



The Bunchgrass Historian

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Indian Scares Panic Homesteaders



Palouse City in 1882

—Photo from Paul Bockmier collection

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Introduction

The outbreaks of Indian violence through the years of white settlement in the West were sparked by many widely varied incidents. Some incidents were created by the acts of renegades of the tribes and their actions were not sanctioned by the tribal leaders, but Indians were Indians to the settler and every report of livestock theft, burned out homesteads, injury or killing increased the anxiety of the settlers living in Indian country. The ancient trails of the redmen were still used to get to their fishing and hunting grounds, to dig the camas, pick berries or change the seasonal campsites. They passed by the homesteader's shack in colorful parades often demanding food and water.

The anxiety of the Indian leaders increased also as the whites, or Bostons as they were called, came in growing numbers each year, usurping Indian land without permission of the owner or any payment for same, depleting the game supply, spreading epidemic disease, misrepresenting treaty terms, trespassing on Indian land to seek gold or any other reason they deemed it necessary.

There was reason for distrust and apprehension on both sides.

Settlement in Whitman county had only begun in the late 1860's. When the county was organized in 1872 there were only about 200 people living within its boundaries which at that time included Adams and Franklin counties. The county was still sparsely settled when Chief Joseph's band of Nez Perce went on the warpath on June 14, 1877. There were very few village settlements at that time and the 2247 persons living in the whole of the county were widely scattered. With only the most primitive wagon roads connecting neighbors and villages to the homesteaders one can readily appreciate the fear that brought panic and the desperate race across the countryside to the closest village for protection.

This issue of the **Bunchgrass Historian** features the forts that were built, the guns that were issued, some first hand accounts by settlers and other articles about that time in our history one hundred years ago this month. □

Front page photo numbered buildings identified. (6) The "Fort," so called because it was at one time encircled by a stockade for protection in the event of an Indian attack. (1) House of ill-repute. (2) Hotel owned by Daniel Preffer. (3) Saloon. (4) Hotel owned by O. E. Clough. This building fell through the ice while it was being moved across the river by oxen. The entire business section was moved to the level ground where it is today. (5) C. J. Cox house. (7) Sam Dimmick's house. (8) Flour mill owned by Wm. P. Breeding.

Whitman County Forts

1877-1878

By Elsie Collins

There were few settlers in the Palouse area country in the year 1877. In November of 1872 Colfax had a population of 30 people. The hills and flats were covered with bunch grass, sarvass bushes, wild rose bushes and sun flowers, to name a few.

Some pioneer accounts tell of "rolling hills and pleasant valleys covered with bunchgrass to a horse's knee." There was an abundance of wild flowers which grew on the dry prairies with the bunchgrass.

There were quite a number of Indian tepee villages scattered along the streams that flowed water, also on the Texas trail that left Snake river at Texas Ferry, crossed the Palouse at Matlock bridge, through the present Pine City country, on the location of Cheney and Four Lakes and to the mouth of the Spokane River. There were also the Kentuck trails from Snake River through Rosalia country, on to Spokane Falls and the Seenyackatene. The Indians traveled all these trails quite frequently. Indian camps were built along the streams since they could obtain food through fishing.

On June 14, 1877, Chief Joseph's band of Nez Perces took up arms, their field of operation being Camas Prairie in Idaho.

Early in August reports were spreading among the settlers throughout the Palouse country that the Nez Perces were heading north and in no time would be traveling over the part lying on the eastern side of the state.

It seems that the Indians were completely ignorant at that time of the terror they were causing everyone, and it was found out later that the northern Indians were uneasy, as they also believed the settlers might be planning of-fensive warfare on them.

An account in the "History of Whitman County" tells us that "A general feeling of uneasiness prevailed. Some reports gained currency that the Palouses, Coeur d'Alenes and Spokanes had gone on the warpath and that Chief Moses was on his way south to join the hostile warriors. People were thrown into a panic.

"Many unfounded rumors were passed person to person. Reason seemed to have temporarily surrendered her citadel and wild fancy ruled. Farms were deserted and the stock which happened to be in corrals at the time were left without food or drink, or turned out and allowed to roam at will."

"A camp meeting was in progress on the banks of the river near Palouse. It was Sunday and a large group in attendance when a messenger arrived announcing that the hostiles were coming. The meeting broke up in disorder and the people rushed pellmell for Colfax. Many pushed on until Walla Walla or Dayton had been reached. Wagons were driven down the steep hills leading to the county seat at a gallop. Never before or since, perhaps, have the streets of Colfax witnessed such a scene of turmoil.

"A blockhouse was built near Palouse City, 125 feet square, and this served 200 people for several days. Some men at Colfax dug rifle pits on the hillsides."

Footnote: We are most appreciative of the efforts of Elsie Collins and Dorothy Matson in researching the material for this article. Elsie is a former resident of Whitman county now living in Clarkston. Dorothy is recently retired from Washington State University.

