

Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 18, No. 2

Colfax, Washington

Summer, 1990



- **Pine City**
- **History of Grazing**

main roads that ran from Walla Walla to Fort Colville and to the mining areas of Idaho and Montana. The Texas Trail crossed Pine Creek at Pine City and was an ideal camp site for weary travelers.

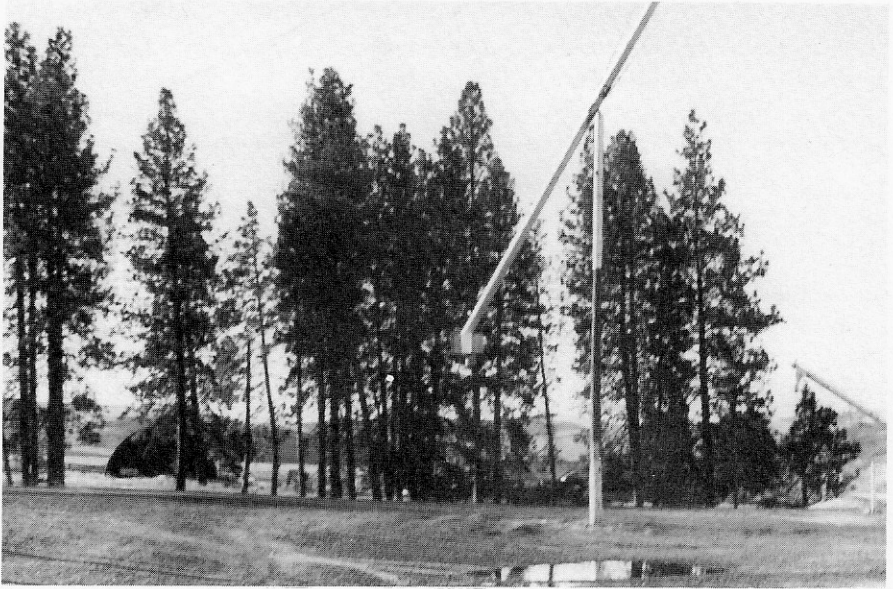
One of the early travelers to stop at Pine City was Billy Lawrence. He came through this area in 1871, which was in Stevens County at that time, and decided to settle here. In 1872 Dr. Z.T. Dodson a young and enterprising doctor chose Pine City for his home. With him was Jim Rick, a large and hardy blacksmith. About the same time, Whitman was developed from Stevens County and how what would soon be Pine City after being located in Clackamas, Walla Walla, Spokane, and Stevens Counties found its current home county. Our great county of Whitman County had been legislated in November of 1871 and was legally established on January 1st of 1872.

In 1873 Billy Lawrence built a sawmill near where Pine Creek and Thorn Creek comes together. Later it was sold to Tom Dowling and moved closer to Pine City.

One of the next to settle Pine City was James Turner who started a small general merchandise store and it also served as a mail drop.

Pine City was soon thriving and with a saw mill, store and doctor it attracted new settlers quickly. In 1877, before Pine City was plotted and turned into an official town site, the area had Indian "trouble". John Ritchie was killed a number of miles away on the headwaters of Pine Creek by a renegade Indian and this with the discontent and problems with the Nez Perce Indians in other areas, the pioneers in the Pine City area were alarmed and took action. They worked together and built a stockade about one-half mile south of Pine City on open ground near a spring. Settlers came from all directions with their teams to haul logs and construct the fort. The stockade consisted of logs about fourteen feet long, set on end side by side, about four feet into the ground. Many people came to the stockade with their important possessions. A company of 50 volunteers was organized and were supplied guns and ammunition from Fort Walla Walla. The leaders of this group were Captain James Alfrey, First Lieutenant Luke Rawls, and Second Lieutenant Mel Choate. There was a lot of excitement in the area but the Indians didn't come close enough to Pine City to cause the stockade to be used.

In 1878 Dr. Dodson decided that his land was a good place to start a town for the community that was growing up around the Pine City area so he plotted a number of lots and our town was born. Pine City continued to grow and soon had the look of an up and coming town. It now had two merchandise stores, a blacksmith shop, hotel and livery stable. The one thing it didn't have was a name. Dr. Dodson, Jim Turner, C. G. Bradner and James Richardson met and decided to name the little town Pine City



Grove of Ponderosa Pine, from whence the name Pine City

for it seemed appropriate with the nice stand of pine trees in the area and being located on the banks of Pine Creek. Now that the town had a name and the population of the surrounding community was growing quickly a post office was needed.

On August 22, 1879 the first official Post Office at Pine City was established with James W. Richardson as the first Postmaster. It was located in Richardson's hotel and now Pine City was booming.

