

# Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society  
Colfax, Washington

Volume 23  
Number 1  
1996



- Palace Hotel
- Paradise Creek
- Wilcox

# Whitman County Historical Society

---

The *Bunchgrass Historian* is published by the Whitman County Historical Society. Its purpose is to further interest in the rich past of Whitman County.

## OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President ..... John Simpson  
Vice-President ..... Robert Hadlow  
Secretary ..... Kathie Meyer  
Treasurer ..... Margo Balzarini

## PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

Editor ..... Lawrence Stark  
Subscriptions ..... Jill Whelchel  
Circulation Editor ..... Margo Balzarini

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	Contribution Range
Basic Membership .....	\$10.00-\$15.00
Contribution or Family Membership .....	\$15.00-\$25.00
Sustaining Membership .....	\$25.00-\$50.00
Sponsor .....	\$50.00-\$100.00
Patron .....	\$100.00 and up
Life Membership .....	\$500.00
Business Membership .....	\$25.00 or more

Membership in the Whitman County Historical Society is tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

## SOCIETY ADDRESSES

**Society Business:**  
Whitman County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 67  
Colfax, WA. 99111

**Memberships and Subscriptions**  
Jill Whelchel  
SE 305 Derby St.  
Pullman, WA 99163

**Articles for Publication:**  
Lawrence R. Stark, Editor  
*The Bunchgrass Historian*  
P.O. Box 2371 C.S.  
Pullman, WA. 99163

**Current and Back Issues:**  
(Send \$2.50 per issue)  
Whitman County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 67  
Colfax, WA. 99111





Whitman County Historical Society  
Colfax, Washington

Volume 23  
Number 1  
1996

## CONTENTS

Mark True's Palace Hotel by Robert King .....	4
Paradise Creek, Where Are You? by Betty Graham Lee .....	13
The History of the Wilcox Community (by Miriam Kammerzell, 1957) .....	20

## AUTHORS

Robert E. King is a native of Pullman who now lives in Alaska. He has interests in photographic history and the history of his home town. This is the third article he has provided for Bunchgrass Historian.

Betty Graham Lee spent her youth in the farm along Paradise Creek that she describes in her article. She lived and worked in the Pullman area for many years and now lives in Arizona.

The article on the community of Wilcox is from the files of the Whitman County Historical Society, donated to the Society many years ago. It was written by Miriam Kammerzell, a resident of the Wilcox area, in the 1950s. The article presented here is an extract; the entire paper is available for reading at the Archives and Library maintained by the society.

## COVER

Palace Hotel, about 1906. From a lithographic postcard in the possession of Ivan Shirrod.



# Mark True's Palace Hotel

by  
Robert E. King

## Introduction:

The first hotel in Pullman, Washington was built by Mark C. True in 1882. It was the "Palace Hotel", which served the community until early 1909. This article traces its history and the man who built it.

## Mark True and the establishment of Pullman's 1st hotel:

Mark C. True was born June 6, 1847 near South Bend, Indiana. In 1853, at the age of 6, True, with his family, crossed the Plains by wagon, settling on a ranch near Napa, California.<sup>1</sup> Within a few years, his father entered the hotel trade, and by the 1880's was operating the "Suscol House" at Napa. Mark grew up working at the hotel, and subsequently would pursue that line of work in later years.

True married at Napa on June 10, 1874, to Joanna Elizabeth McGregor, a native of Prince Edward Island, Canada.<sup>2</sup> Over the next six years, three sons were born to them in California: Edwin E., Harry E., and Fred C. True.

In 1880, accompanied by his wife and young sons, Mark True traveled by steamship from San Francisco to Portland. From there, they went by boat and wagon to Colfax, Washington Territory, arriving on October 19th of that year. Subsequently, they settled in Moscow, Idaho Territory, where True was involved in both the hotel and butcher business. Reportedly, he leased and operated the "Barton House" hotel in Moscow for a time.

In 1882, with prospects of a railroad coming to Pullman, True gambled that the tiny community of 20 residents would soon need a hotel. Consequently, with encouragement from Pullman pioneer, Daniel G. McKenzie, True moved his family to Pullman. By the fall of 1882, True secured a hotel site on the southeast corner of Paradise and Alder (now Kamiaken) streets, presently the site of the Pullman city hall. Early deeds show that McKenzie sold True four lots, including the hotel site, for \$75 on September 18, 1882.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, construction work followed in the spring of 1883, with the hotel's opening marked by a fourth of July meal in the newly finished dining room.<sup>4</sup>



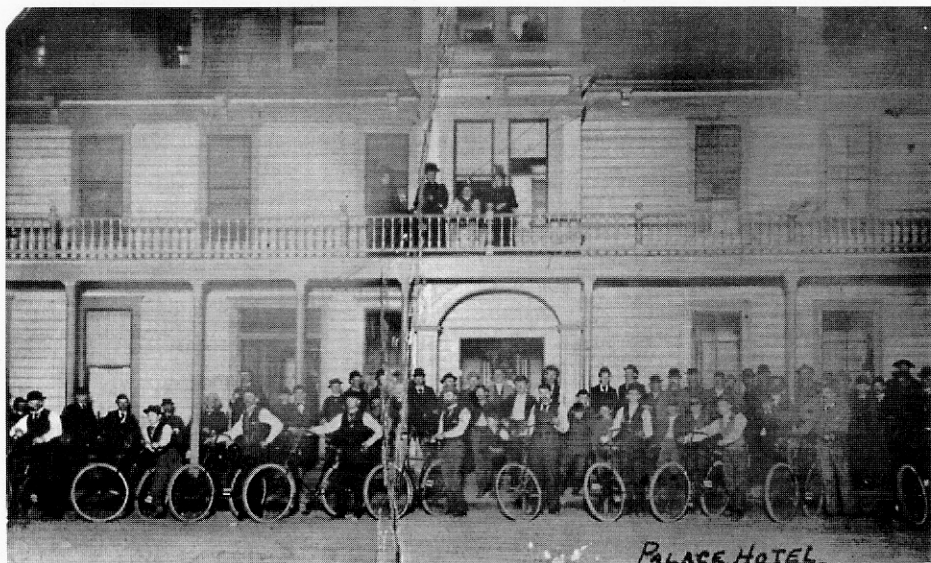
*True's Hotel at its second site, Main and Pine*

At first, the size of True's hotel was relatively small, a two- or possibly three-story<sup>5</sup> wooden structure, being remembered years later as "50 feet wide and 35 feet long."<sup>6</sup> Initially, it also served as the True family's residence. But as the town grew, so did the hotel through a series of expansions.

