

Bunchgrass Historian

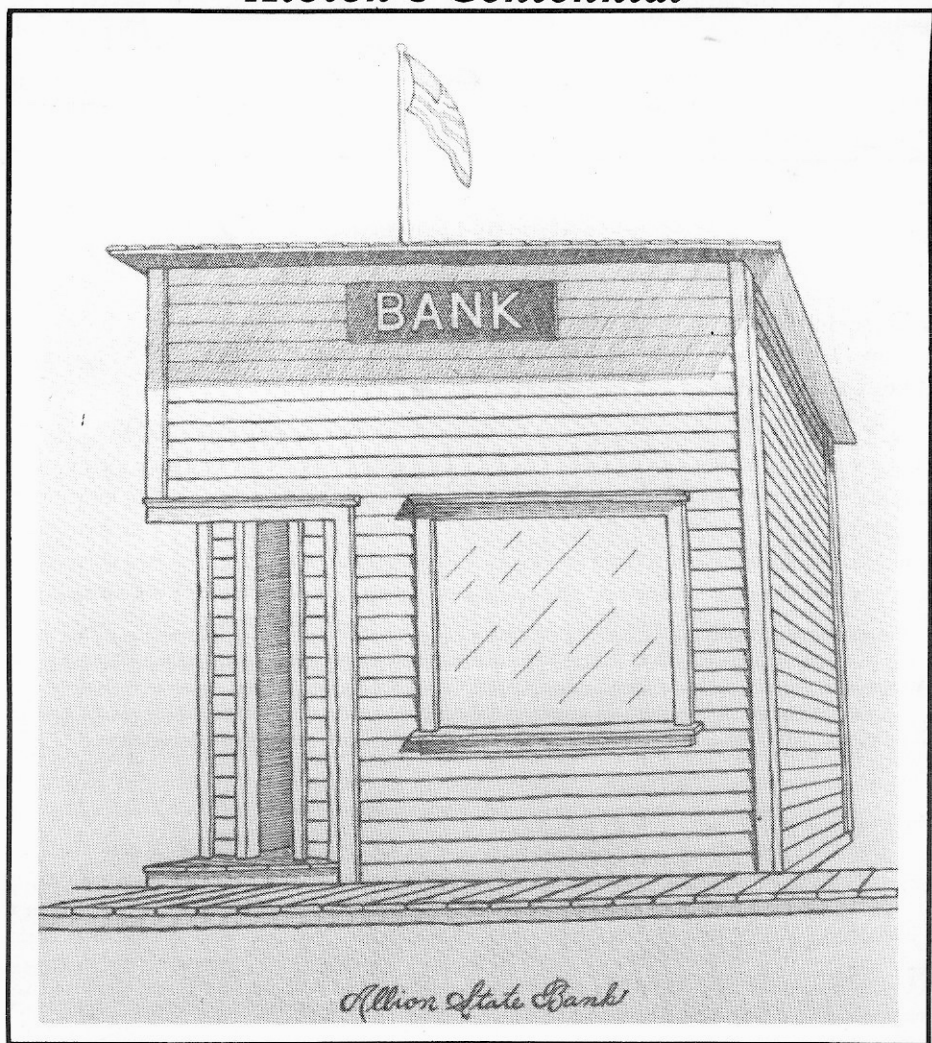
Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

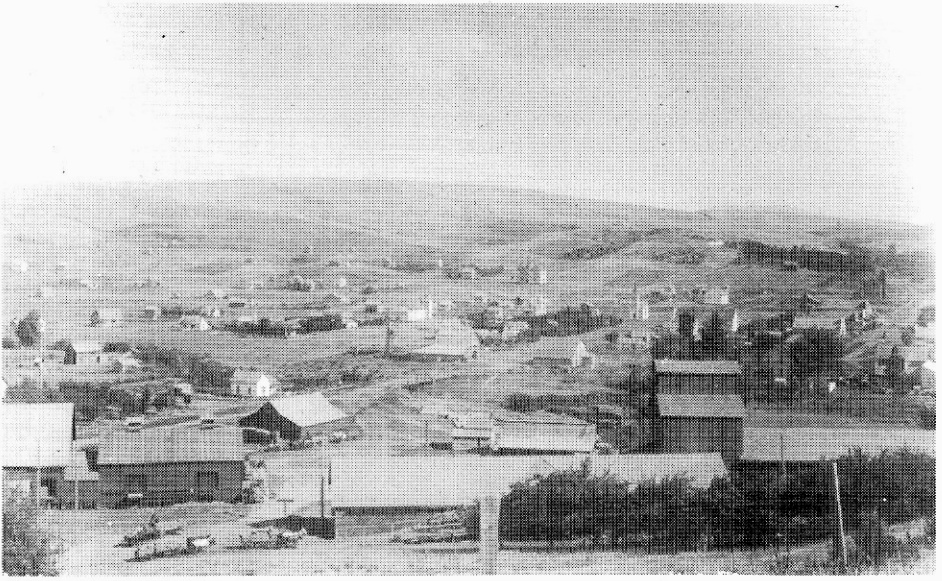
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Colfax, Washington

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Albion's Centennial





—Courtesy Guy-Albion Historical Society

Albion, Washington as it appeared in September 1909, the Fall before the twin disasters of February and March, 1910. The isolated building in the center is Edwards College.

Albion, 1881-1981

by Dee Harrison

Former residents who returned for Albion's centennial year celebration on July Fourth may have found the town greatly changed, but the traditional potluck picnic, program, games and parade brought back fond memories of past Fourth of Julys spent in the Eugene Rice grove at the northeast corner of town, or later at the school grounds where this year's celebration was held. Ada Farr, who now lives in Colfax, recalls: "We came in a buckboard to celebrate the Fourth of July with a picnic lunch. We sat out on the grass in our white dresses and had a good time. There were all kinds of races; three-legged races, barrel races, and fireworks. All I can remember of Albion is happy memories."

Another former resident, Edna Brownell Skoglund of Bellevue, Washington, had a few sad memories of the five-mile trip home after a Fourth of July picnic at Rice grove. "There was quite a grove of trees at one time at the Gene Rice home, and that's where they had one Fourth of July picnic. I remember it well," Mrs. Skoglund said, "We'd bring picnic lunches. We came with the horses, I know. We were on the way home after the picnic and met one of the first new cars that had come out. It was a Brougham. The horses were so frightened when they saw that (car), they started to jump around and we went over the bank in the hack. The hack had two seats and the cover and side-curtains and all. Oh, it was elegant. It broke all that, and all we had left was four wheels and two seats. Mother was hurt. She broke her wrist. The baby was crying, and I was crying." But mostly people remember Albion as a good place to live and raise their children.

The Early Days

Albion is celebrating its centennial in 1981 even though its beginnings are to be found much earlier. Records of the United Brethern Church indicate that Dr. Jeremiah Kenoyer held camp meetings just a mile south of the townsite as early as 1864. All that remains at the location where Kenoyer held his meetings are three pine trees surrounded by a field of wheat. It was not until after 1868 that the area around Albion became open for settlement. Up until that time it had been a part of the Nez Perce Reservation. Levi Reynolds was among the first to take advantage of the opportunity to settle at the present site of Albion. He arrived in the area in 1870, and in partnership with Hezekiah Hollingsworth, erected the first sawmill on the site of the present town of Colfax. In 1871 Reynolds disposed of his property in Colfax and moved to what later would become Guy, some sixteen miles away. Here, he could exercise his land rights. He took up a homestead, a timber culture, and a preemption. Then he sent for his daughter and son-in-law. As with many early settlers in Whitman County, the patent on his land was held up until the courts decided whether or not the Northern Pacific Railroad should be granted land rights in the area. The court ruled in Levi's favor in early 1881. On May twenty-third of the same year a post office was established on the location, named after Reynold's grandson, Guy Whetsell.

