

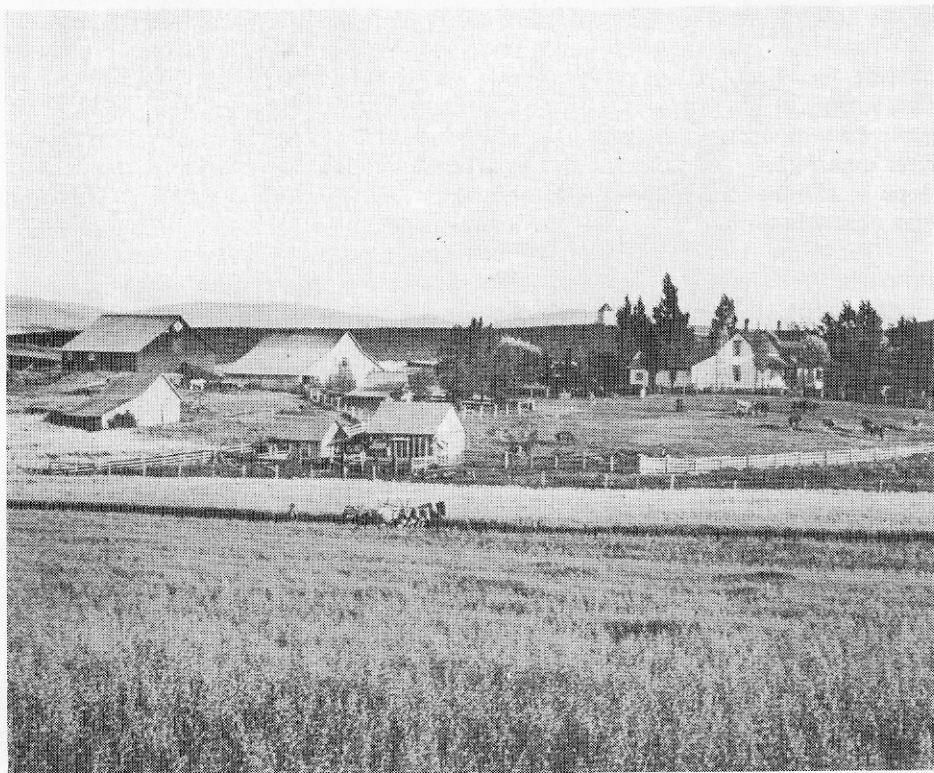


Bunchgrass Historian

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Trading Centers Arise from Farmers' Needs



This farm scene near Tekoa, with its outbuildings and machinery, shows the change from the strictly pastoral bunchgrass landscape first settled, to one of cultivation and harvest. The change encouraged more people to settle here to meet the farm community's needs.



Bunchgrass Historian

Published quarterly in March, June, September and December during the calendar year by the Whitman County Historical Society, at P.O. Box 447, Pullman, Washington 99163 to further an interest in a rich and wonderful heritage by sharing memories of those days of early settlement in the bunchgrass country. Subscription rates are five dollars the calendar year.

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Trading Centers Arise From Farmers' Needs

Once the earliest Whitman county pioneers had settled themselves among the bunchgrass hills of the Palouse and began farming ever more acres of the fertile soil, the demand for goods and services closer to home grew apace.

What ever was needed in Whitman county must be transported from the outside to this inland empire; every mode of transportation at the time, be it horse, wagon or steamer, was time consuming. Roads were merely widened trails and impassable much of the time even for horses. The level of the Snake river determined the schedule of the steamboat runs and even after delivery to dock or sandbar the goods must then be moved to the farm by team. The wait was costly in time and money. The need was great.

Out of the demand, new businesses were established which made the trips to Walla Walla and Portland for supplies unnecessary. Flour mills and blacksmith shops, department stores and machinery dealers, livery stables and hotels, cafes and ice cream parlors, not to mention the numerous and ever-present saloons in every town.

From Palouse City to Winona and from Rosalia to the Snake river these commercial enterprises sprang up, and through the years, the rise and fall of the business community was largely dependent on the economic health of the agricultural community. There were the bad years of 1893-94, the '29 crash that heralded the Great Depression of the '30's, but just as many of the earliest farm family names are still identified with agriculture, so, too, are many of the family names associated with the early trading centers still doing "business as usual" in the county.

The pictorial display featured in this issue of the Bunchgrass Historian will surely bring to mind even more family business names than those recalled here.

Erratum: Our apologies to Betty Manning, Sybl Nygreen and Vern Henson for inadvertently misspelling family names in the last issue.



—Courtesy Irene Weitze

Door-to-door peddlers supplied the housewife with fresh produce in season, meat in the winter, dairy products and miscellaneous kitchen equipment.

John W. Rice — Village Blacksmith

As necessary as food and drink to any community of settlers was the blacksmith. Almost everything the pioneers needed in the way of supplementary farm tools, surgical instruments and machinery parts were made by the local blacksmith.

John W. Rice was a master blacksmith. Born in 1828 in Indiana, he was apprenticed out at the age of 14 because of the stringent limitations faced by his father's family during their days of settlement in Indiana.

Apprenticed to a blacksmith for a period of seven years he was also taught the common subjects of the elementary school and bookkeeping. He spent the first year of his apprenticeship working the bellows and watching how things were done. The second year he made horseshoe nails by hand for a group of other smiths as well as his own master. The third year he was given a variety of tasks but the main one was to use the heavy sledge hammer on ploughshares and other heavy forgings. It took two hands to lift this sledge. The seventh year he learned the art of tool making and it was at this work that he excelled. He learned to use common files that were no longer useful as files, in making any sort of keen blade. His razor blades compared favorably with the finest English made Sheffield razors.

His keen eye could distinguish between the merest shading in color to obtain the exact degree of hardness necessary in tempering steel tools.

After completing his apprenticeship at twenty one, he opened his first blacksmith shop in Illinois and did very well. Later he moved with other relatives to Nebraska where he set up shop and bought a farm which his sons worked for him. Disastrous flooding of his farmland which lay along the Nemaha river in 1878 discouraged the family.