In July of 1880 the John Allen family arrived in Pine City. According to the memoirs of Sam Allen, they found the town with three houses and decided to settle nearby close to Pine Creek. They built a small, one-room cabin which housed 12 people over the winter. In the spring they used the trees from along the creek to build a cabin on the land they homesteaded about two miles from town.

In 1881 Anderson Edwards decided Pine City was a good place to settle and he thought Pine Creek was a good place for a mill and a flour mill would be a good business to start. He borrowed 500 dollars from Jim Crutcher to start the mill. Edwards didn't know much about building or running a flour mill but knew that he needed stone burrs. He borrowed \$1,500 from Andrew Jackson Smith, a new comer to the area. Edwards ordered stone burrs which were shipped from Belgium, around Cape Horn to Portland and up the Texas Road to Pine City. Soon Edwards ran into trouble and didn't even complete the mill. He had financial troubles and turned the mill over to Smith to pay off his loan.

main roads that ran from Walla Walla to Fort Colville and to the mining areas of Idaho and Montana. The Texas Trail crossed Pine Creek at Pine City and was an ideal camp site for weary travelers.

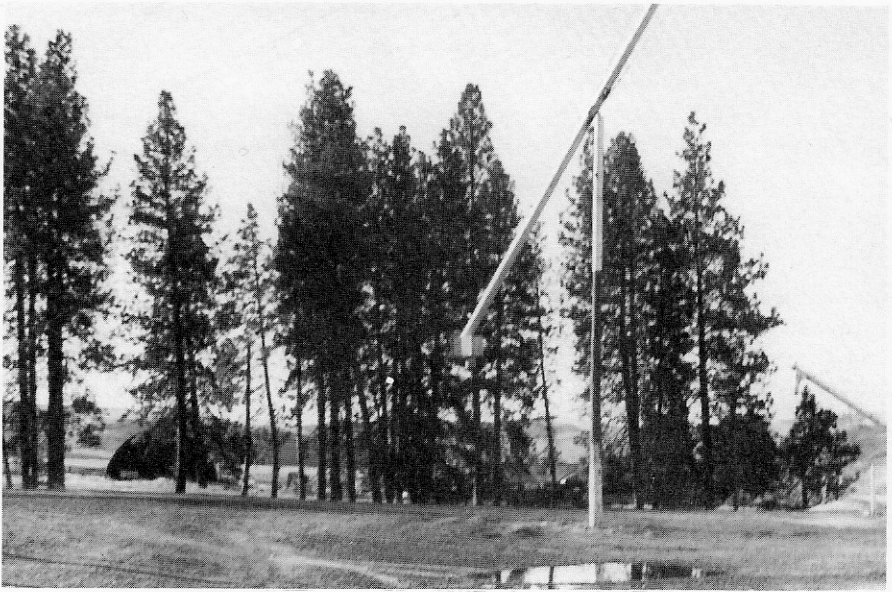
One of the early travelers to stop at Pine City was Billy Lawrence. He came through this area in 1871, which was in Stevens County at that time, and decided to settle here. In 1872 Dr. Z.T. Dodson a young and enterprising doctor chose Pine City for his home. With him was Jim Rick, a large and hardy blacksmith. About the same time, Whitman was developed from Stevens County and how what would soon be Pine City after being located in Clackamas, Walla Walla, Spokane, and Stevens Counties found its current home county. Our great county of Whitman County had been legislated in November of 1871 and was legally established on January 1st of 1872.

In 1873 Billy Lawrence built a sawmill near where Pine Creek and Thorn Creek comes together. Later it was sold to Tom Dowling and moved closer to Pine City.

One of the next to settle Pine City was James Turner who started a small general merchandise store and it also served as a mail drop.

Pine City was soon thriving and with a saw mill, store and doctor it attracted new settlers quickly. In 1877, before Pine City was plotted and turned into an official town site, the area had Indian "trouble". John Ritchie was killed a number of miles away on the headwaters of Pine Creek by a renegade Indian and this with the discontent and problems with the Nez Perce Indians in other areas, the pioneers in the Pine City area were alarmed and took action. They worked together and built a stockade about one-half mile south of Pine City on open ground near a spring. Settlers came from all directions with their teams to haul logs and construct the fort. The stockade consisted of logs about fourteen feet long, set on end side by side, about four feet into the ground. Many people came to the stockade with their important possessions. A company of 50 volunteers was organized and were supplied guns and ammunition from Fort Walla Walla. The leaders of this group were Captain James Alfrey, First Lieutenant Luke Rawls, and Second Lieutenant Mel Choate. There was a lot of excitement in the area but the Indians didn't come close enough to Pine City to cause the stockade to be used.