Lower Palouse and The Lacrosse Country

We read in the book "Pioneering in the Lower Palouse and The Lacrosse Country, written by Minnie Turner Fronck, that "Some of the Palouse Indians were determined to join in the war against the whites. These Indians traveled through our place on the Palouse. We were in constant fear of being massacred during this time. Father kept five large hounds, and the Indians were very much afraid of them. The Indians did not dare get off their cayuses unless they first called "close nanish caramouche" which meant "Watch the Dogs Closely." The dogs were cross and one of them nearly tore a blanket from one of the Indians. One night the dogs growled, and they knew the Indians were near. They barred the doors. The Indians were afraid or else they might have set fire to the cabin.



Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Benton Turner

—Photo courtesy Elsie Collins

"After this Indian scare, Mrs. Turner was sent to Portland with the family. They had to take a boat down from Riparia. Mr. Turner and his hired man stayed on the ranch, and slept in the haystacks at night. A band of calves ran down a hill one night, and they thought their time had come. The hired man ran and hid in the brush along the river. Mr. Turner soon saw what it was, but at first they thought it was Indians.

"Guns and knives were carried by the Indians. They did not travel together, but would string along two or three at a time. When one came in sight you could look for more. There was one Indian named "Sunday" who pretended to be a close friend of the Turners. One day Martha Turner was alone and "Sunday" and another Indian came and sharpened their big knives on their grindstone. They kept talking in Indian and she thought they were going to kill her, but they finally rode off.

Pine City

Roy Smith, brother of Henry Smith, writes in his book "Smith Brothers — Shor-lz." that "There was a stockade out of town toward the school house on a small hill where there was a small spring of water and no trees or brush near for concealment. It had been built by the first settlers about 1875 out of logs for protection against the Indians in case they should go on the warpath. It was in the minds of the people all the time that trouble might arise."

J. D. Butler, father of Margaret Scott, writes in his "Reminiscences of an Old Timer." "When the Nez Perce broke out in 1877 there was talk of all the Indians north of the Snake river, the Palouse, Spokane, Coeur d'Alenes and Colville, joining together for one grand raid on the scattered settlements.

"Tales of what the Indians might do alarmed the people to such an extent that the men decided to build a fort on a raised spot of ground. The location is in the Smith brothers' field about one-half mile south of Pine City. The word was



Pine City Fort Site

broadcast and the people came in on the appointed day for starting work. Men came in with their wagons and teams. For 4-horse teams did the hauling and Mr. Bonnie, Wes Clark, George Butler and I did the chopping. There was quite a force of men digging ditch, setting logs on end in the ditches and tamping dirt around them. Two good sized logs on end in the ditches would be placed upright and a smaller one on each side to close the crack. The logs were about 14 feet long, set four feet in the ground. When logs were placed to within four feet of the corner, they were jogged out four feet and built around the corner, with portholes in them so that one could see along the side of the wall and shoot at Indians before they would come close and attempt to scale the top.

After the fort was built there was another Indian scare. Among those who came to the fort were Messrs. Turner, Bonnie, Naught, Ross, Jeffries, Ralls and Gage. Their wagons, containing about all of their household effects were taken inside. I did not go into the fort so I am not sure who all did, but there were

several others, I think, besides the ones I mentioned. All of the families had four or five children. Father and Mother packed our wagon and I gathered in 60 head of our horses, leaving 12 head that could not be found. My brother George was four years my senior so he stayed at home to look after the ranch. He never stayed in the fort at night. In fact all of the bachelors stayed at home or visited around or went about their work as usual, but always had their eyes open and on the look out in every direction. An Indian could not come to the top of a hill without being seen at once.

A company of volunteers was organized and elected James Alfrey captain. Luke Ralls was first lieutenant, Mel Choat second Lieutenant. The fifty men who joined the company applied to the government officers at Fort Walla Walla for guns. They were sent to Colfax. The day the fort was finished James Alfrey and Luke Ralls went and got them. The guns had fifty rounds of ammunition for each, and were distributed to the men on the afternoon of the day the fort was finished.

During the next two days people moved into the fort. On the third evening, Andy Patterson came by with guns for a fort which had been built at Spangle and where a company had been organized with old "Cap" Wells as captain. By the time that Anderson had fed and rested his horses it was dark. He did not care to travel alone with guns at night so my brother and Mel Choat went with him."

Rosalia

In the book "History of Rosalia" by Alice V. Campbell, we read that "A blacksmith shop was started by Samuel Gage in 1876 across the road from Whitman's store. These two buildings and Whitman's stage inn or rather a dwelling where travelers might get meals and lodging comprised the village of Rosalia . . . Later in 1877 an unfounded Indian scare took place throughout the Palouse country. The Indians were much puzzled over the action of the whites. It is reported that Chief Saltese sent Indians to herd the stock from the poorly fenced fields of the settlers, and even stopped himself to feed the hungry swine of a farmer north of town who had fled for safety. The Indians thought that the whites or Boston men as called them had gone to a 'Pow Wow'.

"As an aftermath a block house was built, the next year, on the hill north-east of town just above the Great Northern track. It was placed there for the sake of the view in all directions, but was never needed."

T. F. and W. J. Donahoe came to Whitman County in 1871, and J. E. Kennedy came in 1872. They all helped to build the block houses or forts at Pine City and Rosalia at the time of the great Nez Perce Indian scare.