In 1879, with their household goods in two wagons they joined a caravan of forty wagons headed West. Arriving in Walla Walla later that year, John Rice worked as a blacksmith until after harvest and then came on to Colfax. He took a homestead, pre-emption and a timber claim near Albion where he built a large home for the family.

Turning the farm over to the boys, he set up a blacksmith shop at Colfax ten miles from home. There his honesty and skill soon made him the most popular and prosperous smith between Colville and Walla Walla.

At that time there were no trained machinists, not even a powerdriven lathe in Whitman county. Machine parts had to come from Portland. Farmers could not afford to have their harvest crews wait around for days for replacement parts for a machine to come from Portland while they fed ten to twelve head of horses who were also idle. The ingenious blacksmith was their only hope.

Frequently, some of the cogs in the huge drive wheel broke under the strain of the horses pushing against the long sweeps. To order a new wheel from Portland would take a week or more for delivery. John Rice perfected a method of replacing the broken cogs by dove-tailing in new cogs. It was a job that took from ten to twenty hours of exacting work. It soon became known that there were few farm machines that he could not repair.

Flour was ground between two huge granite mill stones or burrs at that time. The stones were grooved to allow the flour to flow out to bins. The grooves often became worn down and the whole stone would have to be trimmed and the grooves deepened. This required steel picks with chisel-like edges. It was necessary that the picks be of a uniform hardness. John Rice soon monopolized the business of mill-pick sharpening for mills as far away as Moscow, Cheney and Colville. □

Footnote: From *Reminiscences of a Pedagogue* by S. C. Roberts, 1935.



—Courtesy Clifford Ott

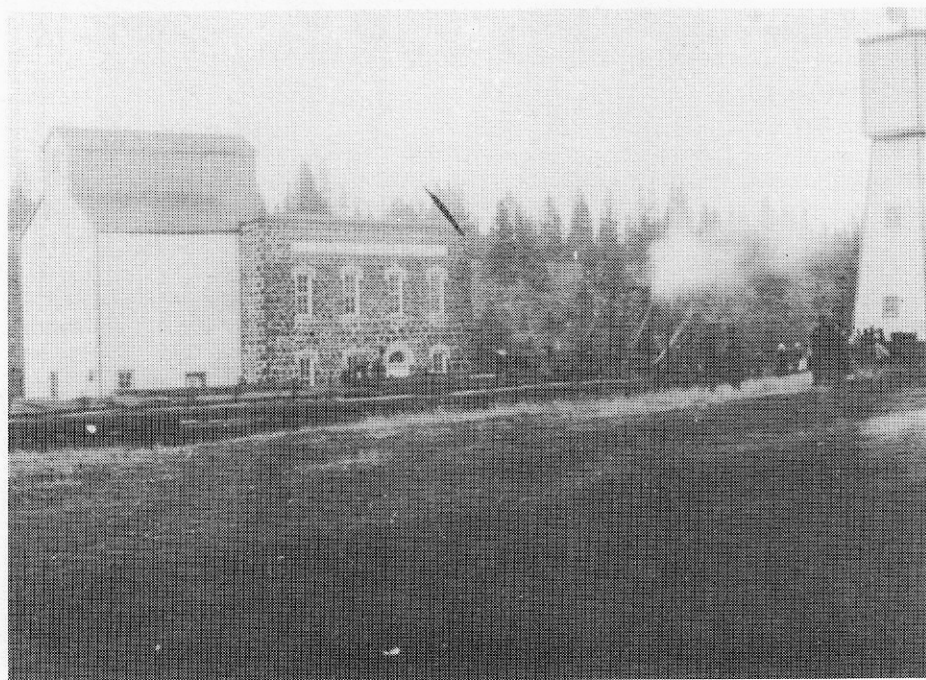
Potlatch Lumber Co., Palouse, Wash., 1906-07

Located below Palouse Highway bridge and highway to Colfax to left in picture. Photo was taken by Romig of Moscow.



—Courtesy Paul Bockmier

Palouse flour mill about 1889. Northern Pacific Railway track in foreground.