In the fall of 1885, with the first operating railroad serving town, True enlarged his hotel.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, by 1887, True had transformed the wooden structure into an even more imposing three-story building with 25 rooms.<sup>8</sup> When Pullman's first disastrous fire swept through the community that summer, True's hotel was one of the few lucky businesses to survive. It is shown in one of the earliest-known pictures of Pullman taken just after the fire, distinguished by its stylish mansard roof. Insurance records indicate that the upper floors with guest rooms, were above the downstairs parlor for general public use. The attached kitchen area extended as a one-story wing to the east. Behind the main structure was a detached storage area for wood used to heat the building, plus a privy.<sup>9</sup>

### **Hotel move and further expansion:**

Pullman's growth resumed after the 1887 fire, and by May of 1889, there were an estimated 500 people in the community.<sup>10</sup> With two different railroad lines established by that time, and prospects for further growth, True laid plans for another expansion to his hotel. It involved relocating the building to a site on Main Street, a block to the north, followed by an addition doubling its size. Rather than constructing a totally new building, True contracted to have his existing hotel moved in June of 1889, to the southwest corner of Main and Pine streets. Subsequently, this was accomplished by horses pulling the hotel slowly to its new location on rollers. By late June of 1889, it was on its new site, and



*Cyclists gathered at Palace Hotel, 1893*

within a short time the addition was underway.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Neill, editor and owner of the local paper, commented that: "This is a good move, and will add much to [the] appearance of the town."<sup>12</sup> Also relocated at this time was True's original "Palace Livery Stable," near his original hotel site. Newspaper ads had previously boasted that the stable had: "the finest of teams, [and] saddle-horses . . . [with] buggies always on hand, and drivers supplied when desired."<sup>13</sup>

Part of True's reason for the move was to secure a more prominent location following the recent realignment and improvement of Main Street in 1888, which otherwise had curved around a fork of the Palouse river as it flowed into town from the east. Until that time, the road to Moscow followed Paradise street, to the south of Main.

Deepening the bed of the main part of the Palouse River enabled the city to extend Main Street and with it, provide more room for its growing business district.<sup>14</sup>

In preparation for the move, True had a well drilled on his Main Street lot, and to his surprise and delight of the entire town, Pullman's first artesian well struck on April 24, 1889.<sup>15</sup>

Another event prior to the hotel's move provides an amusing insight into its lack of adequate sanitation facilities in its first years. Responding to mounting complaints, in early 1889, the Pullman Board of Trustees passed a motion for the town marshal to remove a hog pen on True's property along with "slops and refuse" which had accumulated near the hotel.<sup>16</sup> Responding to this, in late March of 1889, the local paper noted that: "M.C. True has arranged to move his hog pen out of the city limits." It added: "This will make life more pleasant to residents on Alder St."<sup>17</sup>

By the fall of 1889, True's relocated "Palace Hotel" apparently was open again for business more than doubled in size and with rooms "newly furnished."<sup>18</sup> On the ground floor, the expanded hotel included a formal office and reception area in the center of the building opposite the entry doors from Main Street. A large dining area was on the east side of the reception area, with a parlor and lobby for guests in the west wing. Stairs to the side of the office led to the upper two floors of guest rooms, each with large windows overlooking the town. A wide balcony, accessible to guests, ran around the second floor of the structure. An attached one-story kitchen extended southward behind the building's east wing, with a privy and two detached wood sheds also behind the hotel. Additionally, there was a cellar for food storage on the hotel property. Topping the hotel at the fourth floor level was an ornamental tower with a pointed roof located above the main entrance.<sup>19</sup>

As to nearby Pullman businesses, in the early 1890's, Lachlan Taylor's combination photographic studio and residence was on the north side of Main street, directly across from the west end of the Palace Hotel.<sup>20</sup> To the east, on the southeast corner of Main and Pine streets, was the Herald building, completed in 1889. Diagonally across Main Street, on the northeast corner of Main and Pine, was the "Palace Livery Stable." True continued to operate this latter business for some time, which by mid-July of 1889, was connected by a private telephone line to the hotel.<sup>21</sup> Finding room for its expansion may have been another benefit from his move to Main Street. By the later 1890's, the "Palace Meat Market" was established opposite the Palace Hotel, though it may not have been directly associated with Mark True's hotel.<sup>22</sup>

Within a year of True's hotel being completed on its new site, in August of 1890, first once again swept the town destroying most businesses. However, for the second time, the Palace Hotel escaped destruction, being just east of where the fire stopped. As before, reconstruction of the town was swift, and by January of 1891, mostly brick structures replaced the wooden downtown buildings. By then, the population had reached an estimated 900 persons.<sup>23</sup> More rapid growth would soon follow as Pullman had been selected in 1890 to become the site of the state's land grant college. True's business would correspondingly flourish, though, by then, there were other hotels and lodging houses in Pullman. By 1891, rates at the Palace Hotel were relatively expensive at \$2 to \$2.50 per day.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the business thrived perhaps in part due to special services provided to guests.

By the summer of 1890, persons arriving in Pullman by train were met at the depot and hauled on a "free omnibus" to the Palace Hotel. Local ads proclaimed that the horse-drawn omnibus "attends all passenger trains, night and day."<sup>25</sup> Otherwise, transportation could be conveniently arranged at the Palace Livery Stable.

### **Mark True and the establishment of WSU:**

Mark True, Dr. Henry J. Webb, E. H. Letterman, A. T. Farris, Thomas

Neill, and W. V. Windus are jointly credited as being "The Big Six" in securing for Pullman the location of the Washington Agricultural College and School of Science.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, some of the selecting officials who came to Pullman stayed at the Palace Hotel, hearing first hand True's lively support for bringing the college to Pullman. At this time, True maintained a "large and well lighted sample room" at his hotel,<sup>27</sup> which may have been the source of a little "liquid refreshment," perhaps furthering the sociability of these or other meetings held there.