One day during the period of excitement a messenger came from Colfax, and warned the settlers that the Indians were heading this way. That night the settlers were all huddled together in the house of James Falkner, expecting the Indians to arrive and attack them at any moment. It was a long distressing night for the women and the next day most of them started for Walla Walla, but the Indians did not come. (**Citizen-Journal**, July 18, 1913.)

Farmington

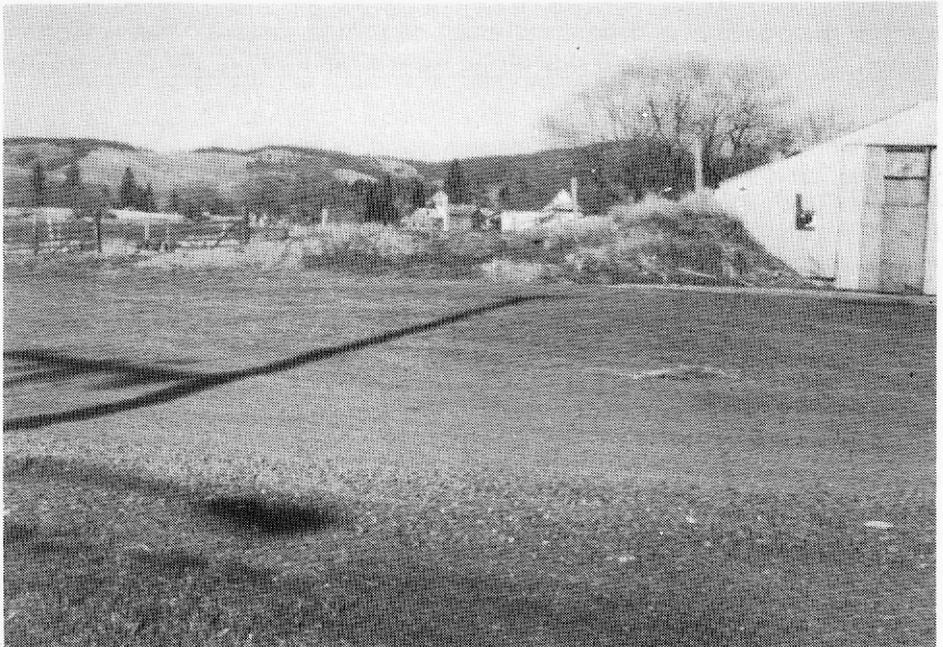
The following accounts were gathered by Charles Blickenderfer from pioneer families of the Farmington area.

John Ritchie was one of the earliest settlers. He was a bachelor and came to the fort and stayed one night. He said he wasn't afraid, so he went home June 22. His cabin was near a spring, which was his homestead and was three



Fort Site at West End of Farmington

—Photo courtesy Leona Tufts



Fort Site of West End of Farmington Today

—Photo courtesy Neita Curtis

miles east of Farmington. He was killed by some renegade Indians June 23 while standing in his doorway. The house was later occupied by P. R. Culp.

Mr. Aden Davis and family moved in to the fort. They reported that each family took their own supplies. They slept on straw ticks. Sometimes as many as five children slept in one bed. They cooked on a common stove, and had one large table for all.

Norma Luite reports, "Due to the Indian Uprising of 1877, a stockade was built and a company of soldiers organized. There were in truth two stockades—one near the present depot, and one near where the Ben Jacky home is located. When it was heard in 1877 that the Indians were headed in this direction everyone gathered together at the George McQueen farm, west of the stockade, now owned by the Hevel estate.

"The men spent a miserable night making bullets and expecting an attack. None was made, however, and the next day they went to Colfax. The Coeur d'Alene Indians were not unfriendly and invited the white people to come to the mission for protection."

An account by Mrs. Sarah Truax tells us, "My mother was so afraid of Indians, and seeing a rider coming toward the place, was afraid to open the door and afraid not to. She saw Father Cataldo there and a friendship was formed that lasted until the end of his life."

Mrs. Ruth McQueen writes about her grandfather, Richard A. Truax: "The Coeur d'Alene Indians were very friendly, and showed their friendliness by bringing meat and helping the white people at the time of the Indian scare . . . In 1876 [1877] the Nez Perce Indians became troublesome and the settlers were forced to leave their homes.

"The chief of the Coeur d'Alenes sent Indians over to tell the people to come to the mission and stay in the church where they would be protected. But instead of going to their mission they went to Colfax. While they were gone the Coeur d'Alene Indians took care of the grain and kept the cattle out of it. After the trouble was over and it was safe for the people to return to their homes, they were notified by one of the Indians. This shows the good will towards the white people."

The men tried to obtain arms from Governor Brayman of Idaho Territory, but he wouldn't issue guns to home guards, and he advised them to organize a Volunteer Militia Company. This they did, and went to Lewiston for guns. They got some that had just arrived by steamboat the day before. They got back home by eleven that night, having ridden 120 miles in 26 hours. The Militia was never called into action, but they drilled once a week in the grove where the school house stands, according to an account by Annie Richie Edmonson.

Colfax

D. S. Bowman met with three Indian Chiefs at this time, one of which was Chief Salteese. He told them that people had come to Colfax and were building a stockade so that they could better defend themselves if they had it to do.