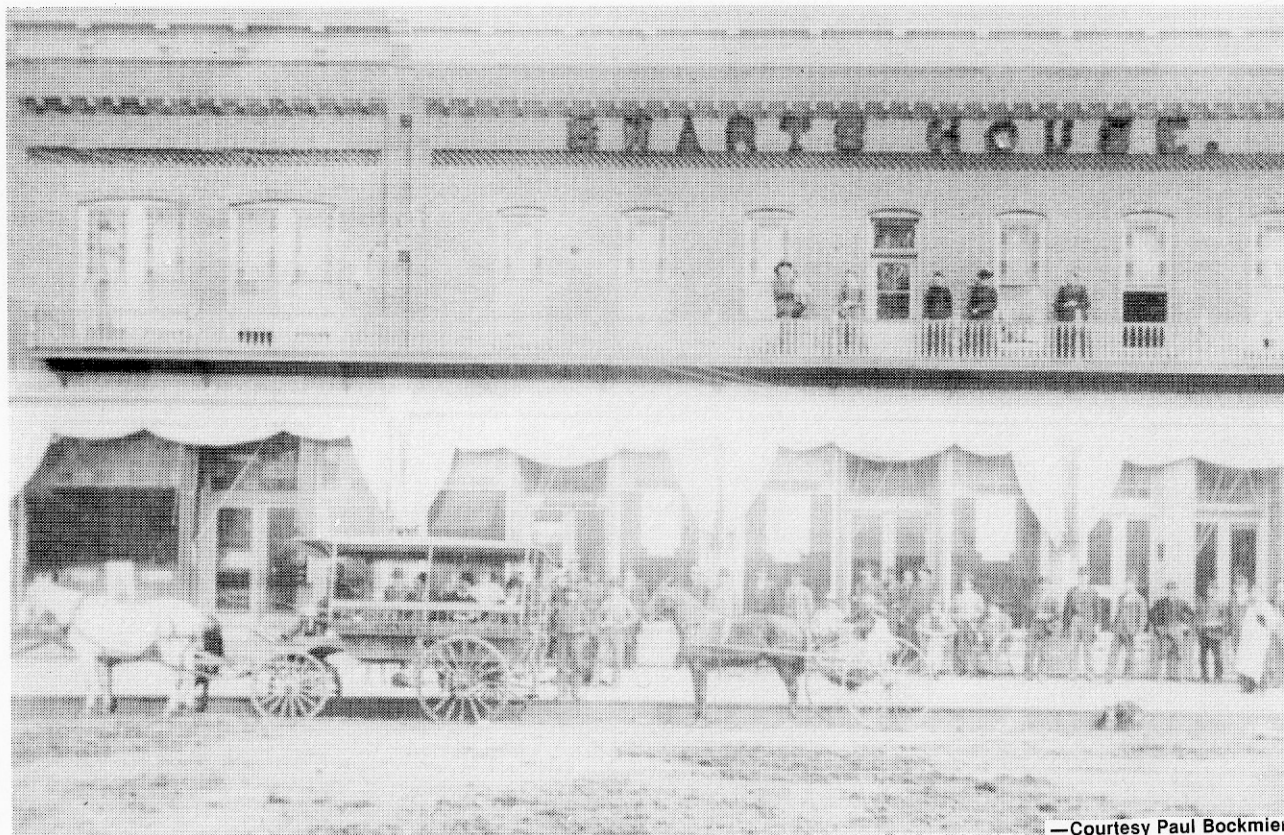


The grinding stones for this early Pine City flour mill which came around the horn by sailing vessel, in 1880, have been donated and mounted at the Perkins House by Henry Smith, Pine City.



—Courtesy Lawrence Welle

The First State Bank in Uniontown.



—Courtesy Paul Bockmier

The Swarts House, Palouse about 1892.

The name of the hotel was changed to Northern Hotel and finally to Commercial Hotel. The man in cart is "Capt." Swarts with his son Johnnie.



—Courtesy of Mrs. Henry Ankcorn

Interior of Ankcorn Hardware Store at Palouse about 1904
L. to R. are Fred Ankcorn and W. R. Belvail.

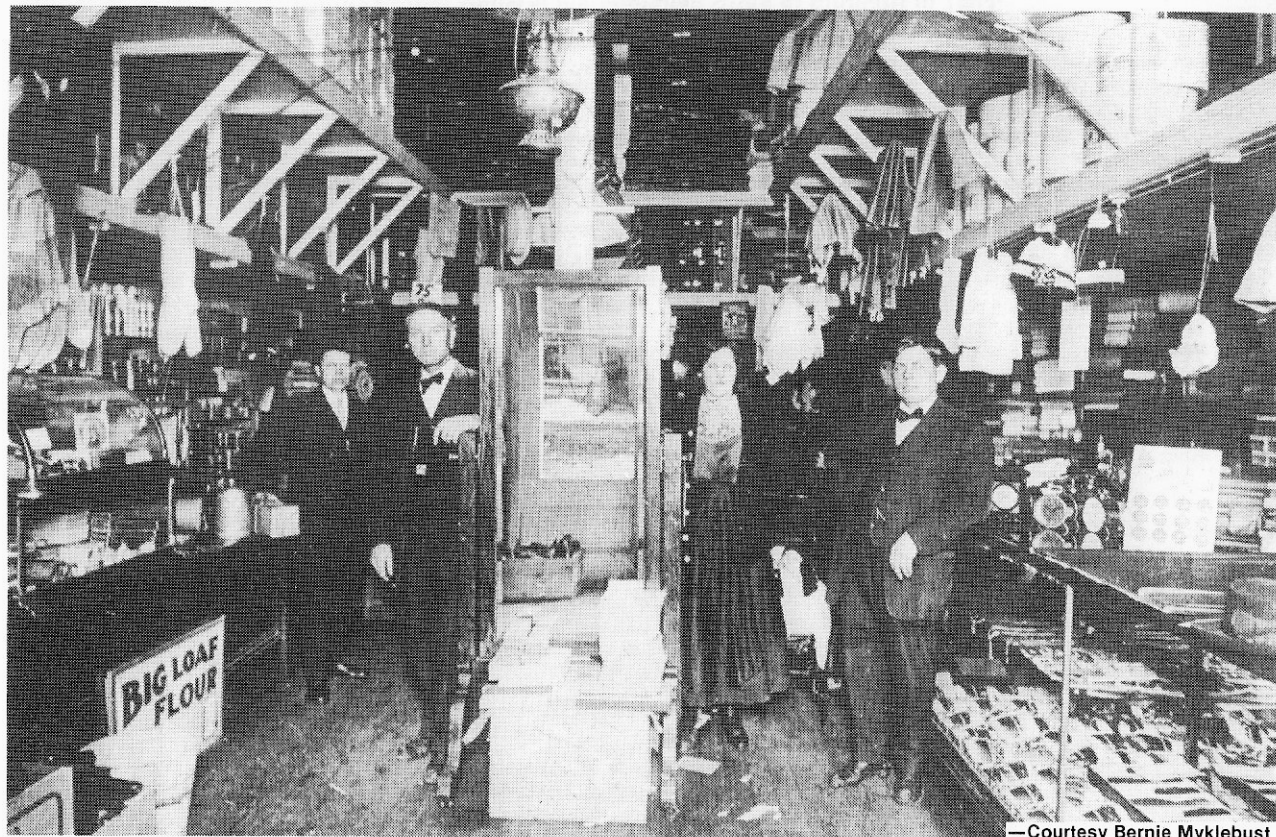


Tekoa Implement Store supplies the mechanized needs of early Palouse country farmer.



—Courtesy Clifford Ott

Huntley Bros. General Merchandise Store at Endicott in 1903.



—Courtesy Bernie Myklebust

Interior of Myklebust store at Rosalia, ca. 1912.

L. to R. K. T. Myklebust, A. Gronsahl, lady is unknown and T. A. Myklebust, father of "Bernie" Myklebust of Pullman.

The Myklebust Co.

A Modern Department Store Conducted by Business Men on the "Golden Rule" Plan

RECENTLY MOVED INTO THEIR NEW HOME

The department store of the present day is the old general store modernized and brought up to date by scientific business methods. The great difference between the old general store and the newer department store is found in the system of conducting the business.