Many years later Ella W. Whetsell, daughter of Levi Reynolds recalled the early settlement of Guy:

I was born in Weaverville, California, September 1853. My father was Levi Reynolds whose wife Emily died when I, the younger of two children, was but six years old. Soon thereafter Judge J. S. Ritzie adopted me. When I was nine we moved to Virginia City, Nevada. We later moved to Pioche, Nevada, where I became acquainted with Jasper D. Whetsell. We were married in 1871 when I was eighteen. My husband was a stockman and we lived on a large ranch there. Here three of my children were born. My father wrote and urged us to come north with him. Accordingly, my husband disposed of his interests in Nevada and with three small children we started out in a covered wagon to Washington Territory in 1879. Five of our children were born in Washington Territory.

Levi Reynolds died in 1888 and his inheritance passed on to the Whetsells. J. D. Whetsell sold most of his interest to the Guy Improvement Company (P. M. Standard, Loving, Downs, and J. M. Price) in 1893. Jasper Whetsell, another of the heirs, died in 1902 and was buried in the Guy-Albion Cemetery.

In the early years the town of Guy grew rapidly. Mail arrived weekly by horseback from the steamboat landing at Almoda. The first addition to the town was platted in 1884. J. W. Rice established a blacksmith shop, Downs and Loving a meat market, Downs and Standard a hotel run by a Mr. Howell. In addition, several other general merchandise businesses were established in the first years. School sessions lasted for only five months, the teacher receiving the magnificent salary of \$60.00 per month. Because of limited space church services of the two congregations, the United Brethern and Methodist, were held alternately in the school house, or in homes in the community.

In 1889, a year before the State created the new Agricultural School at Pullman, the United Brethern opened Edwards College at Guy. During the first year, the new institution had a faculty of four and a student body of fifty-three. The Reverend Laurin Burtin Baldwin served as the first president of Edwards College, I. R. Hughey its financial agent. The Reverend Jeremiah Kenoyer had been influential in starting the institution and was a moving force in the creation of other religious schools throughout the Pacific Northwest. As both a physician and a missionary the Reverend Kenoyer was a very busy man.

In other areas of education, Guy, Washington grew as well. By 1893 the original two-room school house proved too small and a contract was let for a four-room brick building. The new school, a \$4,400 fifty-six by thirty two-story building, was constructed on the site of the Guy Mercantile Company. Subsequently the community relocated the old school building on the corner of Second and "D" Streets where, for nearly twenty years, it served as the United Brethern Church. Only in 1910 did the United Brethern replace it with a new concrete block chapel across the street.

By the turn-of-the-century Guy had become a well-established community. Businesses included a hotel, two general stores, a restaurant, harness shop, grain elevator, four warehouses, flour mill, meat market, confectionary store, drug store, cigar shop, carpenter shop, several doctors' offices, as well as three churches—Christian, United Brethern, and Methodist. During the heyday of railroad construction there had also been several saloons and a pool hall. But these were voted out in 1895, the year the community "went dry."

Guy Becomes Albion

On February 18, 1901 the community changed the name of its post office from Guy to Albion. Yet the railroad depot continued to be known as "Guy" for some time. There are conflicting stories about the reason for the name change. The most plausible of these suggests that the residents were tired of being called "the guys from Guy," because the term "guy" was derogatory.

Within a few years of the name change a series of disasters struck the community. Fires wreaked havoc in Albion, as in the other towns of the area, destroying buildings despite the valiant efforts of the bucket brigades. Even before the famed "Fire and Flood of 1910" numerous businesses had been burned, rebuilt, then burned again. In the fall of 1906, less than a year after making extensive repairs and improvements to the city's water system, building a concrete and stone dam on the South Fork of the



—Courtesy of Dorothy Matson

Farnsworth's Grocery Store was one of the several buildings destroyed in the Albion fire of 1910.

Palouse River, the Guy Milling Company's three-story flour mill and adjoining warehouse were destroyed by fire. The owners, A. G. Spengler and August Siler, did not rebuild.

Ed Farr, who was born just a mile north of Albion in 1895 on the Farr ranch was interviewed on Memorial Day 1981 by Everett Hope. Farr described early Albion as he remembered it.

The railroad was right between the old Standard barn and warehouse and went between the other warehouses. They used to have a ramp up to the platform of one old warehouse and that's where you'd get off at Guy, Washington. The flour mill was run by water power from the dam up above the old Campbell place. Standard later rebuilt the barn and made a lumber yard out of it. The chop mill was on the opposite side of the river across from the livery stable.

The bank was on the corner of First and Main. Next to it was the little pool hall. Later it became the Farmer's Union Store. My dad ran that for eight or ten years. Next to that was the Wallace Grocery Store. Directly across the street was the blacksmith shop. The original blacksmith was John Rice, "Grandpa Rice," an old timer. Then Ed Stover bought it (the blacksmith shop), and when the first automobile came along he (Stover also) bought an old chain drive International car. It had high wheels like a buggy.

Across the street (from the blacksmith shop) was a grocery store and that was run by Farnsworth. He had a post office in the back of it. Right along side of it, joined to it, was the house they lived in. Next was a little building that was a drug store—the original drug store in town—and it was run by old man Baldwin, and Doctor Hall was the doctor at the time. Between that little drug store and the hotel there was a stairwell that went up the stairs to that old hotel and that's where all the Granges and Mason's lodges met—up in that hall, right on top of that hotel. The hotel was pretty wide there. They served meals in the bottom (of the hotel) and had a portion of a two-story lean-to on that hotel that they had their rooms in.

Then next was the candy store. The candy store was run by Hype Manning, a big heavy-set man. He had a workshop right in the main window and he pulled taffy, a lot of taffy. He had a taffy hook up there and he'd stand in that window and everyone would watch him pulling taffy. He pulled taffy there for an hour at a time. He'd have a big roll of taffy five or six feet long. He did this all by hand. He didn't have machinery.

The next business above the candy shop was the John Stover Butcher Shop. The next one was my grandfather's house, the old Chapman house. He married my grandmother when she was running the telephone office in the telephone building across the street.

The Disasters of 1910

The most spectacular fire to hit Albion occurred on February 10, 1910. The Ladies' Aid Society of the Methodist Church was serving a dinner upstairs in the Albion Hotel when a stove overheated. Heavy snow on the roof prevented the flames from spreading too rapidly, so there was time to get all the movable goods out of the lower floor of the hotel. Although there was no wind, the fire did spread to the buildings on either side, ultimately destroying everything on the block. In the aftermath, George Howell, owner of the Albion Hotel, did manage to save most of his personal property. Thomas Farnsworth lost his grocery store and residence. The mail and some post office fixtures were saved. But people would no longer be able to stop and watch Hype Manning pull taffy in the big window of the confectionery store. Gone too was Stover's butcher shop. The bucket brigade was, however, successful in preventing the fire from spreading across the street to the bank and blacksmith shop.

Undaunted by the fire the town of Albion voted for incorporation less than three weeks later, on February 28th. Efforts at incorporation two years earlier had been strongly opposed by the *Albion Independent* and opponents of liquor. Rumor at the time suggested that a successful vote for incorporation would enable the community to



The Albion School constructed in 1893.

—Courtesy of Dorothy Matson

go “wet”. In 1909 the county had voted on the wet-dry issue and all unincorporated areas had voted “dry.” Colton, Uniontown, Colfax, Palouse and Tekoa, on the other hand were “wet.”

Disaster fell upon disaster in the spring of 1910. The incorporation papers had hardly become final before nature again loosed her fury. With twenty-eight inches of snow on the ground it started raining. On March first the South Fork of the Palouse went on a rampage. Water and ice jams took out all the bridges between Moscow, Idaho and Colfax. The new bridge at Albion was demolished. For two months no trains went through. Ed Farr recalled the event.

We rode horseback to school that day from the ranch and put our horses in the livery stable. At ten o'clock they came up and told us that we'd have to come down and get our horses out of there, the water was coming up into the barn. By the time we got down to the barn they'd taken the horses out because there was about three feet of water in it. I don't know how high the water got. It probably got half way up "D" Street to the old Cannon Store. When the flood washed the bridge out . . . we had to get into town by horseback over the hill and down Second Street.