In 1871 there were 83 permanent settlers, or about 200, on Union flat and around the Palouse forks. Another reference reports "In Colfax and Palouse rifle pits were dug and barricades of wagons and stones erected in the streets."

An account in "History of Whitman County" says, "Some of the male refugees at Colfax mollified their own feelings and proved to their wives and families their animus to protect these helpless dependents by digging rifle pits in the hillsides.

“About 20 men in the town organized themselves into a scouting party and set out on an expedition. They saw no traces of hostilities. At Fort Howard, Idaho, they were informed that Joseph’s band had not crossed the Clearwater. The account which they brought back to Colfax had a pacifying influence there.”

Annie Richie’s account states, “L. W. Davenport of Farmington was chosen captain of the wagon train for the trip. Arriving at Colfax, the men busied themselves in digging rifle pits, across what is now the main street of Colfax in preparation of the expected arrival of the redskins. The people remained there a week and as the Indians did not show up they returned to their homes.”

Leitchville

The following is from a report written by John Hooper, age 13, of Johnson, for an 8th grade class assignment. His mother, Clara Hooper, resided in Johnson.

“In the early days of 1876, the country now known as Johnson, Wash., was covered with bunchgrass and rocks. A small creek ran down the middle of the valley into the country beyond. Wild horses and Indians roamed the land in great numbers. Indians in search of camas, had left trails that dotted up the territory. Wild horses ran from the Snake River to the hills of this valley.

“At this time, in order to get their mail, these men had to travel to Leitchville. This was the station on the stage coach line between Colfax and Lewiston. Besides as a stage coach station; a fort against the Indians, a combination hotel, store and post office was erected there.

“The fort was built in the hill above the hotel and a secret tunnel was dug from the hotel to the fort. This was for protection against the Indians which roamed this country. The other fort, in this region was in Moscow, then a small town with only one store owned by . berry Lu Allen.

“In the year 1879 the Indians of this region went on a rampage and the families of this region had to go to the forts. Most of them going to Leitchville while a few of them went to Moscow. This rampage did not last long and was not long that everything was going on as before. Rocky Butte and Wild Horse Butte, now known as Bald Butte, were two of the famous Indian encampments. A few of the old landmarks of Leachville still exist. For example; about four miles west of Colton on the Union Flat are some rifle pits where the settlers used to go in case of Indian attacks. Back when Leachville existed, the pits were located on a rise in back of the city’s store.”

Palouse

“A blockhouse was built near Palouse City, 125 feet square, and this served 200 people for several days. About 480 wagon loads of Poles entered into the construction of this fortification. In “The Palouse Story” we read “One lady who was born on a farm six miles southeast of Palouse told us that the Indians camped back of their place at a campground. The butte back of her farm was the signal point for the Coeur d’Alene and Nez Perce Indians. The Indians used to go there and send smoke signals. She also said there was a block house on what is now known as the La Zello place and one on the Broyles places.” The main river crossing at that time was Kennedy Ford.

An article, written by Mrs. Lucille Coleman Parker says, “Among early

happenings were dealings with the Indians and a near war in 1877, when the Indians banded together for a siege on Moscow, and a fort was built on Four Mile where the women and children gathered for protection.

“Uncle Sam issued guns to the settlers and most of the men scouted around in Indian fashion to see that they came no nearer. However they came no closer than where the Memorial plaque now stands beyond Moscow.”

Another article written by Cora Ball tells us, “One of the main Indian trails crossed near the butte.” She recalled that Chief Joseph had stopped at this camp ground and spring on the butte to rest while traveling through the Palouse country.□

Indian Scare of 1891

Rumors that various Indian tribes of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho were going on a war path in 1891 resulted in many wild rushes of people to the stockades and forts built at Colfax, Palouse, Leitchville, (Moscow, Idaho) and Walla Walla.

Captain F. L. Evans who had served as an artilleryman in the regular army and was later an officer in command of cadets at the Pullman Military College began organizing a company in Pullman to combat the Indian hordes. He was about ready to take to the field when a runner announced that there was no longer cause for alarm.

Communications was slow and rumors grew and people hadn't forgotten the Steptoe campaign and Chief Joseph's campaign. —**Pullman Herald Golden Jubilee**, Nov. 4, 1938.

Palouse Indians Claims

“Assistant Attorney O. P. Hubbard of the Dept. of Justice, Wn., D. C. was in Colfax July 1893 getting evidence of indian depredation claims made by the residents of the Palouse Country, **says the Commoner**.

Mr. Hubbard had worked on this problem since last December and listened to numerous stories of the indians outrages in Montana, Wyoming and Oregon. The indian claims pending at the time in the states west of the Mississippi River and a few of the southern states amounted to nearly \$20,000,000.

THE CLAIMANTS WERE:

W. G., Corum—administrator of Farmington, Wn. \$5,620.

Horace C. Quigley, Colton \$482.

James Butler, Pine City, \$1,400 damages by the Nez Perce tribe.

George Dyer of Pine City—administrator \$750.

P. B. Whitman, Lewiston—damages (P. B. Whitman was a nephew of the man for whom Whitman County was named) \$41,895.

The claims of the settlers were for the value of stock run off, buildings burned and general property destroyed by the indians belonging to the settlers.