The general store was one large concern handling many different kinds of merchandise; the department store of today is made up of a number of distinct stores, each specializing in its particular line but under one roof and one central management. The newer plan offers many advantages. It has a better organization and as each department is handled as a unit, its efficiency or weakness is more readily apparent and it is easier for it to keep in touch with the requirements of its customers.

The business of Myklebust Co. is now being conducted on department store lines.

The firm began business April 13, 1912, with a general stock of merchandise in a building 24x60 feet. The business prospered from the start and it soon became evident that the store space was not large enough for the constantly increasing trade. So an arrangement was made with Mr. Brockway to erect a new building for them according to their plan.

They are now occupying the new

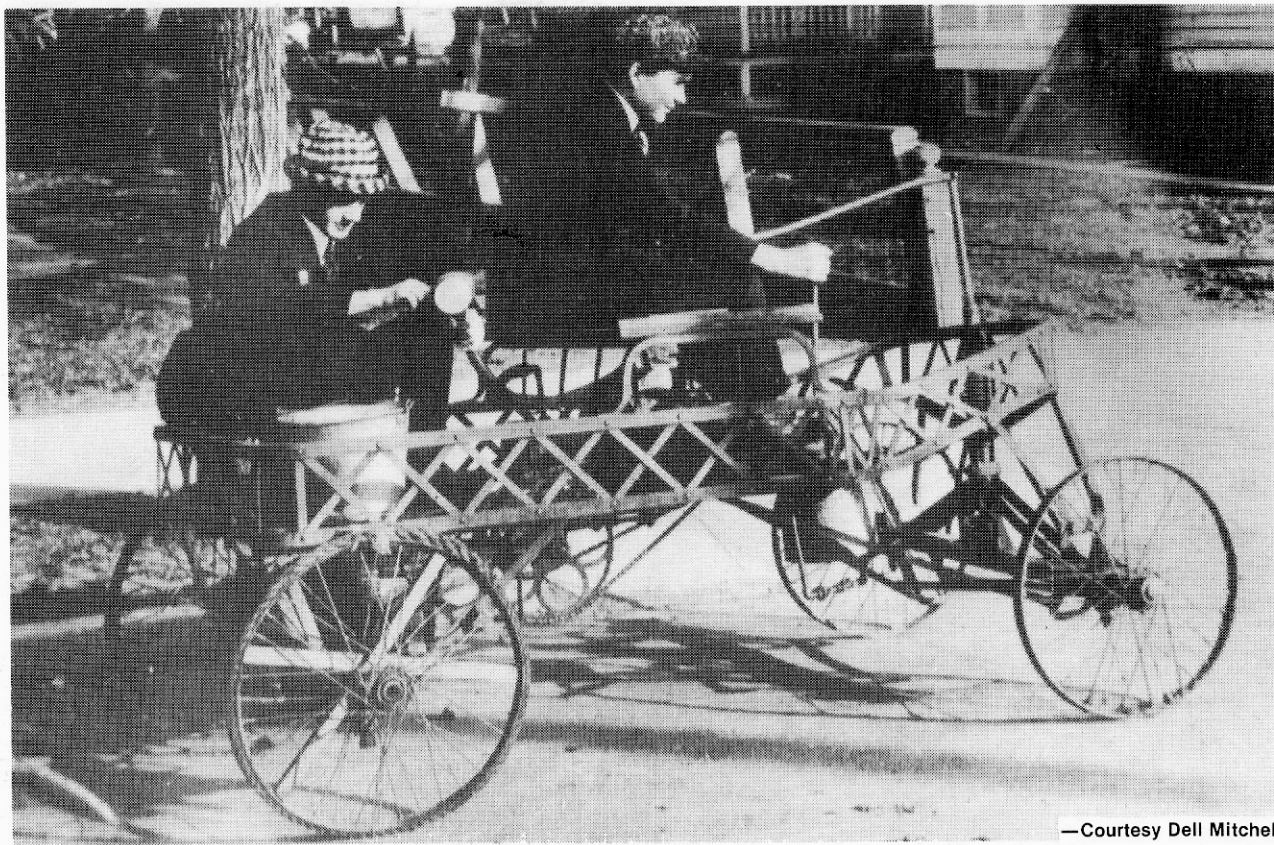
store, which is one of the most conveniently arranged and completely equipped business houses in the Inland Empire.

The store room is 50x100 feet with a full basement under the entire building. It is steam heated and perfectly ventilated, has hot and cold water, and a built-in fire-proof vault. There is a ladies' fitting room, a rest room and a dressing room for women and children with all conveniences.

The firm is composed of K. T. Myklebust, T. A. Myklebust and A. Grons Dahl and they have all had many years of experience in the business. Mr. T. A. Myklebust gained his department store experience in the eastern states. Mr. Grons Dahl was for twenty year in the general merchandise business in Iowa and Mr. K. T. Myklebust was for six years with the largest department store in Idaho. For a number of years he was a buyer for the house, so he is well posted on prices and has a thorough knowledge of the great market centers of the east, which should prove of value to his customers.

They carry a complete line in all departments but make a speciality of women's and men's ready to wear clothes, and they take great pride in their shoe department, in which several famous makes are carried.

Reproduced from the special 1913 issue of the Rosalia Citizen Journal.



—Courtesy Dell Mitchell

The Carley Car first auto in Whitman county. While Orville Chase mans the tiller, the engine is cooled by Dell Mitchell with cup, bucket and hose, in 1914 photo.

The Carley Iron Works

Colfax was the birthplace of the very first automobile ever seen in Whitman county. The inventor was Myron Carley a machinist from New York who had migrated to the Palouse country.

Acquiring a Barnes, foot-powered, metal-working lathe his general repair business prospered and he began inventing and then producing various kinds of machinery.

After a time he moved into a larger building and added equipment to repair farm and mill machinery and took his brother William Carley into partnership with him to form the Carley Iron Works.

Although the internal combustion gas engine was still in the experimental stage, Myron Carley had one that worked. It was a single cylinder device and as soon as he had succeeded in making it run and then stop running, he was determined to build a "horseless carriage."