Another area resident, J. Antrim Kenoyer, recalled the flood.

The flood wasn't as bad here as in Pullman. It spread out here. They had a big snow and it went off with the rain and washed out all the railroads between Moscow and Timbuktu. They didn't have any trains for eight weeks and Ed Pearson carried the mail out here. He'd go to Pullman one day and to Colfax one day, and out on the route the next.

Marie Brooks has also given us her version of the flood.

A lot of stuff came floating down the river from Pullman, just gobs and cases of things washed out of the stores and stuff, and pianos. I remember over where Phelps lives now, they drug out an old piano that washed down there and for years we used to go over and sit and plunk on that thing and play it. They'd taken the back out of it. You know, one of those big metal backs, and we used to play like we were playing on the harp.



—Courtesy of Dorothy Matson

The United Brethren Church constructed in 1910 to replace the old structure that had formerly served as the Guy School until 1893.

During the 1910 flood my dad, Will Bartlett, and a couple of other fellows took one of the horse troughs that used to be down in front of the livery stable and took mama's ironing board and made paddles out of it and paddled out into the river and got cases of oil and stuff that came floating down from Pullman.

Among the items that came down the river from Pullman there was at least one coffin. It floated along with the current and became lodged against the mill dam.

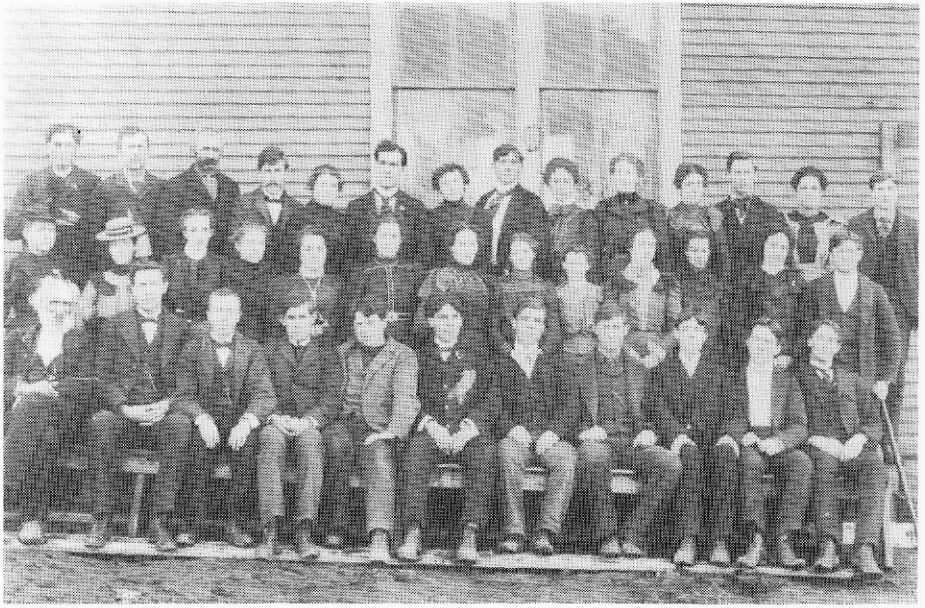
But as far as the residents of Albion were concerned fire and flood were merely obstacles to be overcome. The following quotes from the August 11, 1911 *Colfax Gazette* reflect the determination and zeal of the community's people.

Albion is a school, church and lodge town. We are particularly proud of the fact that it is a good place to raise our children. A good, clean town. You can judge something of its importance as a business point from the fact that the Albion State Bank handled more than a million dollars worth of business in the last year . . .

Walking up from the O. W. R. & N. Depot the visitor to the town is impressed with the excellent sidewalks. From the Depot to the post office and on many of the side streets are six-foot plank walks—more than a mile of them . . .

The first step of progress after the incorporation of the town last February was the construction of the sidewalks. The second year saw the completion of the town hall, a one story frame building for general town purposes and provided with a jail. (The iron door of the jail was made over in the blacksmith shop.) Improvements are going on under the administration of Mayor O. D. Crawford, Councilmen G. W. Gates, E. P. Dearing, J. H. Stover, T. M. Farnsworth, and Wirt Willoughby, Clerk J. G. McCune, and Treasurer A. R. McClaskey . . .

The Masonic Building Company was formed for the purpose of building a new lodge hall. The building is a two story one. The lodge rooms are on the second floor and the first floor has been finished for a hall which is for rent for any legitimate purpose. The Albion lodges are noted for their hospitality and the housewarming will be a banner event. C. E. Hoag is Master of the Lodge and J. C. Farr is Secretary . . .



—Courtesy of Dorothy Matson

The Edwards College faculty and student body circa 1910.

The support of the town comes from the large farming community tributary to it. Wheat and oats are the principal crops, but we are getting enthused over diversified farming. One man has 35 acres of potatoes, another 23 and another 12. Last year 30 carloads of spuds were shipped out. The grain shipments were over 200 carloads, while 150 more billed from Albion, but loaded at Armstrong and Shawnee, the nearest sidings. There are three warehouse companies. F. B. Peterson is the local agent for the Interior Warehouse Company. O. D. Crawford is the agent for Pacific Coast Elevator Company. All around Albion wheat is yielding 40 to 45 bushels . . .

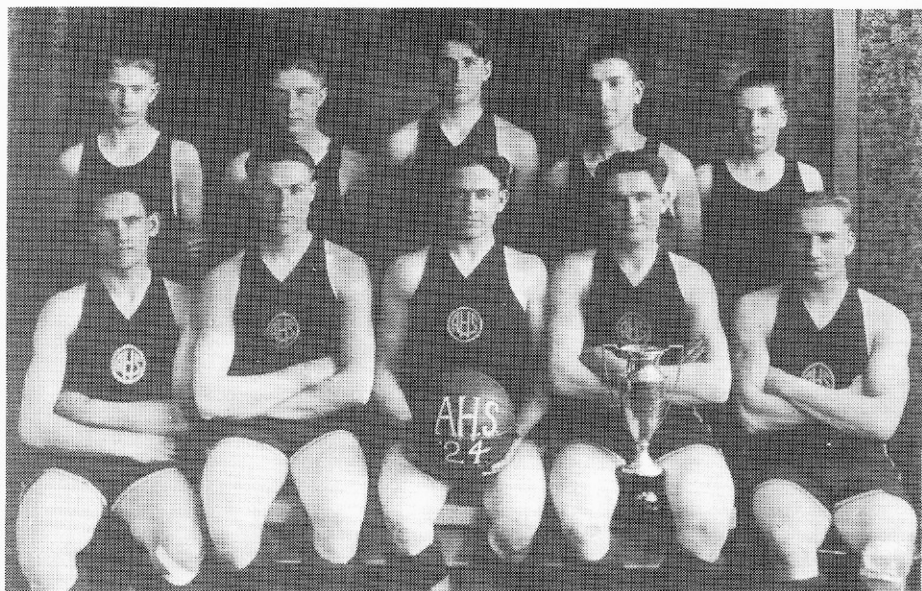
Albion's Struggles

In 1911 Edwards College, Albion's institution of higher learning, offered a classical college course, as well as a course preparatory for the ministry. Bishop F. L. Hoskins served as president and over fifty students were enrolled. Yet just five years later, in 1916, Edwards College had been closed. The year 1916 also saw the demise of the last of Albion's three papers, *the Albion Journal* (edited and published by R. E. Newbill), *The Albion Independent* (published from April 13, 1907 to February 10, 1910 by I. R. Hughey) and the *Albion Graphic* (published in 1915 by T. W. Shaughnessy and his wife) preceded the Newbill's publication in death.

The town of Albion also encountered difficulties with its school district in the years following, but not before the high school, with C. G. Thornton Principal, moved from the red brick structure to the now defunct Edwards College. This left only the lower grades in the Albion Public School.

Marie Brooks recalls what occurred a decade later.