Pullman Herald, 14 July, 1893.

Mary Pickard's Story

By Nicholas J. Manring
From an interview with Mrs. C. V. Moody,
nee, Mary Pickard of Spokane

On the day that the news of the Indian uprising reached the homestead of J. A. and Mary Pickard, south of Elberton (which was not there at that time), the men of the Pickard family were off cutting firewood. When a runner came by the homestead relaying the news that Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce were heading north from Wallowa, Mary Pickard set to work to quickly round up her children, get them into the two-seated hack, and to head for Colfax and safety.



—Photo courtesy Verden Irwin

Shown in above photo l. to r., Mary Pickard, Lena Kelly, Zada Irwin, and James A. Pickard in front of thier home, Elberton, ca. 1906.

In the rush to Colfax, the pitch which was used as a lubricant between the hack's wheels and the axles caught fire. The Pickards had to stop, then, for a few minutes and put the fire out before resuming their journey to Colfax.

In Colfax, the Pickards spent several days at the schoolhouse, with many other area families, until news that the Indians were not heading into Whitman county was received. During the time these settlers were gathered in Colfax, an epidemic of diptheria broke out among them. Several of the Pickards had the disease, and the two eldest daughters, Permelia E. and Ora Etta, died from it. These two girls, age seven and nine respectively, were among the first to be buried in the Colfax cemetery. Ora Etta Pickard died on June 20, 1877 and Permelia Pickard on July 11, 1877. □

Footnote: The two girls are granddaughters of Mr. and Mrs. Pickard. Zada Irwin's brother, Harry was for years a mathematics Professor at W.S.C. Lena Kelly's father, Evans Kelly, managed the Winona Flour Mill in the early 1900's.

Warpath

By June Crithfield

The terror that swept the whole of Whitman county in June 1877 with word of the uprising of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce created pandemonium among the settlers. Like children who play 'gossip,' every report was enlarged upon, embroidered and in the passing on of "facts" everyone heard something different in the excitement of the moment.

The panic was completely unnecessary for the rumors concerning the number of Indians involved, their reason for going on the warpath and that they were heading for Whitman county at any time were without basis in fact.

Although the five tribes of Nez Perce involved were called the "malcontents" because they had refused to sign or live up to the treaties which other tribes had agreed to prior to 1877, they were peacefully living on their ancient homelands when word came that General Howard had agreed to the request for assistance in removing the tribes to the reservation made by Agent Monteith on May 3, 1877. They had seen increasing settlement on their lands by the whites, lands trespassed upon by gold seekers and others apparently encouraged by officials who closed their eyes to it all.

Seeing no alternative after Monteith's order, the Indians began the tremendous task of gathering their livestock from the valleys and side canyons of the Wallowas. They had been given only thirty days to do this and be on the reservation. It has been estimated it would take nearly six months to do properly what was required to be done in the thirty days allotted.

The settlers in Whitman county heard of the great number of Indians taking part in the conflict that followed this order. Actually, there were only a very few men in all of the five tribes. L. V. McWhorter, in his book **Hear Me, My Chiefs**, tells us that Joseph's band which was the largest of the five, had only about sixty men. Second to Joseph's band in size was White Bird's band comprised of fifty men. The Looking Glass band numbered near forty men. Toohool-hoolzote's band totaled thirty men. The last and fifth in size was the Paloos band following Chief Hahtalekin being sixteen men. A combined total of 191 which included the aged, the disabled and those lacking the courage to fight. The total of men, women and children was much more, estimated at 600. But the number of available warriors to be called on in the conflict was actually about 155.

There have been many references to "warchief Joseph." Nothing could have been farther from the truth according to McWhorter. Joseph was the youngest of the chiefs and he was a man of peace. He had never been prone to heroic acts which were associated with a war chief in the Indian community. He was a man content to live peacefully among his people, raising cattle and horses in the beloved Wallowa country. A protector and provider, a good council speaker, but not a warrior. This title has been thrust upon him by circumstance.

By June 12, 1877, the Nez Perce had gathered their stock as best they could in the short time allowed, but they remained at Tephahlam. The rivers were raging with spring run-off, they would lose some stock but they would try to comply with the order to move to the reservation. They would have to leave several caches of foodstuff and gold nuggets but they believed they would be allowed to return for them later.

Only forty-eight hours before they must be on the reservation, some of the young men became bitter and angry at being forced to leave their tribal lands



Chief Joseph

Photo Courtesy of Clifford Ott

with such short notice and under the conditions present at that time. They decided to hold a war parade as a final tribute to their ancient meeting place, Tapahlewam, on June 13.

An Indian war parade is a ceremonial affair. The line of mounted warriors is tailed by a brave, the last in the close formation of horsemen, and much farther behind the entire parade are two of the bravest men riding one horse where their purpose is to guard the others from any surprise attack from the rear. McWhorter states that Two Moons rode directly behind the parading horsemen this day and Wahlitits and Sarpsis Ilppilp were the double riders bringing up the far rear. Wahlitits sat in front and as they were riding through the village the horse stepped on a canvas spread with drying **kouse** roots. The owner angrily accused young Wahlitits of putting on a big show of bravery and asked him why he had never killed the murderer of his own father if he was so brave.