During the winter of 1898, Myron was ill for a time and while he was recuperating the plans for the automobile were conceived. Work began that spring and continued throughout that year and the next as a sort of side project.

The automobile was a very crude affair, framed of strap iron and mounted on heavy bicycle wheels. The 550-pound auto featured a two-and-one-half-horsepower hydro-electric carbon engine, had coil springs front and rear, a solid brass differential and a divided steering fork. It could easily carry four people as it whizzed along at twelve miles an hour.

Mr. Franklin, an eastern manufacturer, came to learn from Mr. Carley how to build a differential so the wheel on the outside would turn faster than the wheel on the inside.

The debut for this remarkable machine was set for July 4, 1900, when it was featured in that day's celebration at Colfax. The sidewalks were filled with spectators for four blocks as Mr. Carley drove it out on the street with a heavy gong-announcing the approach of the car. It traveled the length of Main street, turned and came back to the center of town where it basked in the admiration of the crowd for most of the afternoon.

This latest product of the Carley Iron Works was a complete success and further attested to the ability of these early craftsmen to make almost anything.

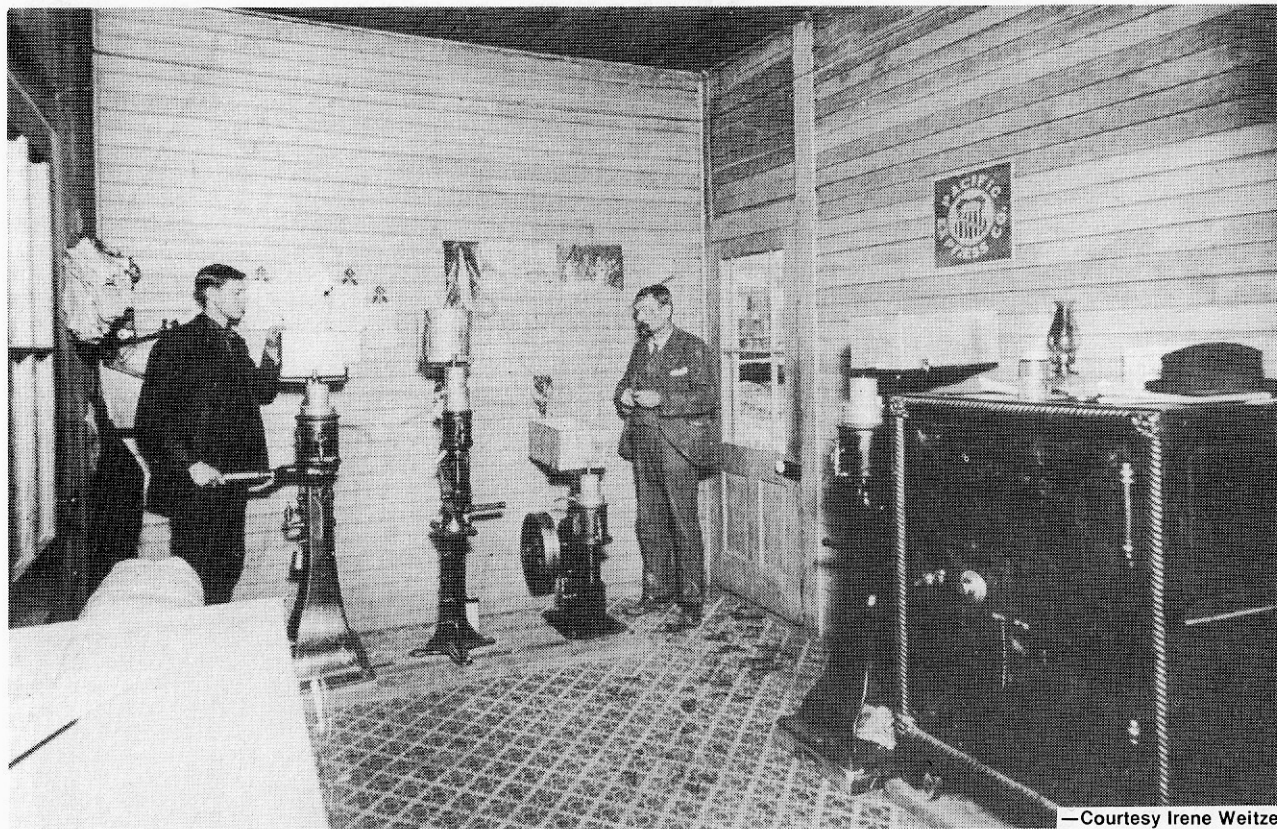
The Carley Iron Works also built a sluicing machine for collecting flour gold from the Snake and Columbia rivers as well as pumps and water wheels to raise the water to irrigate the orchards and commercial gardens along these same rivers. The first commercial equipment for drying prunes and a power elevator for piling sacked grain in the warehouses were designed by Eugene Brown and then made by the Carley Iron Works.

But Carley's most sensational achievement was scored when he produced the Carley automobile.

The Carley car was bought for fifty dollars in 1914 by Orville Chase when the business was sold by the Carleys. It was later given to the Colfax Historical Museum where it was displayed for many years. When the museum closed, the car was parked in front of a local bank for a time and was later moved to the city park. The car just escaped the scrap-iron drive during World War II. Eventually considered junk by most observers, the engine was stolen out of it and the rest shoved over the bank from the park into the Palouse river.

Rescued from the river in 1959, this model of pioneer ingenuity is undergoing the processes of restoration by Dell Mitchell and his son David at Steptoe. □

Footnote: The information above was obtained from an interview with Dell Mitchell, Colfax Gazette article and Reminiscences of a Pedagogue by S. C. Roberts, 1935.



—Courtesy Irene Weitze

The Jersey Creamery at Colfax before 1912. Located at the north end of the present Jones Implement Store, the building was torn down for the McCroskey Building.



—Courtesy Marvin Entel

Early day meat market at Palouse.



—Courtesy Irene Weitze

Unique Cafe at Colfax ca. 1912. Harry L. Hubbard, Proprietor.



