Wheat	46	46	25.98
	Bal: due on total sale of 107 ^{3/4} Bush wheat			

11/23	M. Hornberg	6.62		
11/24	To Fuel a/c	6.62	6.62	
	amount of in credits of 18 th and 24 th July 88			

Sept: 13th 1888

paid	A. D. Keith			00.00
	By			

From COLTON FLOUR MILL RECORDS
 Courtesy of Elsie Nichols of Montana,
 a grand daughter of John B. Standley.

14027

The Colton Flour Mill

During the winter of 1882-83 the importance of building of flouring mill at this place, was agitated and culminated in the citizens of the town and vicinity raising a bonus of \$2500 for J. B. Standley, as an inducement for him to build a mill, and on the following summer he erected the mill.—**Colton Eagle**, April 19, 1888.

The above news item was the beginning of the milling business in Colton which continued until April 1937 when the last flour was milled there.

The old mill stones (buhrs) from the Colton Flour Mill are at the Twin Willows Museum at Uniontown. They were made in France in 1867 and shipped around the horn and up the Snake river to Wawawai in 1883. The mill stones were hauled from the river landing to Colton by Levi Wiggins of Colton with a team and wagon. Because there were four stones instead of the two he was expecting, he had to make two trips to get the heavy load out over the old road.



—Photo Courtesy: Leo Druffel

Old Colton Flour Mill

It is not known who owned the mill after Standley sold it but some time after the turn of the century Casper Hamp and George Baumgartner bought it. Later Mr. Hamp bought Baumgartner out and was sole owner. A Mr. Frank Fite worked in the mill at one time. A new mill was built and the old mill stones were used as corner stones for the new mill.

Mr. Hamp told the Colton postmaster, Norm Kramer, that during the depression he never locked up any of the mill and never lost anything except a half sack of feed someone took for his saddle horse and he knew who that was.

The Colton Mill was first run by steam, then electricity and finally by diesel. After flour milling was no longer done at the mill the owner continued to do custom feed chopping until about 1968 when the property was bought by the McGregor Fertilizer Co., and the old building was razed. It was owned at that time by Albert Grams.□



Stone buhrs used in Colton Flour Mill

Farmington Flour Mill

A flour mill was erected in 1884 at Farmington by Hicks and McGifford. The mill had a capacity of 75 barrels a day and was operated by H. G. Taylor in 1907. Located at the north end of First Street the mill was a steam operated one. The mill burned about 1919.

Pine City Flour Mill

For picture of the Pine City Flour Mill and other information see Vol. 4, No. 3, of Bunchgrass Historian.

Dance in Flour Mill

“I danced all night in the mill on Christmas night in 1874,” said S. J. Boone. “I was living at Shawnee near Albion and rode horseback to Palouse to attend the dance. We had a bully time too. The mill had just been completed and the dance was given in celebration of its completion.”

However an account published in Palouse News published May 5, 1893 proves Mr. Boone’s memory to be slightly in error for the mill was built in 1875 making 49 years since he cut the pigeon’s wing there.

The first mill on the present site was built in 1875 by W. P. Breeding. Its capacity was 30 bushels. The property afterwards passed into the hands of F. M. Smith. It was burned in August of 1890 and the present building erected in 1891. It has a capacity of 50 barrels a day. The flour is know as the Northern Light and the millers are Harry Wolf and Harry Holway.

Excerpted from **The Palouse Republic**, Feb. 8, 1924.

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The Almota Flour Mill

Sometime in the early 1880's the booming port of Whitman county at Almota on the Snake river was further developed by the construction of a water-powered grist mill on Big Almota Creek. The mill was built by one of the earliest settlers of the community, L. M. Ringer, and associates. The associates being Adams Bros. & Alex Carter.

The mill changed hands several times being owned by H. H. Hungate at one time. (See Vol. V, No. Bunchgrass Historian) It later was owned by Henry Hart Spalding, son of the Presbyterian Missionary.

Adams Bros. were a Walla Walla based concern which dealt in a variety of merchandise. Alex Carter also owned such a business. These men were apparently instrumental with L. M. Ringer in developing the flour mill and warehouse at Almota.

An item in the **Washington Democrat** for December, 1881 states: "The O. R. & N. Co. have just loaded a barge with 100 tons of wheat here for Texas Ferry and will continue to take wheat from here to points below on barges, leaving them here while the steamer goes above and taking them on her return. The barges are very large, 100 Tons sinking the one just loaded but 10 inches."

"The O. R. & N Co. has made substantial improvements at Almota. The double dock is completed except covering which will be done in the spring. A bulkhead has been built above the warehouse for its protection, and the office enlarged, and as soon as grain is out of the warehouse, extensive repairs will be made to it. A large force pump has been ordered up from below for use in case of fire. There are now about 1500 tons of grain and several hundred barrels of flour in the company warehouse."

A side-line business of the grist mills and warehouses is cited in the same paper for the same date with this note, "The mill company at Almota have killed about 100 head of hogs for bacon." The sweepings were used to fatten out hogs.

During the time Spalding owned the mill, a German immigrant, A. C. Spengler, who was a miller from Sheldon, Iowa, came to operate the Almota flour mill for a short time, but soon moved to the Albion flour mill to practice his trade. Later he moved again, this time to Lewiston, Idaho, where he opened a bakery business which supplied much of the surrounding territory with a variety of goods baked there. The bakery was at the present site of the Holsum Bakery Co. in Lewiston.

A cloudburst in 1894 did irreparable damage to the mill and the giant buhrs were left in the building with the rusting machinery until after World War II when they were taken to California by a collector. The stones had been made in the east and shipped around the Horn and then brought to the Almota site by steamboat. □