In 1928 I was a junior in high school. They built this new building and they had quite a to do over that. There were people for it and people against it. We—the kids—had a big parade and we



—Courtesy of the Guy-Albion Historical Society

The controversial Albion High School basketball team of 1924. Standing: (left to right) Ralph Johnson, Bob Dugger, Wright Kenoyer, “Junkie,” _____ Calloway. Seated (left to right) Chuck Faylor, Ted Rosenoff, Bob Cunningham, Narden Kulp, Adrian Lakin.

paraded all over town, yelled and screamed, and hollered for our new building. Then the last part of that year they had the building finished enough that we could move into it. They built the annex on to it later. That’s where the fire station is now.

Brooks also remembers the fate of the Albion school in the 1940’s

Albion lost its school to consolidation in 1945 after a bitter fight. (The primary grades were allowed to remain for two more years.) There was a law at that time when they consolidated the schools that you formed a new district then voted on it. What chance did Albion have voting with Pullman in the district? They changed that [law] in the next year or two, but it was too late for Albion.

Loosing its school was quite a blow for Albion. The institution had been the center of much of the town’s social life. For example, basketball games were civic events, justifiably so considering the team’s win-loss record. The Albion High School basketball team went to the state tournament in 1924, although, there is some local controversy about the 1924 hoopsters’ successes. Many people say the team won the state tournament; some say they won only the county tournament. One spoil-sport poohpoohs it all by saying they placed only eighth in the state. Regardless of who was right, the town was proud of its school.

Even with these losses and the gradual consolidation of its several churches into the one non-demoninational church that remains, Albion has always had its boosters and local clubs. The school had been vacant but a short time when the Masons and Eastern Star rented the large room in the upstairs of the annex and the local women’s club rented a room on the ground floor. Another group of citizens formed a communi-

ty association to hold the lease on the building. This organization planned and held annual barbecues and other fund-raising events to help pay for maintenance and for the salary of Gus Lindsley who, for years, took care of a balky heating plant, kept the structure repaired, and its grounds neat. In 1967 the city obtained a long-term lease on the old school and later purchased it. As former mayor Burt Harrison frequently says, "Signing that lease was my last official act before resigning and going to Thailand for a year."

Today the former school building houses the city offices, the Albion Community Club, the Albion branch of the Whitman County Library, the Guy-Albion Historical Society, the Albion Fire Department, and the Albion Boy Scouts. Recently the building has also been used for community college classes, volleyball, the practice area for bluegrass band, exercise classes, youth groups, as well as community dinners, first-aid classes, school reunion picnics, rummage sales, and naturally as the base for the annual Fourth of July celebrations.

Albion's population is larger now than in earlier years. There are, however, fewer businesses. The town serves primarily as a "bedroom community" for Pullman and Washington State University staff, students, and faculty. Albion is still growing. New houses are being built, old ones are being remodeled, mobile homes are being moved in. It is a little harder to find common interests among the town's 625 inhabitants than it used to be. Yet they still "rally round" when anyone is in need: taking food when a family has sickness; holding benefits for people whose homes have suffered fire damage; serving funeral dinners for the relatives of a deceased citizen; or by joining in happy occasions, like the eightieth birthday celebration for Ruth Kenoyer Emerson. Mrs. Emerson is the granddaughter of the Reverend Jeremiah Kenoyer who helped to found the town. She served as Postmaster of Albion from 1943 until her retirement in 1966.

Yes, Albion is *still* a good place to live and raise a family.

Sources

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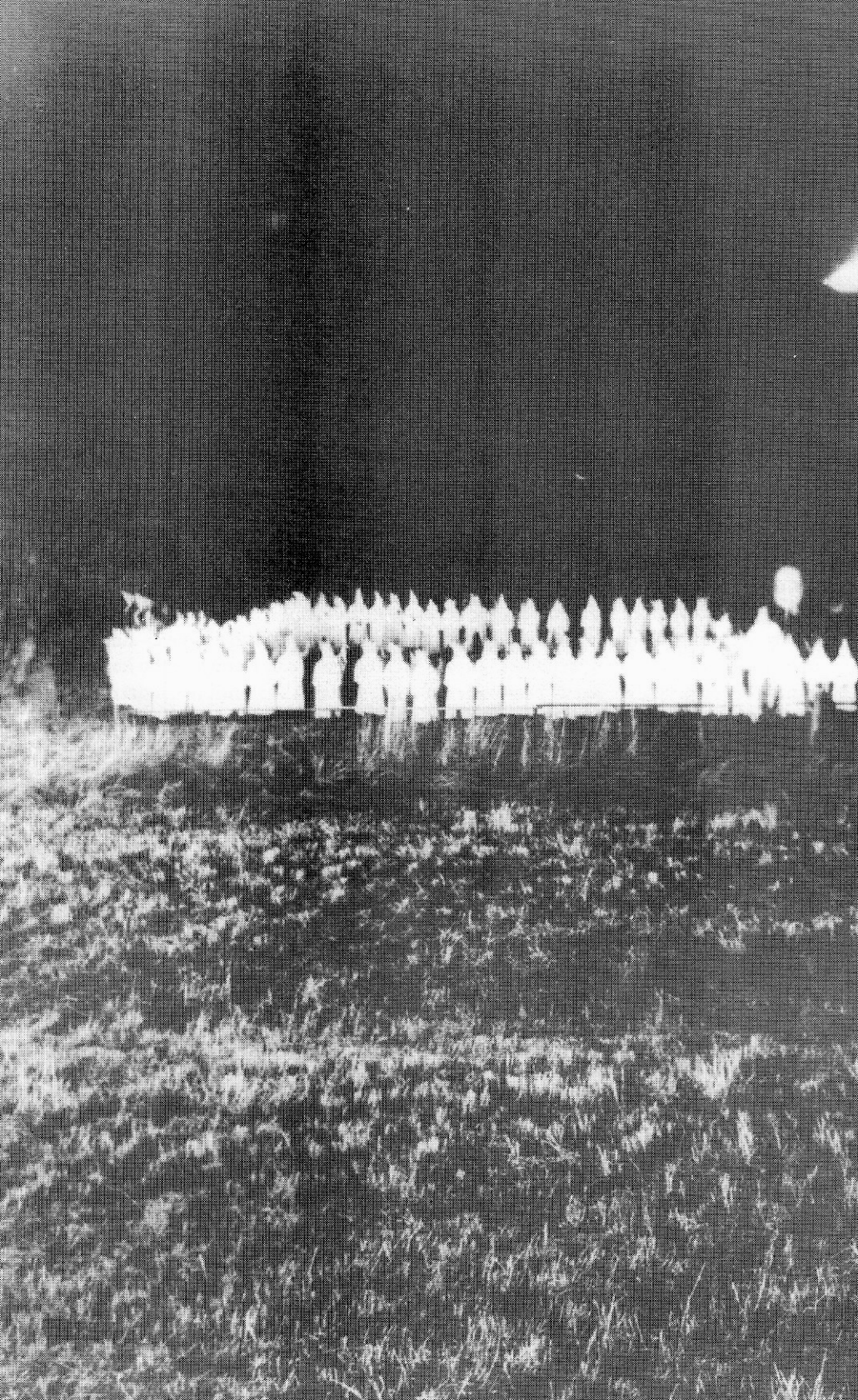
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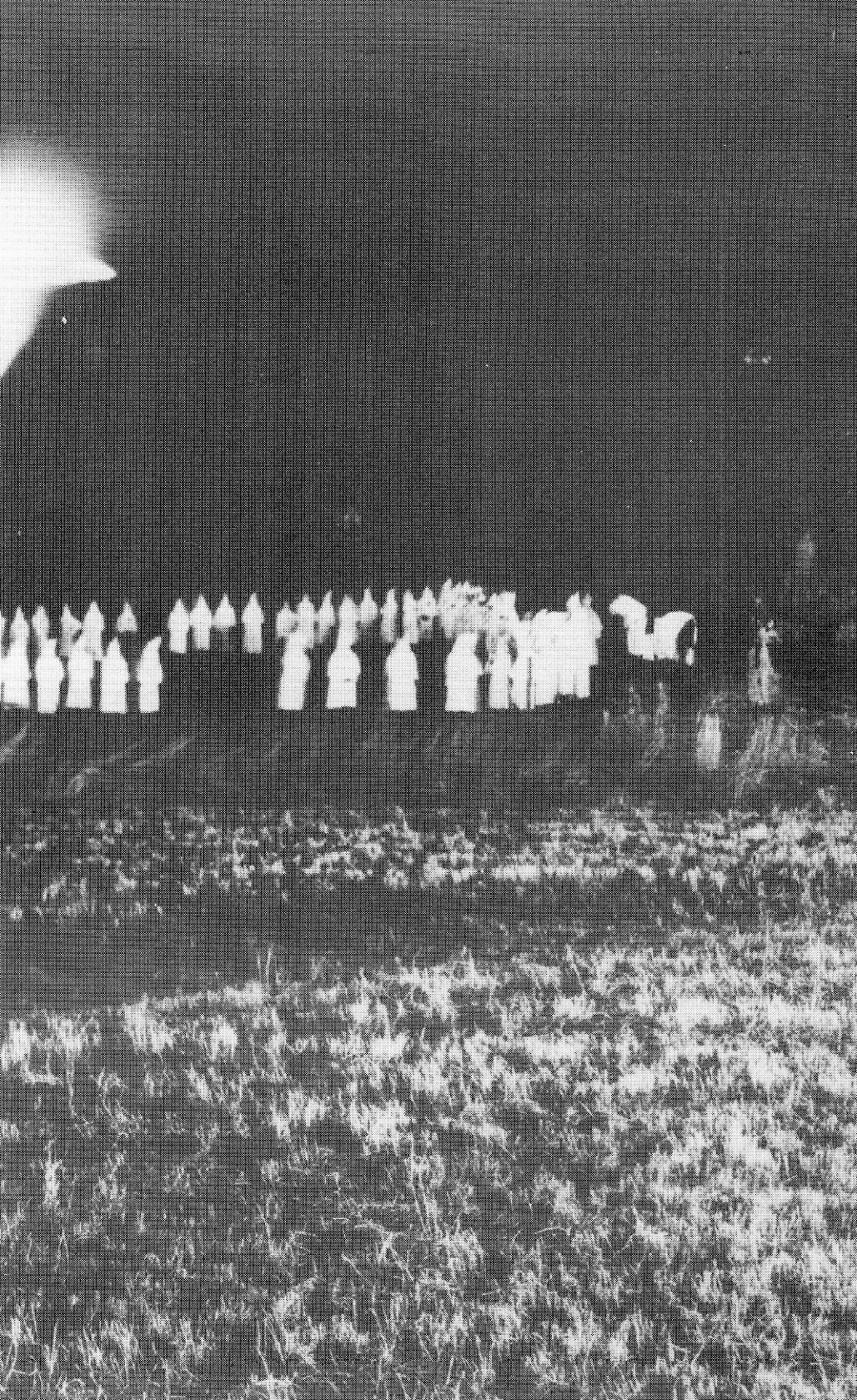
Washington State University, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections—Albion town documents.