### **Business and Social Life at the Hotel**

Early issues of the *Pullman Herald* newspaper provide insights into some of the social events which occurred in the early years at the Palace Hotel. By at least 1896, records indicate that it included a small stage and reading room, both located in the downstairs public area in the west wing of the building.<sup>28</sup> Parties and meetings were sometimes held here, especially in the earlier days when there were limited alternatives for public gatherings. For example, in January of 1889, a masquerade ball was held at the hotel, while on March 31, 1894, local farmers and other Pullmanites met in the lobby of the Palace Hotel to discuss the establishment of a possible creamery for the community.<sup>29</sup>

On another occasion, in the spring of 1893, members of the local bicycle club grouped outside the Palace hotel for a "flashlight" picture taken by S. S. Sloan, a Pullman photographer.<sup>30</sup>

Traveling salesmen and others also would sometimes use the Palace hotel for short-term business activities. The local paper, for example, advertised in the Spring of 1899 that: "Dr. King, of the King Optical Co. of Spokane, will be at the Palace hotel parlor April 11th. See him if you need glasses."<sup>31</sup>

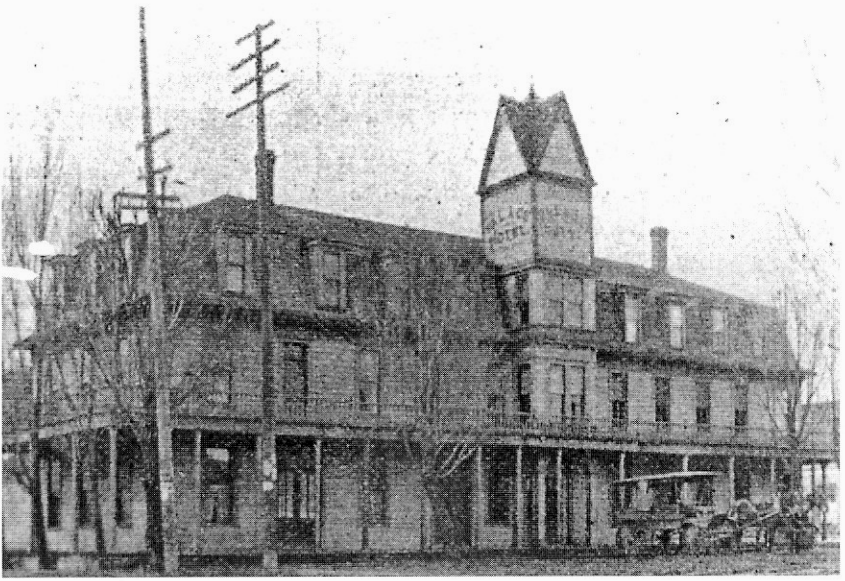
During its operation, the Palace Hotel also furnished Pullman with a restaurant, operated initially by Mrs. True.<sup>32</sup> In early 1889, the local paper printed a tongue-in-cheek account of an amusing (and probably fictitious) breakfast diner at the hotel, as follows:

"A few mornings ago, a stranger in these 'diggins' entered the dining room of the Palace Hotel, and gave his order as follows: A cup of coffee, seasoned with the fluid extract of bovine and crystallized saccharine; a small piece of the tender rein of the bos species well agitated; two decocted eggs, and a dish of ollapodrida [stew]. Howard, the waiter, was visibly affected with cutaneous exhalation, and with trepidation at once vanished to the cuisine. Another waiter was sent with an every day breakfast, and to the surprise of all he ate it with assevernations [sic] of satisfaction. All efforts to find where the stranger came from have proven unsuccessful."<sup>33</sup>

### **The Fire of 1895:**

In mid-January of 1895, a fire broke out on the third floor of the hotel, due to an overheated stovepipe. While the local paper first reported that "the top of the building was burned entirely out" and that "it





*Palace Hotel with rebuilt tower*

will be well nigh impossible to repair the building," this proved to be an overstatement.<sup>34</sup> The \$7,000 building insurance and \$1,500 insurance for contents apparently were sufficient to cover losses, and within a few months, the third floor and ornamental central tower were rebuilt.

#### **Later hotel owners and operators:**

By the later 1880's, True began leasing out operation of the hotel for limited periods, presumably allowing him to explore other business opportunities, including his livery stable and possibly real estate ventures.<sup>35</sup> On February 2, 1889, the local paper reported that True's hotel, which was leased to "Quivey & Hall," was returning to True's control after the expiration of the lease.<sup>36</sup> Later, by mid-February of 1891, True had again leased out the operation of his hotel, to concentrate more on his livery and associated hauling business.<sup>37</sup> His lessee at this time was Charles McClary of Dayton, Washington. In 1891-92, the local business directory listed McClary as "proprietor" with the hotel boasting itself as "the Commercial Man's Headquarters — Always First Class."<sup>38</sup>

Subsequently, True again resumed control of the hotel for a time, but once more leased it out. By 1899, Theodore T. Davis was proprietor, operating it until about 1904. During this time, hotel advertisements stated "No Chinamen" would be served,<sup>39</sup> reflecting the racial prejudices of the period. Otherwise, special rates were offered at this time for the parents and students of the young college in "thoroughly refitted and newly furnished" rooms.<sup>40</sup> Later, L. Harry Soliday operated the Palace Hotel by 1905-06, followed by A. H. Dawson by 1908.<sup>41</sup>

Dawson was the hotel operator on January 1, 1909, when fire destroyed the then-aging Palace Hotel.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, within a month,

Dawson had leased both the rival Artesian hotel,<sup>43</sup> at the southwest corner of Main and Grand, and the new brick Bloomfield block building, then under construction on the southeast corner of Grand Avenue and Olsen Street. Both were remodeled, with the Bloomfield structure becoming the "New Palace Hotel" housing the "Paris Cafe" with a seating capacity for 60 people.<sup>44</sup> With the business relocating there, the old burned-out old hotel site on the southwest corner of Main and Pine streets by 1915 was replaced by the present single-story, brick Jackson Block building. In 1996, it housed the Gallios restaurant, the International Shop, and the Audian Theater, which closed in early 1996.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Mark True's later life:**

True reportedly maintained an interest in the Palace Hotel until 1903, when he moved his family to Spokane.<sup>46</sup> There, he operated a rooming house for about two years before moving south to Colfax, Washington. Subsequently, True, a long-time Republican, entered politics. In November of 1914, True was elected Whitman County Assessor by a vote of 5,311 to 4,151, defeating the Democrat candidate, G. H. Holbrook.<sup>47</sup> Thereafter, True was re-elected and served a second two-year term. In 1918, he won the race for Whitman County Clerk serving two years. During 1920-22, he was out of office, but was elected again as Whitman County Assessor for four terms, starting in November of 1922. At the end of his last term in the fall of 1930, at age 83, he retired and returned to Spokane with his family. Subsequently, he lived there until his death a decade later, on Sept. 21, 1940. Affectionately known as "Pops" True by this time, he was buried in the Colfax cemetery, with his wife, Joanna, buried beside him the following year.<sup>48</sup> With their passage, two of Pullman's early pioneers were gone. Today, the Palace Hotel is all but forgotten, but in its heyday, it was one of Pullman's grandest early structures.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Information on True's early life is taken from his biographical write-up in *History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington, Vol. II* (Portland: North Pacific History Co.), 1889, p. 608; and his obituary in *The Colfax Gazette-Commoner*, Colfax, Wash., Friday, Sept. 27, 1940, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Whitman County, Wash. Territorial census for 1889, Pullman division, no page number.