—Courtesy J. B. West

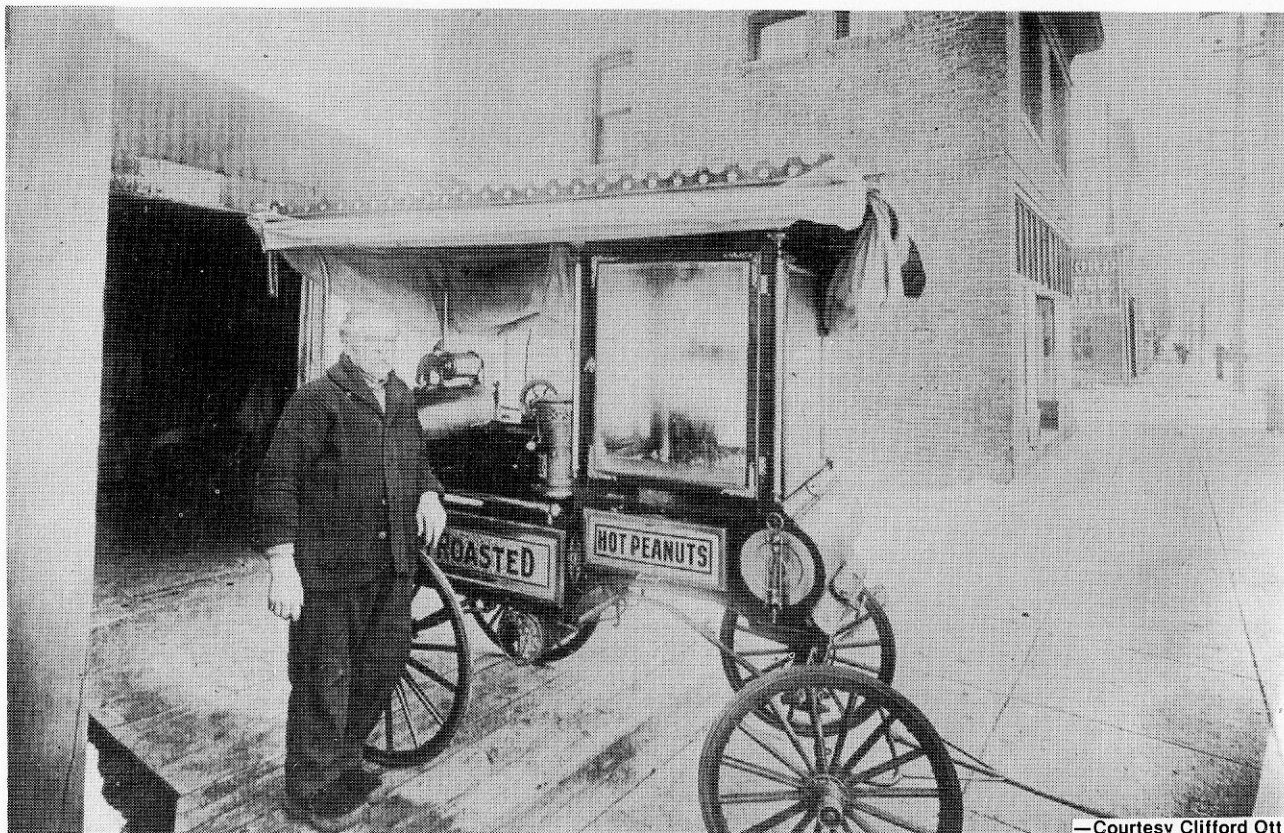
**Garfield Trading Company
Dray unloading freight for this general merchandise store.**



—Courtesy J. B. West

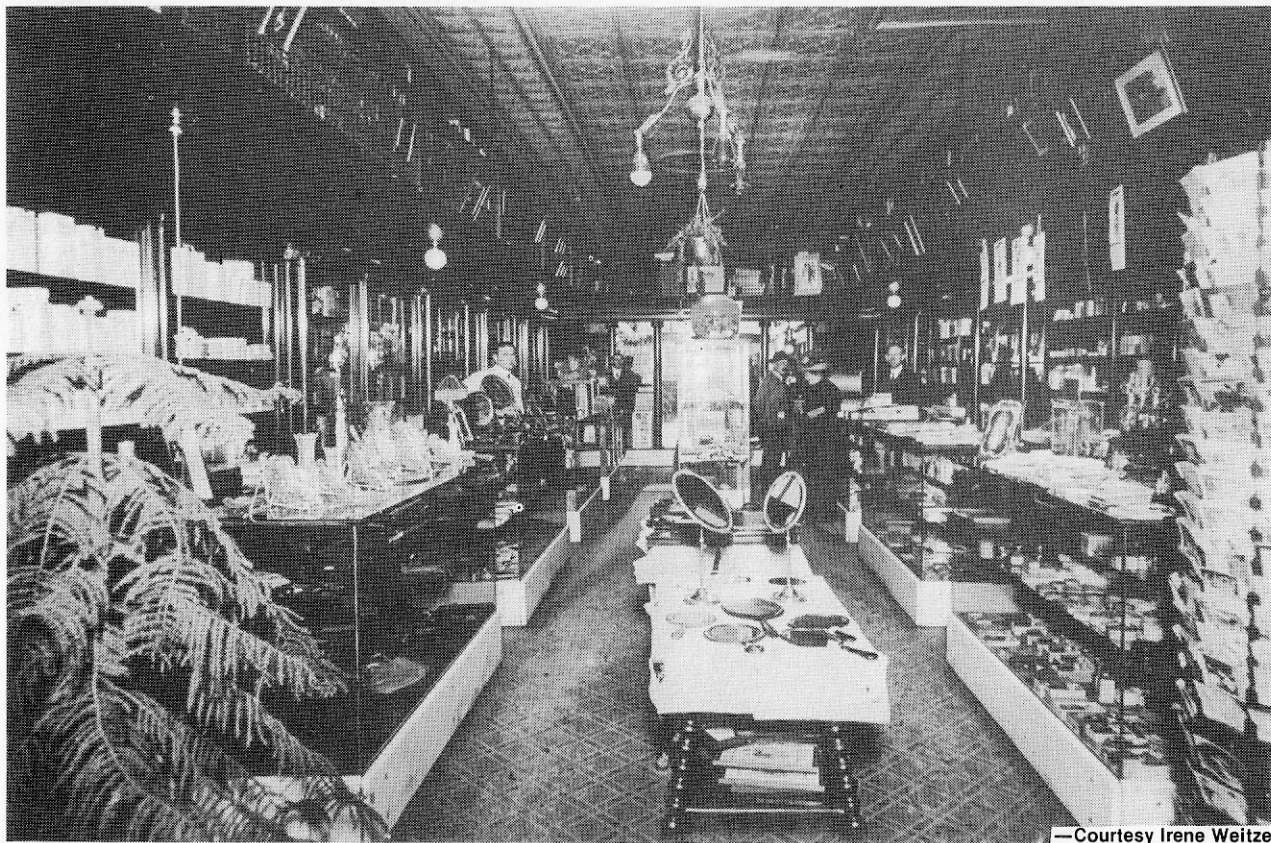
Luesings Shoe Store in Palouse.