Wahlitits was a strong, athletic young man. His physical condition made him an outstanding long distance runner and wrestler. He was a pleasant and generous man but a dangerous opponent when angered. This, then, was the young man, the son of Chief Eagle Robe, who cried after the parade saying he had not avenged his father's murder because so many of the Nez Perce were rich with stock and he did not want them to be robbed.

He brooded after this. Eventually, taking his nephew Swan Necklace with him to hold the horses, he and Sarpsis Ilppilp set out to find Larry Ott, the murderer of Chief Eagle Robe. But Ott had fled to the Florence mining camps. Determined to avenge themselves of the white man's treatment of them in some way, they decided to visit an old man living on the Salmon river named Richard Devine. Devine hated the Indians and never missed an opportunity to threaten them with his gun or sick his vicious dogs on any who passed by his place. They entered his cabin and shot him with his own gun. Soon after this they traveled to the John Day ranch and killed Hank Elfers who had frequently displayed his hatred of the Indians, and they took guns, ammunition and horses. They seemed intent on harming only those who had mistreated them in anyway, they took time to warn the friendly white settlers to stay inside at home that war was coming.

Later they returned to within a few miles of the main encampment, but not wanting their deeds laid to the tribe they made camp, sending Swan Necklace to tell the other Indians of what they had done and that they intended to continue such action the next day. They ask no one to join them but said that any who felt as they did and wanted to resist Monteith's order would be welcomed.

Chief Joseph and his brother, Ollokot, with others, had been away from the main camp for a few days at this time. When they were returning they were greeted at a distance by Two Moons who told them what had happened and that some of the people were already moving. Joseph pleaded with them to stay until the army came and try to make peace again. But they would not listen and finally only the brothers' teepees were left standing at the camp site. Then they also moved with the rest, first to Cottonwood Creek and later to White Bird. The young men of the tribe and most of the older chiefs of the tribe were now determined to fight, and so it began, the Nez Perce War of 1877, sometimes called "Joseph's War."

The closest the war ever came to Whitman county was the battle on the Clearwater near Kamiah, Idaho. hardly close enough to warrant the pandemonium that swept everyone in southeastern Washington. Concerned that the Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Pend Oreille, and Okanogan tribes might join the Nez Perce the

settlers felt surrounded by hostiles at this time. At the same time the northern tribes seeing the whites preparing for seige, thought the settlers were making ready to attack them. No other tribe helped the Nez Perce in 1877. Before it was over and Joseph had surrendered on October 5, the injuries and casualties were many. Joseph's wife, who had delivered a daughter just days after the conflict started, was wounded, his brother, Ollokot, was dead as were Wahlitits and Sarpis Ippilp and all the other chiefs but Joseph and White Bird. White Bird refused to surrender, escaping to Sitting Bull's camp in Canada.

With the surrender, the settlers of Whitman county, who, had returned to their homes and farmsteads soon after the start of the war, were relieved, but the Indians never again knew the Wallowa country as their home and their tremendous loss of livestock, preserved foodstuffs and the like left them unable to provide for themselves as they had always done in the past. □

Whitman Massacre Survivor Buried in Farmington

The residents of Whitman county in 1877 had lived with the fact that life on the frontier was often shaken by confrontations of one kind or another with the Indians. From the time they left their homes in the East they had heard and seen the evidence of Indian attack. In 1877, the Whitman massacre at Walla Walla was only thirty years away. It might be of interest to residents today to learn that a survivor of that massacre lived in Whitman county for some time and is buried in the cemetery at Farmington.

Matilda Jane Sager was eight years old at the time of the massacre. In the spring of 1844 she had left Missouri with her parents, brothers and sisters headed for Oregon. Both parents died during the trip across the plains. The children were cared for by other families in the wagon train. After six months of hardship the children arrived at Waillatpu (Walla Walla) where they were adopted by the missionary doctor, Marcus Whitman, and his wife, Narcissa. Only three years later the Cayuse Indians attack the mission killing the doctor and his wife, Matilda's brothers, John and Francis, and twelve other people living there.

After the massacre the survivors were held for a month until a ransom of \$500 was paid. Homes were found for the Sager girls. Catherine, Elizabeth and Henrietta went to live in homes in Salem, Oregon, Matilda Jane went to live near Forest Grove, Oregon, with her guardian, Dr. Wm. Geiger. Here she remained, no doubt a lonely girl, until her marriage on June 5, 1855, to Lewis Mackey Hazlitt.

Her husband, thirty-one years old, had been in partnership with Dr. Geiger's brothers in raising cattle for the northern markets. They were very happy together and made a fine home for their five children, until his death in 1863. Matilda was a widow at 25 with five small children to care for. She managed to feed and clothe her children and had continued with the Hazlitt-Fultz plans made with Lewis's partner, Mathew Fultz. At last realizing she could not provide and care for her children alone, she accepted Matt's proposal of marriage. They were married on January 2, 1866. This marriage produced three more children. They got along well and prospered but the community in which they lived seemed

Footnote: The above story has been written from personal letters from Mrs. Guy Carpenter of San Francisco, California, who is a granddaughter of Matilda Jane Sager Hazlitt Fultz Delaney, and Mrs. Celesta C. Platz of Seattle, Washington, who is a granddaughter of Catherine Sager Pringle. Of great help was Mrs. Carpenter's personal account of Matilda Jane Sager's life.

to stand still. Matilda longed to move north and her husband no longer able to do the heavy farm work at 62, agreed. In 1882, the family moved by wagon a long way north to Farmington, Washington, and became residents of Whitman county.