<sup>3</sup> Whitman County, Wash. Territory Deed Book F, pp. 712-714. Deed dated Sept. 18, 1882, whereby McKenzie sold to "M. C. True of Moscow," lots 1, 2, 7, & 8 in Block 11 of Daniel G. McKenzie's addition, filed June 7, 1882. Note: On Nov. 4, 1938, the 50th anniversary issue of the *Pullman Herald* (p. 7) erroneously stated that McKenzie "donated" the lot to True in 1881.

<sup>4</sup> "Hotel operators were among Pullman's first settlers," by Robert Ludeking, *Daily News* newspaper, Monday, April 11, 1988, p. 43; also *Pullman Herald*, Feb. 23, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Nov. 2, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Nov. 4, 1938, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Feb. 9, 1889, p. 3. Note: In 1928, True recalled that in 1883, the Oregon-Washington railroad reached Pullman from Colfax, but was shut down in 1884 due to financial troubles. In 1885, it resumed operation and served the town thereafter (*Pullman Herald*, Friday, June 11, 1926, p. 12).

<sup>8</sup> *History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington, Vol. II*, 1889, p. 608.

<sup>9</sup> Sanborn Fire Atlas of Pullman, May 1889.

<sup>10</sup> Sanborn Fire Atlas of Pullman, May 1889.

<sup>11</sup> *Pullman Herald*, June 15, 1889, p. 3; June 29, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Pullman Herald*, March 30, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Nov. 2, 1888, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Nov. 4, 1938, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Sept. 27, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ludeking 1988: 43.

<sup>17</sup> *Pullman Herald*, March 30, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Oregon, Washington and Idaho Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1889-90*. (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co.), 1889, p. 723.

<sup>19</sup> Sanborn Fire Atlas of Pullman, Jan. 1891.

<sup>20</sup> For the story of this business, see "Lachlan Taylor: Pullman Photographer, 1887-1902," by Robert E. King, in the *Bunchgrass Historian*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1995, pp. 4-13.

<sup>21</sup> *Pullman Herald*, July 13, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Pullman Herald*, March 11, 1899, p. 4. At this time, Ira Henshaw was the reported proprietor of this business.

<sup>23</sup> Sanborn Fire Atlas of Pullman, Jan. 1891.

<sup>24</sup> *Bensel's Pullman City Directory, 1891*, ad inside front cover. Note: At this time, the average daily wage was under \$1 per day.

<sup>25</sup> *Pullman Herald*, July 26, 1890, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Nov. 4, 1938, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Polk's Oregon, Washington and Idaho Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1889-90*, p. 723.

- <sup>28</sup> Sanborn Fire Atlas of Pullman, March 1895, sheet 5.
- <sup>29</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Jan. 19, 1889, p. 3; March 30, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>30</sup> *Pullman Herald*, May 19, 1893, p. 1.
- <sup>31</sup> *Pullman Herald*, March 25, 1899, p. 1.
- <sup>32</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Sept. 27, 1940, p. 5.
- <sup>33</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Jan. 26, 1889, p. 3.
- <sup>34</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Jan. 19, 1895, p. 1.
- <sup>35</sup> There are over two dozen deeds recorded in Whitman County, Wash. reporting True as either buying or selling Pullman lots in the 1880's and early 1890's. He, like some other Pullman pioneers, speculated in town lots.
- <sup>36</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Feb. 2, 1889, p. 3.
- <sup>37</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Feb. 14, 1891, p. 1.
- <sup>38</sup> *Oregon, Washington and Idaho Gazetteer and Business Directory, No. 5, 1891-92* (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co.), 1891, p. 951.
- <sup>39</sup> *The Chinook*, 1899 yearbook of the Washington Agricultural College and School of Science (now Wash. State Univ.), advertisement on p. 180.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 171.
- <sup>41</sup> From Polk's Pullman City Directories for 1904 (p. 216), 1905-06 (p. 166), 1908-09 (p. 167), and 1910-11 (p. 224).
- <sup>42</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Jan. 8, 1909, p. 1. The hotel owner at the time of the fire was C. W. Nessly.
- <sup>43</sup> For a period, True may have operated this hotel also (Luedeking 1988: 43).
- <sup>44</sup> *Pullman Herald*, Feb. 5, 1909, p. 1. In the 1920's, the name "New Palace Hotel" would be changed to "Pullman Hotel". Ironically, in the early 1990's, this structure, a relocated "descendant" of True's first hotel, also burned. In 1996, the Cougar Mall occupied its former location.
- <sup>45</sup> At this writing (January 1996), Gallios Restaurant had not yet opened.
- <sup>46</sup> Much of what follows is abstracted from Mark True's obituaries in the *Colfax Gazette Commoner*, Colfax, Wash. Friday, Sept. 27, 1940, pp. 1, 6; and the *Pullman Herald*, Friday, Sept. 27, 1940, pp. 1, 5.
- <sup>47</sup> *Colfax Commoner* newspaper, Colfax, Wash., Friday, Nov. 6, 1914, p. 2.
- <sup>48</sup> She died Sept. 27, 1941 in Spokane, Wash., at age 91. Her obituary was in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* newspaper, Spokane, Wash., Monday, Sept., 29, 1941, p. 14.