L. to R. are H. A. Luesing, C. H. Knapp (?) and Mrs. H. A. Luesing.



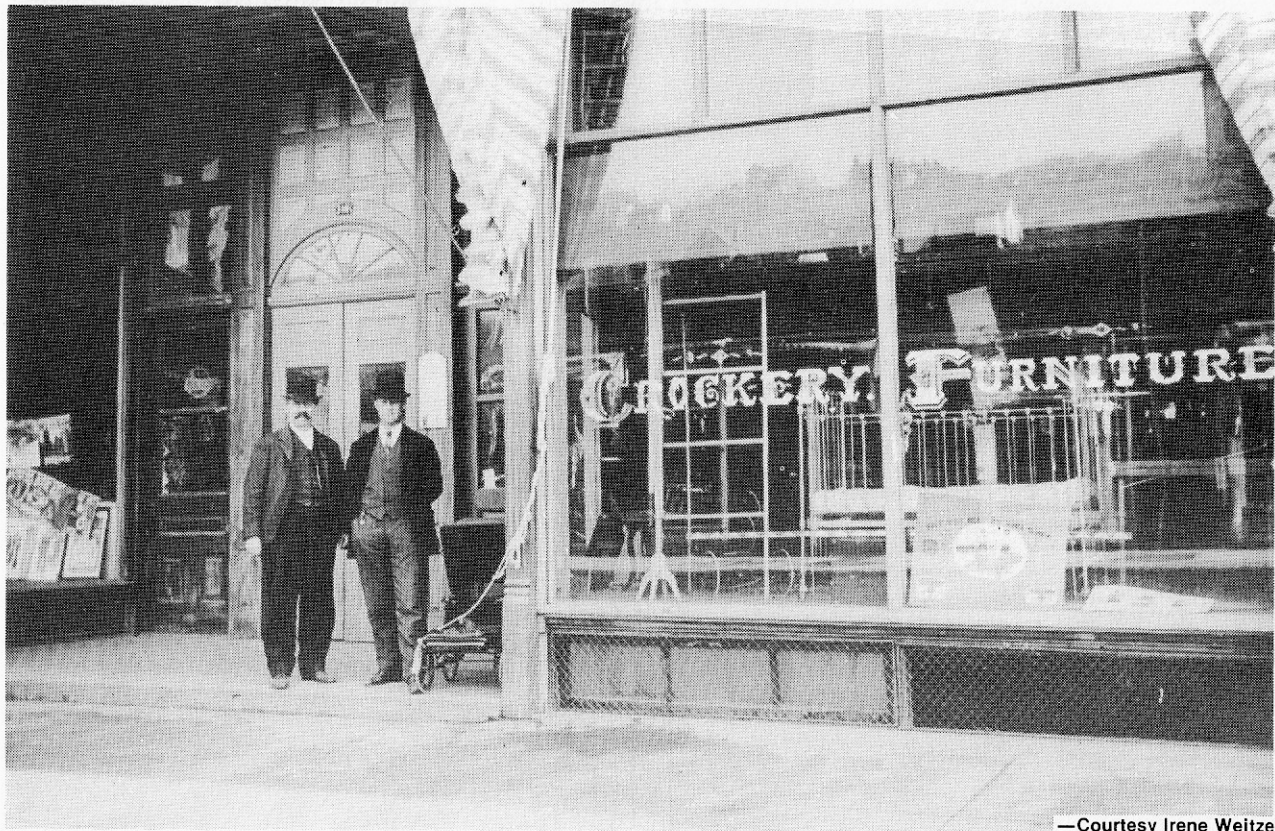
—Courtesy Clifford Ott

Fredrick Gelwick's Popcorn Wagon at Pullman about 1915.