Guy-Albion Historical Society oral history collection.

Material was also obtained from the following newspapers: *The Pullman Herald*, *Colfax Gazette*, *Albion Independent*, *Albion Graphic*, *Albion Journal*.







The Ku Klux Klan in Whitman County in the 1920s

by Craig Holstine

Under the eerie light of flaming crosses, hooded figures in white robes performed the sacred rituals of the Ku Klux Klan. The scene might have been in the Deep South during the tense days of Reconstruction after the Civil War. But, incredible as it may seem, the scene became a familiar one in the hills of the Palouse country of southeastern Washington in the 1920s.

What was the notorious Ku Klux Klan doing in Whitman County? And why was it here? Today not everyone old enough to remember the 1920s can recall the activities of the Klan in the area. One such Whitman County man from the Carolinas said: “We didn’t have the Klan out here because we didn’t need it.” That individual was surely referring to the scarcity of Blacks in the Pacific Northwest. With the Black “threat” obviously absent, a good many citizens apparently thought the Klan was needed for other reasons.

After the end of the First World War, many Americans believed that the country needed something to save it from various ills. Marxism and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 seemed all too close to home when the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) made their presence felt in the United States early in the twentieth century. To many

—Courtesy Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections
Washington State University

The photograph on the preceding pages is believed to be of the September 1923 Ku Klux Klan initiation ceremony near Prune Orchard Road east of Colfax. Bearing the inscription “Klu [sic] Klux Klan, Colfax, Wash.,” the photo was found in the James Collection in the WSU Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections.

people, the “Wobblies,” as these self-proclaimed Marxists were called, embodied the threat of socialism and communism. By the end of World War I, foreign ideas were as unpopular in the United States as was the notion of involvement in foreign affairs. Americans had sacrificed dearly in the war in Europe and few could see any tangible benefits accruing from that involvement. Popular disdain for anything foreign helped persuade the United States Senate to reject American participation in the League of Nations in 1920.

Whitman County was not unlike the rest of the nation in the 1920s. Technological advancements, American involvement in a costly foreign war, and a veritable revolution in manners and morals at home had produced a rapidly changing world in which many individuals found themselves increasingly uncomfortable. Prohibition was enacted to uplift what seemed to some to be the sagging character of a people contaminated by excessive numbers of profligate immigrants adhering to a religion (Catholicism) controlled by a foreign potentate (the Pope). As was the case with the country as a whole, Whitman County witnessed a resurgence of xenophobic Protestant fundamentalism.

Capitalizing on these fears and anxieties came the new Ku Klux Klan. Modeled after the original KKK which had been born and died in the South during Reconstruction, the new Klan was reborn in Georgia in 1915. By the early 1920s, the KKK of the twentieth century had taken root in every section of the United States, and had even spread into Canada. Like the old organization, the new Klan supported the doctrine of white supremacy. In adapting itself to the climate of the times, however, the modern KKK attempted to speak for what it believed was the desire of a majority of citizens for the country to return to more traditional American beliefs and lifestyles. Klansmen proudly proclaimed that they stood for “100% Americanism.” Equating the tenets of Protestant fundamentalism with patriotism, Klansmen fancied themselves as watchdogs of the nation’s morality, as modern-day vigilantes whose duty it was to ferret out and punish lawlessness, immorality, and sedition. In regions such as the Pacific Northwest where relatively few members of racial minorities resided, Klan propaganda and activities became primarily anti-Catholic in their focus.

The intensity and extent of Klan activities varied in different areas of the region. In Oregon, for example, the Klan helped elect a governor who supported KKK principles. In a direct attack on Catholic education in the state, Oregon voters approved a Klan-supported initiative which outlawed private and parochial schools. The Klan had less success in Washington. A Klansman was elected mayor of Kent, and a Congressman was suspected of Klan membership, but apparently few other KKK members were elected to public office. Klan organizations (“klaverns”) existed in most cities and towns in the state. Approximately 25,000 members were initiated into the Klan in Washington between 1915 and 1944. The Klan organizations around the state numbered about 8,000 in Seattle, 2,500 in Spokane, 2,000 in Tacoma, and Walla Walla had a large klavern.

On the surface, Whitman County seems an especially unlikely place to find the Ku Klux Klan. Only fourteen of the county’s 31,323 residents in 1920 were Black. American Indians, Orientals, and those listed as “other” in the 1920 census numbered but forty-one. Foreign-born whites accounted for approximately 8.6 percent of the county’s population. Native-born whites represented over ninety-one percent of the residents of Whitman County. In addition, Protestants far outnumbered Roman Catholics. And yet the KKK became a part of life in many communities in the county during the 1920s.

The Klan seems to have first appeared publicly in Colfax in 1922, although the local Klavern had been organized the previous year. Over the next seven or more years, the Klan visited most of the towns in the county. Little is known about KKK activities in some places, such as Garfield, even though the town sent delegates to a large Klan convention in Lewiston, Idaho, in October 1924. Klansmen burned crosses in Colton and Johnson in 1923, but the extent of Klan organization in that part of the Palouse is not known. The Klan held a public initiation for new members in Tekoa during the summer of 1928, but it is not known what if anything else the KKK did there. The story of the Ku Klux Klan becomes clearer when certain events in other localities are examined.