## Paradise Creek, Where Are You?

by  
Betty Graham Lee

In August of 1995, I returned to Paradise Creek and the farm home of my childhood at Graham's Dairy. It was an overdue sentimental journey. But where were the old dairy barns and milk plant buildings? Where was the two-story white house, the smoke house, the wash house, the heavy-walled stone cellar wedged back into the hillside, the wood shed where a few tears of repentance fell? Perhaps I could get my bearings if I could spot the old orchard. The sheep barn would be just beyond it.

Paradise Creek runs in a narrow valley westward from Moscow, Idaho, for about eight miles to join the south fork of the Palouse River near Pullman, Washington. We lived in between. From the descriptions of early pioneers, it had already changed by the 1920's when my parents (a couple of former Kansas school teachers), the John T. Grahams, purchased it. At one time it had been a tanglewood of willows and cottonwoods, but then it was a meandering creek with park-like meadows in which cattle, horses and sheep grazed among isolated groves of great trees.

Old timers reported that the fields of wheat, corn and alfalfa on the upper terraces had once been covered with a tall native bunch grass which held both moisture and soil securely on the hills. The first planted crop was flax.<sup>1</sup> So I should have predicted that during the ensuing 75 years (or the 55 years since I had left there), other unimaginable developments would change the idyllic, quiet, and peaceful Paradise Valley. The side hills are now walled with intermittent gravel pits, man has dictated that the creek no longer meander but stay within its roadside channel, and most old homes have vanished.

I walked down the railroad track, westward from the Whitlow grain elevators, seeking the approximate location from which an early 1920's photo had been taken. I crossed the first trestle where my brother had trapped a mink in one of his muskrat traps. Several women in the Valley had lovely coats from the pelts their husbands had trapped. A jay flew up and scolded me. It would be the only bird I saw along this stretch of Paradise Creek where a great variety of birds once nested. My brother had a colorful string of egg shells festooned from the picture molding in his bedroom, and could name each type of bird an egg represented. Such collections were encouraged as school projects at that time. We also had



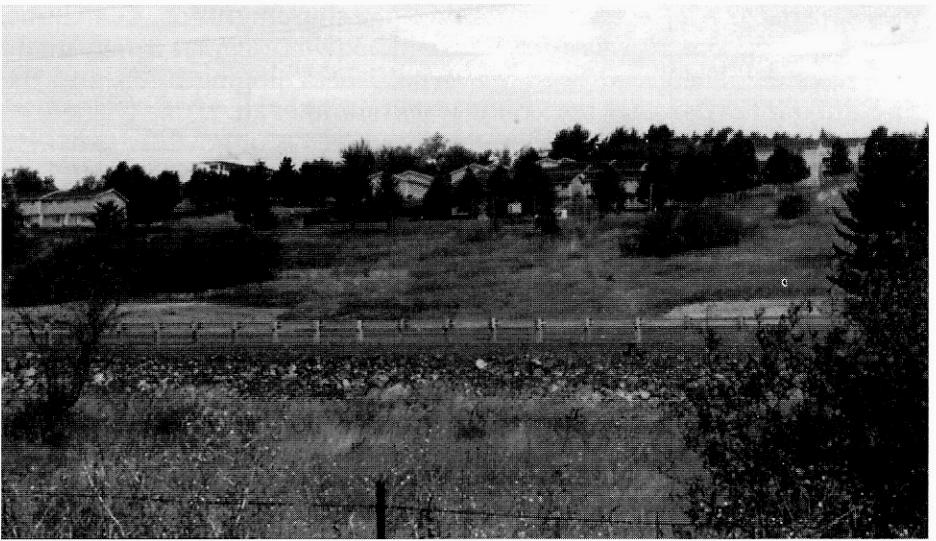
*Graham home, 1921*

an impressive butterfly and beetle collection. But how we envied the kids who got to go to the ocean beaches in summer and brought back beautiful sea shells.

I stood along the track about where the early picture from my photo album had been taken (photo #1), and shot another of the site today (photo #2). This was also where one could stop the "Bug" to catch a rail ride to Pullman or Moscow. Now old memories were catapulted into my mind as if they had jumped from a spring board.

The Bug was a single motorized car and better described as resembling a ferocious big gray rat about the size of the school bus. That was part of the reason for my terror in boarding it one morning when I was five to go to Dr. Litch's office in Moscow to have my tonsils out. Mother and I put on our Sunday clothes. Mother packed a bag for our overnight stay, and promised me a lovely surprise when it was over. We crossed the narrow dirt road south of our house, maneuvered the planks balanced from boulder to boulder over the creek, and crossed the green pasture. Then we crawled under the fence that lined the track right-of-way. This wasn't easy for my pudgy mother, and she wanted to accomplish this awkward feat before the Bug came around the bend from Pullman. Possibly the greatest annoyance that morning was that the excited dogs, Shep and Pete, curious about this unusual parade, followed us. They splashed back and forth in the creek beside our plank bridge, getting our good clothes as wet as if we had gone swimming. By the time we crawled under the fence in the dirt, the Bug engineer must have concluded that the farm had neither a bathtub nor a laundry tub. Many of them did not. Dr. Litch probably thought the same thing.

Other recollections came flooding forward as I walked. I located



*Graham home site, 1995, with University building*

the clump of trees under which slept more than 20 years of cast-off items. The bulk of the dump would surely be made up of broken milk bottles and leaky milk cans from the dairy. But there is one item my two sisters and I were reluctant to bury... our old doll buggy.

The wicker cradle and hood were in shreds, the frame bent, and the handle off. That handle was no doubt the most mended item we ever owned. One time when it broke apart where screws held it to the base, our dad declared he could not fix it one more time. We girls would have to take it to the blacksmith down on Grand Avenue in Pullman and see what he could do. It might cost us a dime or two, so we had better start saving our money. When we had twenty cents saved, we took it to be repaired. However, when we later called for it, the iron workers said it would cost twenty-five cents. We were distraught! My quick-thinking older sister then offered the man a stick of gum and a pencil for the difference. It must have amused him, because he accepted the barter. We not only used that buggy for our dolls, but for our kittens, pet chickens, orphaned lambs, and yes, even for baby pigs. If a runt piglet was doing poorly, it was given to us to feed on a bottle. Sometimes our nursing had proved miraculously successful. On cold nights, we would warm a rock in the oven of the old wood stove, wrap it, and place it in the buggy with the piglet. It would settle right down.

As an archaeologist, I can now realize that the old dump would be a great location for a university's beginning class in historical archaeology. What conclusions could be made about the social, economic and cultural level of the contributors to the dump?