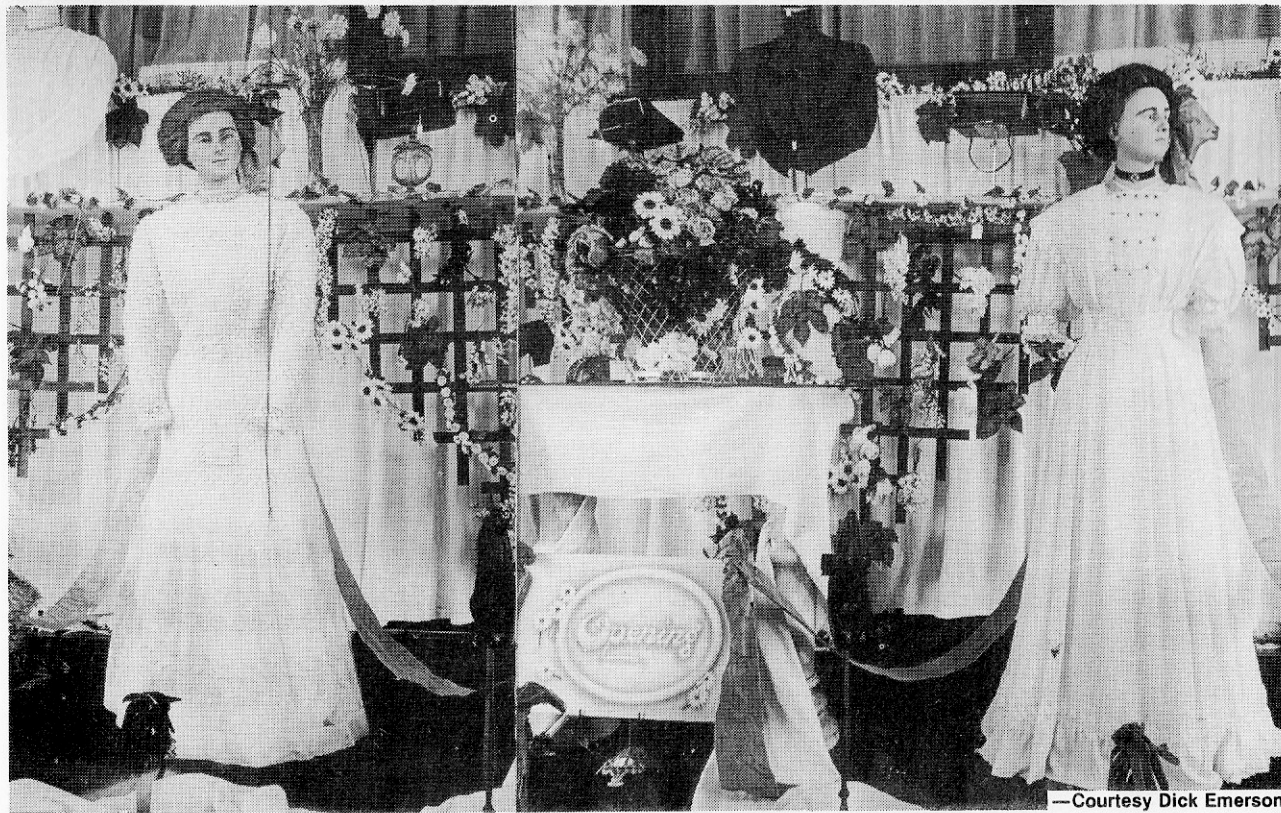
—Courtesy Irene Weitze

The Hamilton Drug Store, Colfax, ready for the Holidays in December 1911.



—Courtesy Irene Weitze

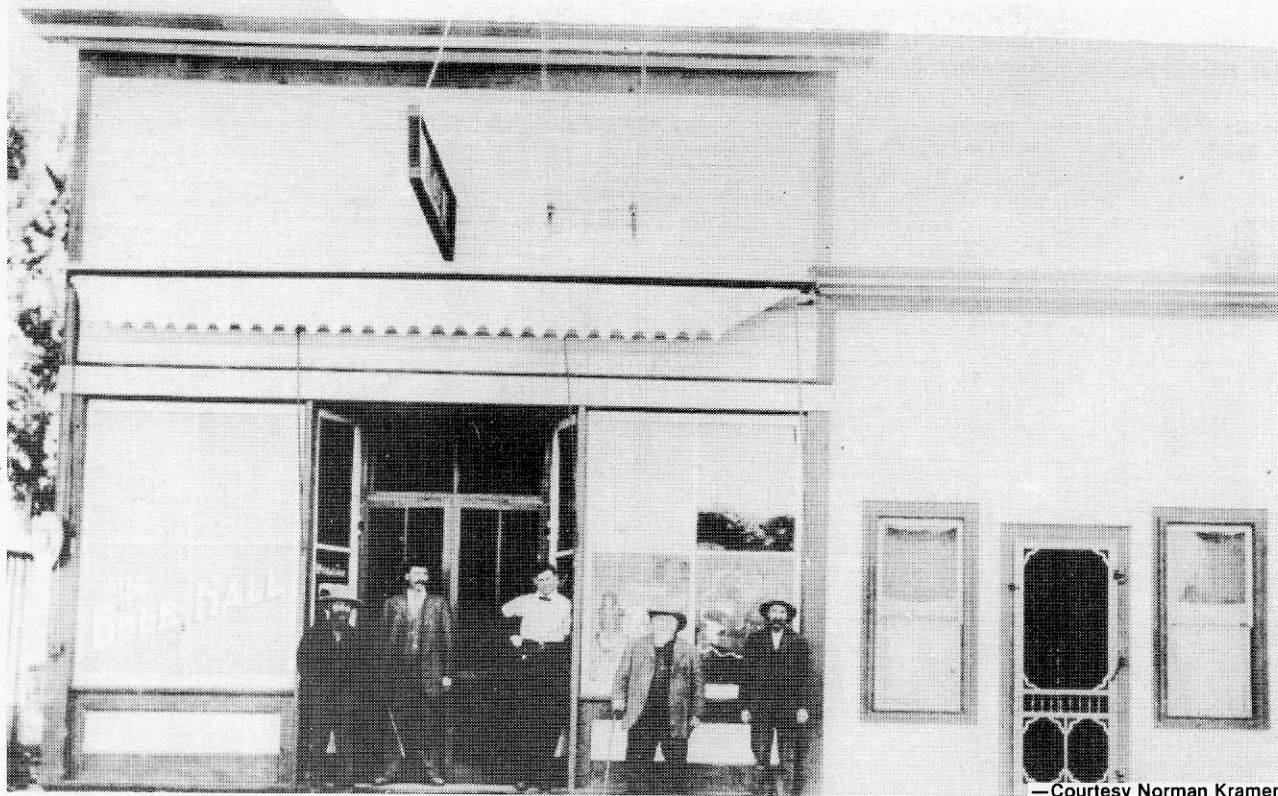
The Bryson Furniture Store in Colfax.



—Courtesy Dick Emerson

The Borgan-Emerson Company at Pullman in 1907.

The front show window for the grand opening of this early day store. J. N. Emerson later bought out the Borgan interests and the family still owns the business which has since been moved from the site of the present Old National Bank building to become The Empire Department store.



—Courtesy Norman Kramer

The Beer Hall in Colton in the early 1900's

Shown in front of this popular gathering place from L. to R. is Henry Spils, Frank Fite, Herbert Schlicht, Mike Schultheis and Barney Yunck. The smaller building at the side was the family entrance where wives and children came in to buy beer to take home to father. This building houses the Colton Post Office today.