Just down the road from Tekoa in the town of Oakesdale, Klansmen from twelve Washington klaverns gathered at a public ceremony in 1924. In a vintage display of "klankraft," crosses were burned as Klansmen paraded in full dress uniforms, that is, in white robes and peaked hoods. It is important to note that cross burnings and full-dress parades were not carried out in secrecy. On the contrary, such displays were for public consumption. The Klan was usually not trying to terrorize anyone, but rather attract attention to itself and its propaganda.

In the early 1920s, the Washington Legislature enacted a law which stated that:

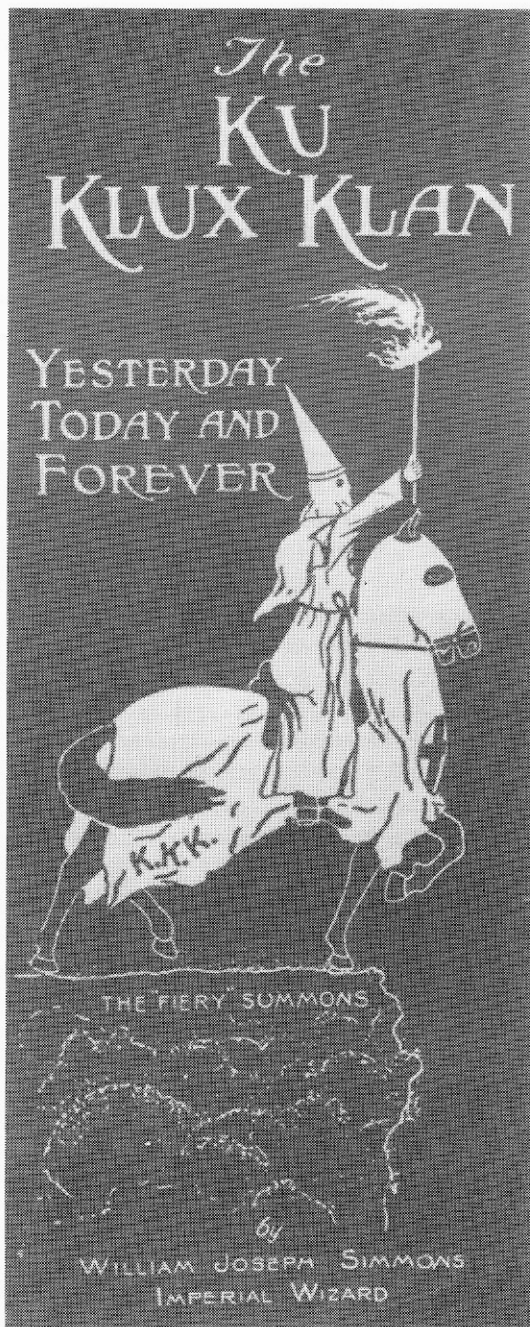
Any assemblage of three or more persons, disguised by having their faces painted, discolored or concealed shall be unlawful and every person disguised therat shall be guilty of a gross misdemeanor; but nothing herein shall be construed as prohibiting any peaceful assemblage for a masquerade or fancy dress ball or entertainment.

During the height of Klan activities, a Whitman County resident requested that the state Attorney General render an interpretation of the above statute. The Attorney General did so, saying that the law

applies to meetings of lodges or fraternal organizations, such as the so-called Ku Klux Klan . . . If it [a meeting] be for purposes of entertainment, such as assemblage is not within the terms of the statute . . . No general rule with respect to any specific organization can therefore be laid down, but each will depend upon its own facts.

Apparently, then, for legal considerations at least, Klan ceremonies were held for entertainment purposes only, although Klansmen surely stated otherwise. It is not known if any prosecutions were carried out under the statute.

The Attorney General intentionally made his interpretation of the law vague. Ritualistic meetings of secretive fraternal organizations were common occurrences in the Palouse in the early twentieth century. With its secret bylaws, passwords, and vocabulary and its special costumes and ritual ceremonies, the Klan held the same attraction which had made other lodges, fraternal organizations and societies popular in America since the 1880s. For example, in Pullman alone at least a dozen secret fraternal groups were active in 1922. They included the Free and Accepted Masons, Royal Arch Masons, Woodmen of the World, Neighbors of Woodcraft, Knights of Pythias, Order of the Eastern Star, Modern Woodmen of America, Loyal Order of Moose, United Artisans, Knights and Ladies of Security, and White Shrine of Jerusalem, not to mention such organizations as the American Legion and many other clubs and societies.



—Courtesy Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections
Washington State University

"The Ku Klux Klan; Yesterday, Today, and Forever" is a typical example of Klan literature that was distributed throughout Whitman County by the national Ku Klux Klan organization.

With attention-attracting exercises involving some ritualistic elements at a high premium, the Klan was quick to seize upon every opportunity to gain center stage. One of their activities involved paying surprise visits to Protestant churches. In October 1923 the Klan marched uninvited into a church in La Crosse during Sunday services and read a statement outlining the principles of the KKK. As they filed out of the sanctuary, the white-robed knights left an offering in the collection plate. The ritual was complete when a fiery cross burned that night over the western Whitman County community.

The Klan paid similar visits to churches in other towns, including Colfax. During worship services at the Christian Church there in November 1922, six robed and hooded men quietly entered the sanctuary and presented the pastor with an envelope which read "Please open and read after we retire, K.K.K." Following the simple instructions, the minister watched the Klansmen depart before opening the envelope to find thirty dollars and a message which he read to his congregation:

Reverend Sir: Knowing full well that you are trying to benefit your community and instill into the hearts of your listeners a higher respect for the laws of the creator and a desire to live a nobler and cleaner life, we the members of the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, located at Colfax, in the state of Washington, tender you this small token of love and respect we have for you in your work and cause and request that you place it in whatever fund you may deem necessary to assist you in your work.

We the Order of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan reverently acknowledge the supremacy of the Divine Being and recognize the goodness and providence of the same.

We recognize our relationship to the government of the United States of America, the supremacy of its constitution, the union of the states thereunder and the constitutional laws thereof, and ever shall be devoted to the sublime principles of a pure Americanism and valiant in defense of its ideals and institutions.

Our symbols are the cross of Calvary and the stainless Stars and Stripes. Our order is founded on the tenets of the Christian religion and our members are ever taught that the living Christ is a klansman's criterion of character and we shall faithfully devote ourselves to the practice of Christian klannishness, that the life and living of each may be a constant blessing to others, our motto being "Non Silba Sed Anthar" (not for self, but for others).

Yours in the sacred cause we have entered.

Colfax Provisional Klan
Realm of Washington
Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

(Colfax Gazette 24 November 1924, p. 4).

On the bluff above Elberton, a small burg on the North Palouse River northeast of Colfax, the Klan burned a large cross as a warning to Wobblies in the area, said one long-time resident. Klansmen supposedly performed other duties in the community. On one occasion the Klan "paid a visit" to a man who had reportedly mistreated his wife. In Elberton the KKK seemed to be particularly civic-minded.

Not far away in the town of Palouse, a Protestant minister held meetings open to the public in his church for the local Klan group which he organized sometime during

the 1920s. One woman said that as a young girl she attended one of the meetings just for the “sensationalism” of it. In nearby Albion, another young girl was frightened by gun shots on a hill overlooking town where Klansmen were attracting attention to a burning cross. Other crosses were later burned on Smoot Hill, the cemetery hill, and the hills east of town. Most residents did not take the Klan seriously, although some of Albion’s citizens of Southern extraction apparently supported the KKK and its wild cross burnings.

Some of the Klan’s activities attracted less public attention. Klansmen, and surely on occasion imposters posing as Klansmen, often sent threatening letters to those judged morally deficient. Someone claiming to speak for the Klan sent the following letter, reprinted in the *Pullman Herald* (9 March 1923, p. 1), to a Uniontown man:

You have read and heard of us often; we are an organization that wishes to do away with evil. A certain customer has informed us that you supply the Lewis and Clark hotel with liquor at Lewiston.