Walking on down the tracks and looking northward, I tried to spot the marvelous stand of willows under which we had scores of wiener

roasts. This special place was shared with church groups, 4-H Clubs, school classes, and Scouts. Its octopus-like low horizontal trunks made fine benches. The green canopy overhead held singing birds, and the fragrant mint in the creek spiced the warm summer air. If one wished, he could try to catch pollywogs or watch the small fish or go downstream to the deep pool to view the big muskrat lodge.

We were not allowed to eat the fish or swim in the water as our parents considered it polluted. Untreated sewage from Moscow was dumped in Paradise Creek, and farmers along the stream often had drains emptying into it. Some of our neighbors felt the creek purified itself along the way and their children got to swim. Well, the four Graham children<sup>2</sup> sneaked a swim or two, but it was certainly without parental permission.

But that clump of trees is gone, so I looked on across the creek, the road, and to the bare ground where the farm buildings had once been so pleasantly arranged. The rocky outcrop that had framed them on the north was still visible. The old Indian bedrock mortar had barely escaped the bulldozers. It was near here that my dad had graded a road into the bank behind the barns and found some old, prehistoric Indian artifacts. A vesicular basalt stone pipe and a dense, polished green stone pestle were of special interest. Perhaps this "find" was the initial inspiration that sparked my interest in archaeology.

Thinking of these artifacts reminded me of the fascinating stories told by old Grandma Thonney... an especially interesting neighbor during my childhood. She had been a Baud, and the Bauds were in the area long before the turn of the Century. She had been riding a horse one day to Three Forks (Pullman) and stopped at the spring near the bedrock mortar. An Indian girl was having a baby. Grandma Thonney brought her some water. To Grandma Thonney's surprise, the new mother soon wrapped her new baby in a blanket, remounted her horse, and rode off.

This pioneer lady told of hiding in the tanglewoods along the creek at night when word went out that Chief Joseph and his band of Nez Perce warriors were headed that way. She could not go into Fort Moscow as settlers were advised to do as her husband was away, carrying supplies and mail from Ft. Moscow to Ft. Walla Walla. She needed to remain near their place to milk their cow, feed their chickens, and care for their stock while her husband was gone.

I was distracted in my reverie by the noise of heavy road equipment at work, again widening the Pullman-Moscow highway. It seemed not too long ago that the once narrow, meandering valley road had been filled with great herds of sheep. As children, we looked forward each spring to this wonderous event. Only Christmas could be better. Sheep from far away down on the Snake river were herded to the Moscow Mountains for summer pasture. All work stopped at farms along Paradise Creek<sup>3</sup> out of curiosity and excitement and to watch the sheep dogs work. There may have been no little interest in also preventing sheep from oozing out of the roadway into their pastures. The old party line crank telephone would warn those on up the road that the spectacle was about to begin.



The party line: gossip, news, emergencies and even entertainment. It substituted before the days of electricity, radio, and T.V. One time Dad saw a swarm of bees headed up stream. He was determined to capture them for his hives. He had all of us children and the hired men from the milk plant and barns get pans and buckets on which to beat, hoping the noise would force the swarm to light. Up the valley we went, yelling, beating, and frightening all living creatures in our path. Soon, Mother got a call from jovial upstream neighbor, Mr. Sims, who could even make a joke of a disaster. He said, "Bessie, there's a wild man on the loose in the Valley. He has lured a line of children just like the Pied Piper, and is taking them God knows where. I saw some of your kids following along, yelling and trying to learn his witchery by hitting on tin pans and acting crazy. He had better call out the National Guard to rescue them! Ha, Ha!". Since every neighbor on the line had heard this, Dad had a hard time living that antic down. But he did capture the bees.

However, he never could work with them without being badly stung. He spent enough money on protective netting, special gloves and smoke bellows to have bought a whole lot of good strained store honey.

This eventually led to his having a calm neighbor, Mrs. Askins, come rob the hives when it was time. We would all stand back a good safe distance and watch in amazement. She wore a sleeveless cotton dress, no netting, gloves, or protection, and slowly pulled the combs out of the hives. Not a sting! Dad could never quite get over that.

Another thing he never quite got over was the night he fired his gun when something was disturbing the chickens. It was dark. There was no reason to aim. He would just frighten the varmint away by pointing off toward the garden. The next morning he discovered he had shot a stray dog right through the heart. "Oh, Lordy! It could have been a man, it could have been a hungry hobo," he would say over and over, beads of perspiration glistening on his forehead.

We never locked anything. We had no keys. One could be gone for a week and return to find a note on the kitchen table: "John, I borrowed a ten gallon milk can. Will return it Wednesday. Jake." The only time I ever sensed a parent being nervous was once when Dad was to be gone overnight. Mother was alone with us. The gypsies occasionally camped down at that great old willow grove. One of them might come up to the house to ask if we had any extra milk or butter or eggs, which we always did. But fear or suspicion never followed the request. We children were not allowed to go near their camp, so we would try to spy from our upstairs windows. However, that night there was more raucous laughter and louder voices than usual, so we all helped Mother move a heavy oak desk and a chest of drawers in front of the doors. Nothing happened, other than we had a rare sleepless night at the farm.

As I returned to the car waiting at the Whitlow siding, I recalled the skunk cabbage, grass widows, wild flags, and pussy willows that filled the boggy swale below the trestle. Now it was waist-high in thistles. Looking up the steep slope to my right, I remembered the late snow banks



*Graham children, 1926*

that remained until Easter on that brushy north decline. It was at their edge that we picked our bouquets of yellow bells, bird bills and trilliums for our Easter baskets while the mourning doves cooed their Easter sunrise service.

Then I heard a truly nostalgic sound. It was the old clock from Bryant Hall on the Washington State University campus striking three. How many times, when the wind was just right, we had heard it or the victory bell ring when a football game had been won. Many years ago the University had purchased the old farm and now had spread out over it. Buildings covered the flat upper field where the first airplanes Pullmanites had seen, landed. One Sunday we children took an unsanctioned short cut to Sunday school in order to see the incredible flying machine that had landed in the stubble field. We were very late getting to church where our parents were waiting and beginning to worry. Our dusty, scratched, dirt-packed shoes gave us away. I don't recall that we got a spanking when we got home. The sermon must have been on the blessedness of forgiving. But we each had to earn the money to buy our new Sunday shoes. We pulled fan weeds, morning glories, split kindling, hoed the garden, washed milk bottles, trapped squirrels, and got so much accomplished that one wonders whether it was a true financial need or just clever parents!