They opened a hotel, the Pioneer House, and a furniture store in Farmington. Matt died of diabetes in 1883 and is buried in the cemetery there. Matilda carried on with the help of her older daughters and a hired cook and helper. Her daughters were married later in the hotel parlor. Bertha Hazlitt married Edward P. Dorris in 1887 and they immediately moved into the Edward Delaney house which he had bought in 1886. Mr. Delaney had not finished the house when his wife died leaving him a widower with a family. (Of interest to our readers, this house is the same one pictured in the Spring 1976 issue of the **Bunchgrass Historian**, page five. Featured in that issue for its historic architectural features we now know it is of even more historical value.) In 1889, Mabel Hazlitt married Frank Edward and went to live in California, and Ida Fultz married Wm. Slade, an engineer from Maryland.

The youngest girl, Mattie Fultz spent a great deal of time with the young people in town. Time passed and Mr. Delaney began calling on Matilda at the hotel. He proposed marriage and she decided to accept. They were married September 26, 1889 at Colfax.

In 1896/7 Matilda was invalided with rheumatism and her husband was also ill. It was decided between them that his children would care for him and hers would look after her. She recovered enough to attend the 50th Anniversary of the Whitman Massacre in Walla Walla in 1897, with other survivors including her sisters, Catherine Pringle of Spokane and Elizabeth Helm of Portland. Henrietta had died in Oregon in 1870.

Sometime after the spring of 1897, the Pioneer House burned. Matilda moved to Spokane making her home with her daughter Mattie, who had married Tommy Hye. She lived in Spokane for many years, enjoying the visits to her children's homes in other states and back to Farmington with friends.

Encouraged by the Esther Reed Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, she began writing of her experiences and recollections of the Whitman massacre. The book, **A Survivor's Recollection of the Whitman Massacre**, published in 1920, was sponsored by the Esther Reed Chapter and is now a collector's item.

During World War I business interests took Mattie and Tommy Hye to California to live. They bought a home near Los Angeles and wrote Matilda to come and see what the warmer climate would do for her rheumatism. She was glad to be home and liked Reseda.

Matilda Jane Sager Hazlitt Fultz Delaney died on April 13, 1928, and is buried in the Fultz plot in the Farmington cemetery, in accordance with her wishes. □

Survivors Lived in Pullman

At the time of the Chief Joseph campaign in 1877 B. B. Norton owned a ranch and stage station called Cottonwood House on the Camas Prairie. Warned by a rider, Lew Day, who stopped there after being wounded by the Indians, the Norton family and others in the vicinity decided to try to ride to safety at Mount Idaho, eighteen miles away. Within a few miles of Grangeville the night of June 14 the party of ten persons was attacked and most of them killed or injured.

Twelve year old Hill Norton was told to leave the wagon during the attack and try to reach Mount Idaho. He ran in the darkness alternately dodging Indians and hiding in the tall grass. He survived as did his mother who had been shot in both legs. Mrs. Norton and her son later moved to Pullman making their home on State Street. Hill Norton became a rodeo rider widely known for his nerve. □

Farmington, N. J.

June 30 1886

Received of J. A. Walters
One Springfield Rifle
Cal. 50 - the
Property of the U. S. in
good condition.

This Receipt is given in place
of Note last by

Capt. Frank. McCasie

W. G. Ritchey
Lieut Comp. G.

Palouse Prepares During Panic

By J. B. West

The upper Palouse River Country, which lay in both Washington and Idaho, had never been inhabited by the Indians. The gold discovered along the tributaries of the river, the fertile soil and the bunchgrass of the treeless Palouse hills which had attracted the white men, had no lure for the Redman.

The Palouse river was recognized as the dividing line between the Coeur d'Alene and other tribes in the north and the Nez Perce and other tribes in the south. Peace had been made with the tribes in the north but the ones in the south were not reconciled to the encroachment of civilization and were in a state of unrest during the 1870's when the immigration to the Palouse Country was at its height.

There had always been much visiting between the members of the northern and southern tribes which resulted in many trails being made across the Palouse Country. Some of them were worn knee-deep to the horses and were wide enough for a number of them to walk abreast. Two of them were in Idaho, one of which crossed the river at a place later called Kennedy Ford and followed the general route of today's Highway 95. The other, near the state line, crossed at the Ewing farm. Ewing was a cattle rancher, and known as the first man to settle in the Palouse river valley.

A third trail crossed the river at the point where Palouse City was founded in Washington. The fourth one crossed the river further downstream, near where, pioneer camp meetings were later held, and followed the valley south to pass by the site where the Old Eden Valley Church building now stands.