Our motto is the firey cross, and Mr. _____ do not be surprised if this cross appears on some nearby hill near your home some evening. Our organization is a mob ruling crowd and you may be assured that tar and feathers have been prepared for you.

You have no evidence to prove yourself not guilty and a lawyer that can free a man that has wrecked many a home, left them lovingless, carefree and a drunkened [sic] husband is not in demand.

All the money you have made with your distillery can never repay the harm you have done. Kindly think of the words we are addressing to you, and may they strike you in such a manner that you will cease to run your long established still.

We are laying for you so heed our warning. We do not harm unless we have warned of the coming danger. Be prepared for our arrival any day.

[Signed,]
K.K.K.

In Pullman the Klan kept a relatively low profile, and in fact may not even have maintained a klavern there. Some community leaders apparently favored bringing the Klan to town. In December 1922 a pastor of the Pullman Christian Church devoted a sermon to the topic “Will Pullman Have a Ku Klux Klan and Why?” He concluded that the Klan would come to Pullman, and gave three reasons why. First, the reverend noted that Colfax, Moscow, and Lewiston had large klaverns, and that it only stood to reason that Pullman would soon gain the same distinction. He continued:

My second reason why Pullman will have a Klan organization is found in the fact that there is too much disrespect for the law. It begins in disrespect for the Divine law. Many of our citizenry flagrantly ignore the call to the House of the Lord on His Holy Day. They promote Sunday shooting matches and many roam the links of the golf course wholly indifferent to the call of the church bell to assemble in the place of worship . . . Prompted by this precedent and abetted by indifference to state and national laws, many are the transgressions. Among these, bootlegging stands out to our shame. . . .

My third reason for the coming of the Klan is found in the fact that Protestantism is in a sadly divided state . . . Laymen, unable to get action through the one organization that ought to produce the plan to save America, are rallying under over and braving the opposition of Ecclesiasticism and other un-

American forces and are seeking to save America . . .

If Protestants had come together as they ought to have done . . . there would be no Ku Klux Klan now, nor would there be any need for such . . .

Until the Pullman churches get together we will have need for such an order as the Klan. When they do not get together in harmony with the Master's plan we will no longer need a Ku Klux Klan to lead in law enforcement. (*Pullman Herald*, 22 December 1922, p. 1).

Not long after delivering that sermon, the clergyman left his pulpit in Pullman. It is not known if the man's sympathetic attitude toward the Klan had anything to do with his departure. The sermon seems to have prompted the editor of the *Pullman Herald* to respond in an editorial entitled "The Boy Scouts and the Ku Klux Klan":

There is no more room in the United States for an invisible agency for law enforcement than there is for an invisible government . . .

Pullman does not need the Ku Klux Klan, which resorts to the use of secrecy and lawlessness to punish crime on the dangerous theory that the end justifies the means, and seeks to substitute a secret and invisible power for the law enforcement agencies established by the government. (*Pullman Herald*, 26 January 1923, p. 4).

Apparently some residents decided Pullman did indeed need the presence of the Klan. Delegates from the town attended the large KKK convention in Lewiston in 1924. One woman, a student at what was then Washington State College, remembers seeing a cross burning on Sunnyside Hill, now within the southwest part of the city, in about 1925. No evidence of Klan activities on the WSC campus has been uncovered. The KKK's apparent absence from the affairs of the school stands in marked contrast to the Klan's involvement on other college campuses, such as at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Other vestiges of the Klan's presence in Pullman were less outwardly noticeable. Klan sentiments surfaced in the local American Legion post, where several conservative Legionaires (who some thought were members of, or had ties to, the KKK) verbally attacked a local priest and a liberal Protestant minister. The Legion members wanted the post to "wait on" the "radical" clergymen, that is, publicly expose them as being dangerous. More moderate Legionaires prevailed in the dispute, and nothing was done to taint the individuals' reputations. The moderates even persuaded the other Pullman Legion members to ignore a directive from the national organization instructing the post to conduct a search for socialists and communists.

The most significant and large-scale Klan activities in Whitman County during the 1920s were centered in Colfax. On 23 November 1922 about one thousand people jammed the community hall there to hear an address on the KKK given by a Walla Walla clergyman and Klan leader. The *Spokane Spokesman-Review* (24 November 1922) covered the event and reported the following:

Twelve masked klansmen occupied the stage with him, a large American flag standing on one side of the stage and the cross of the order on the other. The speaker emphatically denied that the order is anti-Catholic and said that it is first and last for real Americanism. He said that the membership in Colfax is nearing the 500 mark.

Both the *Colfax Commoner* (1 December 1922, p. 1) and the *Colfax Gazette* (1 December 1922, p. 1) covered the meeting and reported that the speaker claimed the Klan's membership to be three hundred in Colfax and five hundred in Whitman County. Membership in the Colfax Klavern was apparently large compared with other rural KKK organizations. One former Klansman claims that the Colfax Klan numbered over two hundred in 1921.

Two of the speaker's numerous targets of attack on that night in November 1922 was the Industrial Workers of the World and bootlegging. The Klansman informed his audience that

The Klan is pledged in opposition to the I.W.W. and the bolshevik, and every I.W.W. organizer in the United States is under the eye of a klansman . . . We stand for the protection of American womanhood and a single standard of morals for men and women. We stand for upholding the laws, including the eighteenth amendment; we stand for a dry America. There is no place in the Klan for the bootlegger . . . (*Colfax Gazette*, 1 December 1922, pp. 1, 6).

Prohibition violators were very numerous and attracted constant attention in the local press at the time. It seems that Wobblies were only occasional, but feared and detested, visitors in the Palouse in the 1920s.

Perhaps it was no coincidence that the Klan held one of its largest public gatherings in the area only three weeks after several Wobblies had been jailed in Colfax for attempting to organize strikes among harvest workers in September 1923. The meeting was an initiation ceremony held four miles southeast of town in which 125 new members were inducted into the Colfax Klavern. The ceremony attracted considerable attention from local citizens. As many as 5000 persons witnessed the Klan ritual, which featured the burning of a cross measuring ninety feet long and forty feet wide. The cross was not the usual wooden type burned by the Klan, but was actually furrows dug into the hillside and filled with sawdust and gasoline. Under the light of the burning cruciform, hooded Klansmen rode horses draped in bed sheets. The spectacle provided first-rate entertainment to the thousands of curiosity seekers gathered below along the Pullman highway and Prune Orchard Road. The *Spokane Chronicle* (29 September 1923) reported that

One man today stated that it took more than one hour and thirty minutes for all the autos [numbering an estimated 2500] to pass a given point and that cars were parked along the road for a mile and a half in any direction from the entrance.

The sheriff's office stated that no disorder or traffic accidents occurred in the immediate area. It is believed that the photograph on pages 12 and 13, discovered in the Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections in Holland Library in Pullman, is of the Prune Orchard Road initiation ceremony.

Who was the Klan initiating into its ranks on that night in 1923? All were white Protestants, to be sure, and apparently Klan membership included individuals from virtually all walks of life. Farmers, merchants, physicians, educators, and clergymen joined the Klan in Colfax. One former Klansman said he joined the local klavern when

he was seventeen at the urging of his older brother. He claims that the main inducement in his becoming a member was the excitement provided by Klan parades, meetings, rituals, and secrecy. It all seemed like great fun for a farm boy who had missed the adventures of World War I.

Many persons undoubtedly joined the KKK for reasons other than the lure of adventure. Some surely became members hoping to promote patriotism. Some joined believing they were doing a social service by clandestinely monitoring and regulating the behavior of their morally inferior neighbors. Others were persuaded to join by local recruiters who reaped financial gain for enlisting new members. It cost \$10 to become a member of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Of this "klecktoken" (initiation fee), \$4.50 went to the national KKK headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. The state leader ("King Kleagle") collected one dollar, and the regional "Grand Goblin" received fifty cents. The remaining \$4 went to the local recruiter, who was sometimes the leader of the local klavern. Frequently the Klan entered a small community by recruiting a local Protestant preacher, offering him free membership, and promising him a leadership position in the town's organization. The Klan would then appear in the pastor's church, read a statement of the Klan's principles, and march out to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers." The recruiting process would then be under way, with the local pastor sitting at the top of a growing pyramid of new members, all paying the \$10 klecktoken.