I crossed the trestle and got into the car. That smooth wide highway was wonderful, but it ran in a valley I could no longer view as Paradise Creek. Instead, it hurried through a kind of miniature Hell's Canyon

lined with stark grown gouges and gravel pits for road constructions.

But who is to say which America needs most? Paradise, or our great highway systems? Good roads have surely been one of our country's most progressive assets — and memories cannot be erased.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In June of 1987 the author interviewed ninety-year-old Walter Thonney who then resided in a nursing home in Moscow. He recalled the first settlers being the Bauds, Thonneys, Ferrands, Devines, Watts, Sharpoffs, Whitlows, Boyds, Haines, Beglands and Sharpes. They established the Russell School District.

<sup>2</sup> The children of John and Bessie Hart Graham were Harold, Ruth, Betty and Virginia. Harold became a marine engineer, Ruth a M.D., Betty an Archaeologist, and Virginia a musician.

<sup>3</sup> By the 1920's most of the early pioneers' farms were in the ownership of the Strattons, Grahams, Sims, Getchels and Halpins. However, several offspring of the Thonney/Baud family remained. Today, to the knowledge of the author, only one descendant of any of the pioneers (Larry Thonney) is still living in Paradise Valley.

# The History of the Wilcox Community

by  
Miriam Kammerzell  
(1957)

Wilcox is located in Township 15; Range 42; Section 11 of Whitman County, Washington. Union Flat Creek, rising in the Uniontown area, runs through Wilcox, and continues on to enter the Palouse River west of LaCrosse. The history of the Wilcox community and that of the immediate Union Flat vicinity are so interwoven that a separation is impossible.

The earliest settlers on Union Flat were two bachelors, George Pangburn and Joseph DeLong. They arrived in 1867, according to the Whitman County History by Lever. However, the Durham Inland Empire History states that George Pangburn claimed land near the present location of Winona in 1863. No other settlers appeared until 1869, when Nicholas Whealen homesteaded on Union Flat, about five miles below the later location of Wilcox. In February, 1870, his wife Catherine and four children arrived, coming from California. The Whitman County History says that Mrs. Whealen was the first woman settlers in what was to become Whitman County. This same year, 1870, witnessed the arrival of several other families. The John Harper Family homesteaded on Union Flat above the Whealen's, just two miles from Wilcox. The three McNeilly brothers, William, Robert, and Andrew, arrived that same year, William and Robert filing claims on Union Flat between the Harper's and the Whealen's; Andrew settling farther up Union Flat, only a short distance from the site of Wilcox. The Frank Dowling family, and Joseph Hardesty, a widower with his six young children, homesteaded next to each other on Union Flat a few miles above Andrew McNeilly's location. According to historian Dr. O.S. Kingston, "In 1870 Union Flat was the only settled district north of the Snake River, having 118 people living along the creek." Other pioneers of the early seventies were John and James V.O'Dell, Philip Brogan, James Woodley, Tom Smith, Josiah Crampton, James Eagan, Dick Mooney, Peter Hoss, George Rogers, and latter homesteading on what is now the Ewald Heilsberg place in Wilcox.

The Territorial Road, which was so vital to these pioneers, was surveyed in 1872 by a Territorial Road Viewer, James Nosler. It was routed from Walla Walla via Waitsburg to Colfax and north, crossing the Snake River at Penawawa. Labor performed on the Territorial Road served as

legal taxes for road purposes, and many of our pioneers took advantage of this method of paying taxes in those hard times. In May, 1874, the Territorial Road was declared a County Road. In 1915, the present Highway 295 was built to Central Ferry, and the old Territorial Road lost much of its travel. It is still in existence, a few miles of it being unimproved north of Wilcox; the rest a gravelled road which enters Colfax via the Whitman County Airport.

The first mail came from the Walla Walla country north to the Snake River, crossing it via the Penawawa Ferry operated by O.C. Cram, thence north by the Territorial Road.; The mail for these early settlers was left at the Andrew McNeilly home on Union Flat. A pioneer of the Farmington area, W.W. Johnston, told in the Whitman County History of riding to this "postoffice on Union Flat" in the winter of 1871-72. He also told of having no meat, and in February, 1872, "hearing in Colfax of a chance to get some bacon on Union Flat, succeeded in buying 100 pounds.... on which we feasted royally."

Later a postoffice was established in the home of R.J. Wilcox, who had the first blacksmith shop in the community. Wilcox received its name from this family. The postoffice was eventually located in the James Williams home. In these later years the mail came via a stageline from Colfax to Penawawa, horses being changed at the Wilkerson home a few miles south of Wilcox. Finally the R.F.D. compelled the closing of the Wilcox Postoffice, sometime after 1920.

The earliest school was built on the John Harper farm on Union Flat. This is the present Harry Sanders farm, located on Highway 295. We do not know the exact date the school came into being, but it was in the early seventies. Sam McNeilly, the eldest son of William McNeilly, who now lives in Chewelah, attended this school in 1881. His teacher was a Mr. Skarks. The following year his father donated land for a school nearer to their home, and the McNeilly school, located approximately three miles from the Harper school, was opened. H.M. Boone, Hester O'Dell, J. G. Eliot, were among the first teachers at the McNeilly school. Meanwhile, the settlers nearer to the Territorial Road felt the Harper school to be too far away, and so, one night in 1883, several brought their teams and moved the school house to a new location on Union Flat on the Territorial Road, the present site of Wilcox. We can only imagine the stir this move must have occasioned, accomplished as it was without the formality of a school election.

The earliest record in the Whitman County School Superintendent's office for the Wilcox School District #11 is a report from the clerk of the school board, T.J. Brannan, signed by Wm. O. Gilliland, Director, and dated June 29, 1888. Only the parents or guardians are listed for the 25 pupils, even the names of teachers being omitted. Other facts are interesting: The sum of \$260.00 paid for teacher's wages for that year. Two teachers were employed, probably for two separate terms, as 6 3/4 months were taught. The estimated value of the frame school and the grounds was \$25.00. School furniture \$35.00; apparatus (charts, maps, globes, etc.,)

valued at \$25.00. The question was asked on this form: "Is your school furnished with the Webster's Unabridged Dictionary?" The answer was "No." The average salary for a male teacher was \$50.00 a month; female teachers were paid \$40.00. Hester O'Dell, who has been mentioned as a teacher at the McNeilly school, taught this school in the early days. Lucy Helm has been named as another teacher. Frank Hardesty, son of Union Flat pioneer Joseph Hardesty, was a teacher in the nineties.