In 1874, W. P. Breeding filed on a homestead on which he plotted the town of "Palouse City". He built a grist mill on the south bank of the river. To gain access to the site, it was necessary to cut a road into the steep hillside along the river. All supplies had to be hauled in by freight wagon from Almota, a port on the Snake River.

The business section was composed of buildings perched on the steep hillside above the mill. Breeding realized that there should be a place for public gatherings until schools and churches could be built. When W. R. Ragsdale came along seeking a site for a general merchandise store, Breeding offered him some choice lots if he would join him and I. Higgins, a carpenter, in building a two story structure. Ragsdale could use the first floor for his store and the second floor would be used for public gatherings. These choice lots were on level ground at the east edge of the village, two blocks above the mill, with a view up and down the valley and to the north.

For a number of years the upstairs served as a school during weekdays, and as a meeting place on Sunday for the Episcopal and Catholic church members. It was available for town meetings, road shows, lodge meetings, or for any kind of gathering. It was also to serve the community in a way not foreseen by the builders.

The area of the Breeding homestead north of the river was also platted. The old Indian trail coming in from the north became "E" Street. It is now a part of State Highway No. 272. A few houses were built up and down this street. Small groups of Indians continued to use the old trail, and an old campground near the river which is now at the east end of Main Street in Palouse. They would build a big campfire, dance around it and their chanting would keep the



J. B. West with 1878 model U. S. Army issue Springfield rifle

villagers awake until well into the night. They were friendly enough except that young bucks, if they saw any children playing about, would terrify them by drawing their knives and pretending to scalp them. They would continue this torment until an even more terrified parent came to the rescue.

Several of the trails converged about three miles south of Palouse City at the foot of Ringo Butte which is on the Washington side of the state line. Cora Randall Ball, who was born and spent most of her life on a farm in Idaho near the Butte, in an interview, recalled that there was an Indian campground near their house which was used regularly. She observed many of their rituals, including a small child's funeral, which was performed around the campfires. She said they had no reason to fear the Indians. One historian claims that at one time there were as many as a thousand Indians gathered here. This may be somewhat exaggerated but the fact that there were many deep trails would indicate that there were great numbers of them passing through.

There is evidence that Ringo Butte, named for a Ringo family, was used as a signal base. Signals were often sent up from there, which together with the ones from Steptoe Butte, 18 miles to the northwest, tended to build up the tension in the community. Not being able to interpret them, the settlers felt sure that plots were being laid against them.

Reports coming to the new community about the hostile acts of the Indians in the Nez Perce country where settlers were being murdered and homes burned, served to increase the fear it lived under day and night. Immigrants coming into the territory were special targets of the savages. A caravan of 18 wagons which had left Walla Walla bound for Palouse City in 1875 was delayed for weeks at Dayton until an escort of 150 mounted soldiers could accompany it.

Nearly all of the settlers had had previous first-hand experience with hostile Indians while crossing the plains and well knew what to expect of the savages if they chose to make a raid. There had never been any concerted plans made for defense. When a message came that a warring party was approaching, the first thought was to flee. People left their homes and, by any means available, joined in a mad rush toward Colfax. Farmers left their stock without feed and water, or turned them out to roam the fields. A campmeeting was in progress. Those in attendance did not return to their homes but hooked up their teams and joined in the exodus. The sudden descent of panic-stricken settlers into Colfax caused problems there. Some people continued their flight toward Walla Walla.

Friendly Coeur d'Alene Indians, realizing what had happened, rode from farm to farm to care for the deserted stock.

It was a false alarm but it did point up their vulnerability to attack by the Indians which everyone was convinced would be sure to come. The U.S. Military was appealed to for protection but they were told that none was available unless actual hostilities were involved. Advice was given to organize all the settlers in the Palouse Country in order to set up their own defenses. There were many veterans in the area experienced in previous wars, hence, this was done without delay.

The result was that a blockhouse was built on the Ferry Hires farm along The Kennedy Ford trail and another one along the Ewing trail, in Idaho.

In Palouse City it was decided to construct a stockade 124 feet square around the Ragsdale building. Men, teams and wagons were assembled and 480 wagonloads of poles were cut and hauled in, some from as far away as Clear Creek, 10 miles to the west.

The U. S. Army issued the citizens 100, Model of 1878, Springfield rifles equipped with bayonets, and a supply of ammunition.

The next alarm was not long in coming, but this time all were ready for what might come. Two hundred men, women and children gathered at the Ragsdale store. Women and children were sheltered in the upstairs hall and tents were set up for the men inside the stockade where guards were posted at all times. With plenty of supplies at hand and with the new rifles it was thought that any attack could be repelled, or they were ready for a siege if it came to that. But nary a warrior appeared.

After a couple of days, George Mood, who had acted as scout for the wagon train with which he came west, left the fort to reconnoiter. After a few hours he returned and reported that there were no hostile Indians in the area and that there was no evidence that any had been near. They were the victims of another false alarm. People returned to their homes.

When the good news came that peace had come and that never again would there be any fear of attack, the stockade was dismantled and the poles put to other uses. Thereafter, the Ragsdale building, for as long as it stood, was referred to as "The Fort."

The blockhouses along those old trails must have stood for many years because people living today, remember them, as they do segments of the trails. □