And so it was not unusual to find a Protestant clergyman heading a local klavern. The resurgence of Christian fundamentalism during the 1920s tended to put these individuals in particularly influential positions in their communities. Although a physician held the highest office in the Colfax Klan for a time, a minister of the United Brethren Church held the position throughout most of the organization's active years. The clergyman became prominent in the Washington State Klan. In 1926 he spoke at a KKK convention in Wenatchee attended by 1500 Klansmen. During his speech, which was described as a "firey address," the Colfax Klan leader stated that "The Klan is not a man-made organization, but God-given." He also attacked U.S. immigration policies when he called on the government to "keep the wolves out of the melting pot" and "keep the wolves out of America." The clergyman used the occasion to voice his disapproval of "Alcohol Smith," a reference to New York Democrat Al Smith, later to be the party's Presidential nominee, and to Smith's opposition to Prohibition. (*Spokesman-Review*, 12 July 1926, p. 1).

Probably many factors contributed to the rise of the sizable klavern in Colfax. Perhaps one of the most important elements in exciting Klan sympathies was Saint John's Academy, a Catholic school situated adjacent to Saint Patrick's Church on the hill at the south end of town. In those days a brewery (then closed during the Prohibition era) sat on the other end of Main Street on the north side of town. The considerable Catholic population often heard Klansmen and their Protestant sympathizers say: "Colfax has the longest main street in the world—it stretches all the way from heaven to hell. Trouble is, you can't ever tell which end you're on!"

Opposition to the Catholic school by the Klan was fairly vigorous in Colfax. Klansmen unsuccessfully tried to force a man living on land overlooking the school to allow the KKK to burn a cross on his property. The man's refusal did not stop the Klan from burning numerous crosses on different hills above town. In an attempt to discredit Catholicism, the Klan brought a supposed "ex-nun" to Colfax. At the local Baptist Church, the woman recited the evils of the Catholic religion, and described how nuns were frequently seduced by priests. Several Catholics attended the "confessional." One of them asked the "ex-nun" to recite the Hail Mary to prove her authen-

ticity. This the woman was unable to do, to the great amusement of the Catholics in attendance.

Undoubtedly the most serious threat to the existence of Saint John's Academy in Colfax came in the form of Initiative 49, presented on the ballot to the voters of the state of Washington in November 1924. Patterned after the Oregon law (which was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1925, Initiative 49 provided for the abolition of private and parochial schools in the state. Colfax Klansmen campaigned vigorously for the proposition. Prior to the November general election, several Klansmen who controlled the voter registration books in the surrounding rural areas moved the books from farm to farm in an attempt to create confusion and prevent more Catholics from registering to vote. It did not take long for Catholics tired of playing the "try-to-find-the-voter-registration-books" game to demand they be allowed to register. Their demands were met grudgingly.

Initiative 49 became a heated issue in Colfax. Supporters of the Initiative pointed to the Catholic school as an example of a Papal (i.e., foreign) stronghold within the county. Others attacked the school as a home for delinquent children sent there by their even more delinquent parents from places outside Colfax. (Prostitutes from Spokane were known to have sent children to the school.) Editorials in both the Colfax and Pullman newspapers urged opposition to Initiative 49. The Pullman *Herald* called the proposal "a trouble breeder which is sure to stir up bitter dissension and arouse lasting animosities." (4 April 1924, p. 6). The *Colfax Commoner* was more emphatic in its denunciation of the Initiative: "That school bill is the product of the diseased minds of fanatics. It should be snowed under . . ." (31 October 1924, p. 4).

When the votes were counted, Initiative 49 was defeated in the state by a vote of 176,980 in favor to 118,936 against. Whitman County voted in favor of the Initiative by a vote of 4539 to 4412. The issue seems to have divided the county geographically. For example, Colfax and other towns to the west such as Thornton, St. John, La Crosse and other smaller precincts supported the proposition by substantial margins. In the eastern-most portion of the county, the measure failed in Tekoa, Palouse, Pullman, Colton, and Uniontown.

The Klan affected politics in other ways in 1924. John M. Klemgard, Democratic State Representative from the 7th District and candidate for Whitman County Commissioner, was apparently accused of Klan affiliation during the campaign. In October Klemgard signed a notarized affidavit, which was published in local papers, stating that he had never been a Klan member, knew nothing about the KKK except what he had read in the press, and that he opposed Initiative 49. Just what affect the statement had on the outcome of the election is unclear. Klemgard lost to incumbent Republican A. L. Maxwell in the commissioner's race. Considering the vote favoring Initiative 49, Klemgard's opposition to the proposal probably did not help his cause.

The failure of Initiative 49 did not end Klan activities in the county. Klan meetings continued in the Lippitt Building (now the site of the Whitman County Library) and the Knights of Pythias Building (on south Main) in Colfax. In October 1927 about 160 men and women Klan members (women belonged to their own KKK auxiliary organization) marched in full dress regalia down Main Street of the county seat while a cross burned on the hill north of town. Despite the fact that new members were still being initiated in Tekoa in 1928, the Klan had begun to fade in Whitman County by the late 1920s. An attempt was made to revive the klavern in Colfax in 1929, but without much success. It is not known when the last Klansmen donned their hoods and robes in the county. Crosses were still being burned in the Spokane area as late as 1936.

What had the Klan accomplished in Whitman County? What had the many Klansmen (and Klanswomen) done during that era of uneasiness? It is difficult to say, but what they had not done is more evident. Klansmen in the country apparently had not harassed the few Black people in the area as the Klan is known to have done in Lewiston, Idaho. It is said that a Jewish businessman in Colfax was never harassed by the Klan because everyone owed him money. So far as is known, no crosses were burned on priests' lawns as they were in Clarkston, Washington. No evidence has surfaced to implicate the Whitman County Klan in any acts of crime or violence. In this respect it should be noted that the KKK in this area and in the Pacific Northwest generally was much different from the violent and ruthless Klan organizations in the Midwest, Southwest and Deep South during the 1920s.

Klan activities in the small towns of Whitman County must have been like those in other rural localities in the region. The communities were too small for the Klan to maintain the secrecy and carry out the truly clandestine missions for which the organization was infamous. Spectators at Klan ceremonies often recognized a hooded Klansman by his voice or by the way he walked. Klansmen found it impossible to put their anti-Catholic propaganda into practice, and perhaps many never intended to. Fraternalization between Klan families and Catholics was inevitable. The son of the leader of the Colfax Klavern kept company with many of his Catholic friends. One Catholic girl often visited and sang hymns in the homes of Protestant friends whose fathers were Klan members. One Klansman fell in love with a Catholic girl, married her, and dropped out of the Klan! There seems to have been little room for serious hatred or bigotry in the klaverns of Whitman County.

Undoubtedly many people in the county joined the Klan believing they were performing a public service. The promise of becoming an agent in a "moral strike force" charged with eliminating lawlessness and immorality must surely have been a strong attraction. Although the intentions of many may have been decent, it cannot be overlooked that the racist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic principles of the Klan had been firmly established and were well known.

Perhaps much of the Klan's popularity stemmed from its moralistic Christian appeal. When the clergyman and Klan leader from Colfax claimed that the Klan was "God-given," he implied that the KKK was divinely inspired and guided. To do the Klan's work was, then, to serve a higher moral law. So it was in the 1920s that the Ku Klux Klan attempted to create and lead a moral majority in its own times.

Sources and Acknowledgements

*Most of the materials for this article were gathered from local newspapers and individuals who either participated in or observed Klan activities in the 1920s. Published works on the subject include **Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965** by David M. Chalmers, **The Ku Klux Klan in the City** by Kenneth T. Jackson, and **The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind** by John M. Mecklin*

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