In later years this original school was supplanted by a two-room frame building on the site of the present building; and finally the large school population prompted the erection of a fine two-story school in 1913. All eight grades and two years of High school were available, with four and five teachers for the 100 pupils. But as has been the case with all these farm communities, with the coming of better roads and larger farming operations, the population dwindled until the once large school finally closed, and the district consolidated with the Colfax system in 1939.

Wilcox Grange #141 was organized November 4, 1903, with 39 charter members. Fred J. Waymire was the first Master, T.L. Williams the first Secretary. Dues were \$1.20 a year. The Grange first met in the Yeoman Hall, but in 1908 the members raised funds for a building of their own by selling stock at \$10.00 a share. Master of the Grange at this time was Ed Pyburn. The Grange Hall was built by the members on land owned by John Major, and still is located there. In 1918 the charter was surrendered to the State Grange, and the organization remained inactive until 1930, when it was reorganized, Harry Sanders serving as Master, and Mrs. Harry Sanders as Secretary. At the present time the membership is 181, the Master being A.B. Miller, the Secretary Wallace Luther.

Mention should be made of the social activities of the early days. Most of these early pioneers were of light-hearted Irish and Scotch-Irish ancestry, who enjoyed dancing and like diversions. Sam McNeilly says, "John Harper built a barn in 1881 which was used for dances. He taught all the boys to dance, playing the violin himself and calling the figures." There was a lack of lady partners in those days. Mrs. May Coffman Williams, mother of Mrs. Marvin Carroll who came here in 1881 at the age of ten, has told of being a sought-after dance partner when she was twelve years old; and Mr. McNeilly says, "We met for dances if enough women could be found."

Mrs. Williams' father built the Coffman Hall in 1883. Music was furnished by a violin and accordin. In later years an organ made its appearance in the Wilkerson Hall. No tickets were sold to these affairs, the musicians being paid by the simple process known as "passing the hat." Refreshments were brought by the ladies, and consisted of pies, cakes, and the like. Waltzes, the schottische, and square dances were the popular dances of the day.

Later years found the dances being held in Wilcox itself, in the Yeoman Hall above the Whitten General Store. The Wilcox Grange has also held dances off and on during its long existence.

The young men and boys enjoyed riding bucking horses, horse rac-

ing, and similar activities. Marritt Carroll, whose father John Carroll came here in 1881, tells of those times. The well-known Yakima Canutt, world champion bronc rider and Hollywood stunt man, and other youngsters of the neighborhood spent every Sunday possible at the Carroll home, engaged in these enterprises. Baseball teams also flourished, playing rival teams from other neighborhoods. Sleigh-riding and coasting were popular winter amusements.

Another social organization of the past was the Wilcox Literary Society. It was instituted January 11, 1911, according to its first minutes. Clair Saxon was President; Sam Whitten, Vice-President; Guy Brotherson, Secretary-Treasurer; and Ed Pyburn, Sergeant-at-arms. Debates, plays, readings, and musical entertainment featured the meetings, and always, refreshments. Other clubs and like organizations visited, usually with debate teams of their own, and according to these interesting old minutes, great was the rivalry.

A Yeoman Lodge was organized in the nineties, and continued for some time, but sources of material concerning it were impossible to find. A more recent organization in the Wilcox neighborhood is the Daffodil Club, a women's club which has been active since its inception in 1930. It was founded February 20, 1930, by six women, Mrs. Marvin Carroll, Mrs. Ben Kammerzell, Mrs. Hugh J. McNeilly, Mrs. Hugh V. McNeilly, Mrs. Harry Sanders, and Mrs. Fay Templeton. Membership is limited to twenty, and the club members engage in Red Cross and other charitable work, and enjoy various social activities.

The earliest telephone service was provided by a single line which came to the Fouts store in Wilcox via a barbed-wire fence from the Almota neighborhood. Later the Crumbaker line was built, the lines being placed on fences, and serving subscribers for quite a distance. A switchboard was placed in the postoffice in the Williams home.

About 1906 the Penawawa Telephone Company was organized, Willis Adams being named president. This new system extended new lines through the surrounding area — poles were floated from the Clearwater country down the Snake River to Penawawa, the company paying \$1.00 a pole. John Major and Fay Templeton built this line, the Penawawa Telephone Company buying the switchboard from the Crumbaker owners. The Wilcox exchange connected with the Colfax exchange, with no toll charge. In the 1920's the Wilcox exchange was discontinued, the local subscriber's lines connecting directly with the Colfax office. In November, 1947, the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph instituted its suburban service, and thus ended the Penawawa Telephone Company. Dial service arrived April 1, 1956.

A few of the early telephone operators in Wilcox were John Jones, Mr. and Mrs. James Williams, Hannah Moran Chamberlain, Louise Reichenauer Vickery, and Mabel Wilkerson Carroll. Mrs. Carroll has told of those days — she lived with the Williams family, and was paid \$4.00 a week. Her hours were 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and her duties in addition to operating the switchboard consisted of taking care of the postoffice

and clerking in the little store, which sold a few school supplies, confectionary items, soft drinks, and on Sundays — ice cream.

James Williams, mentioned above, was a blacksmith. The Wilcox Postoffice and telephone exchange were in one room of his house. Stores were operated in Wilcox by Adam Luft, Del Fouts, Sam Whitten, A.E. Studer. Homer Williams, later a well-known business man of Colfax, owned a store in Wilcox, and also taught in the Wilcox school. Roy Morgan owned a feed mill, and a cobbler shop was operated by Bill Bock.

In its heyday Wilcox boasted a feed-mill, two blacksmith shops, a cobbler shop, two general stores, a postoffice and telephone exchange, a two-story school, and numerous residences. Today nothing remains of the little community but the old Williams home, now vacant, the shell of the once large school, and three or four empty homes. The John Heilsberg family is the only remaining one, living on the farm homesteaded in the seventies by Peter Hoss. In Wilcox itself no one lives. The coming of the automobile, better roads, rapid communication and the mechanization of farming operations have accomplished this, here in Wilcox as elsewhere.