In 1878 Dr. Dodson decided that his land was a good place to start a town for the community that was growing up around the Pine City area so he plotted a number of lots and our town was born. Pine City continued to grow and soon had the look of an up and coming town. It now had two merchandise stores, a blacksmith shop, hotel and livery stable. The one thing it didn't have was a name. Dr. Dodson, Jim Turner, C. G. Bradner and James Richardson met and decided to name the little town Pine City



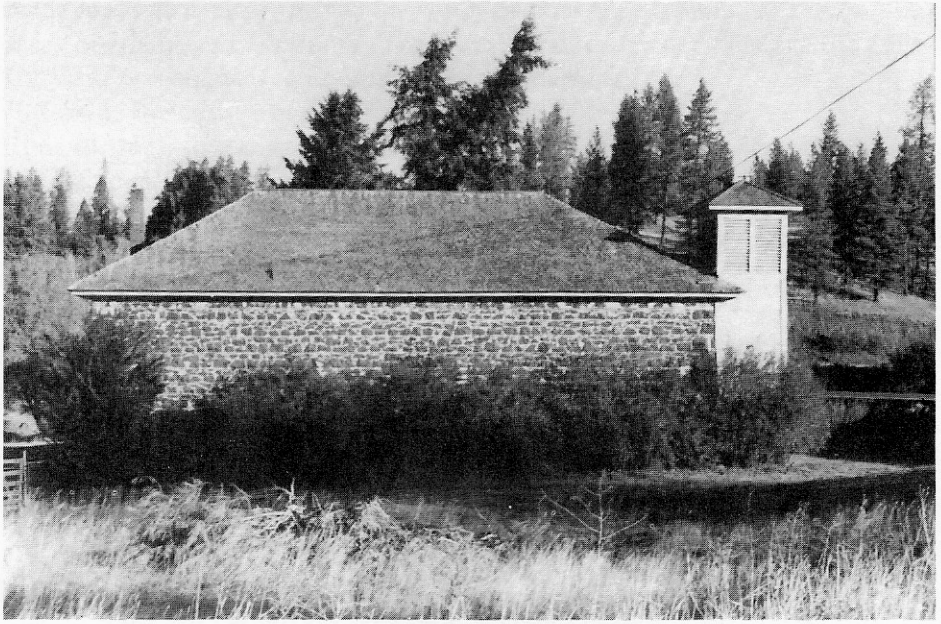
Grove of Ponderosa Pine, from whence the name Pine City

for it seemed appropriate with the nice stand of pine trees in the area and being located on the banks of Pine Creek. Now that the town had a name and the population of the surrounding community was growing quickly a post office was needed.

On August 22, 1879 the first official Post Office at Pine City was established with James W. Richardson as the first Postmaster. It was located in Richardson's hotel and now Pine City was booming.

In July of 1880 the John Allen family arrived in Pine City. According to the memoirs of Sam Allen, they found the town with three houses and decided to settle nearby close to Pine Creek. They built a small, one-room cabin which housed 12 people over the winter. In the spring they used the trees from along the creek to build a cabin on the land they homesteaded about two miles from town.

In 1881 Anderson Edwards decided Pine City was a good place to settle and he thought Pine Creek was a good place for a mill and a flour mill would be a good business to start. He borrowed 500 dollars from Jim Crutcher to start the mill. Edwards didn't know much about building or running a flour mill but knew that he needed stone burrs. He borrowed \$1,500 from Andrew Jackson Smith, a new comer to the area. Edwards ordered stone burrs which were shipped from Belgium, around Cape Horn to Portland and up the Texas Road to Pine City. Soon Edwards ran into trouble and didn't even complete the mill. He had financial troubles and turned the mill over to Smith to pay off his loan.



Stone church, from east

Smith completed the mill, installed the imported burrs and was in the flour business. When the water flow was good the mill could produce about 32 bags of flour that weighed 100 pounds each over a 24 hour time span. Soon Pine City attracted quite a bit of trade and business because of the mill. Settlers from Thornton, Oakesdale, Waverly, Wilber and the Rosalia area brought their grain to Pine City. They shopped in the stores, went to the churches, could attend the Grand Army of the Republic organization, and some even belonged to the local branch of the W.C.T.U.

A.J. Smith, being a shrewd business man, learned to operate the mill and in 1885 opened a general merchandise store and stocked everything the community needed.

The 1880's brought a rapid growth of homesteaders to the Pine City area. The Oregon Railway and Navigation Company had a line that linked Walla Walla and The Dalles in 1881 with a branch going to Dayton. Then by 1883 they were running all the way to Portland. In 1881 the Northern Pacific Railroad built a line from Ainsworth (near Pasco) to Spokane Falls. Even more important was the completion of the northern route of the Northern Pacific Railway in September of 1883. The western line of the railroad met the eastern line in Montana and there was now a transcontinental railroad line coming through Washington state. The towns of Ritzville, Sprague and Cheney were along this line and now homesteaders could easily reach the Pine City area and Pine City farmers could ship their

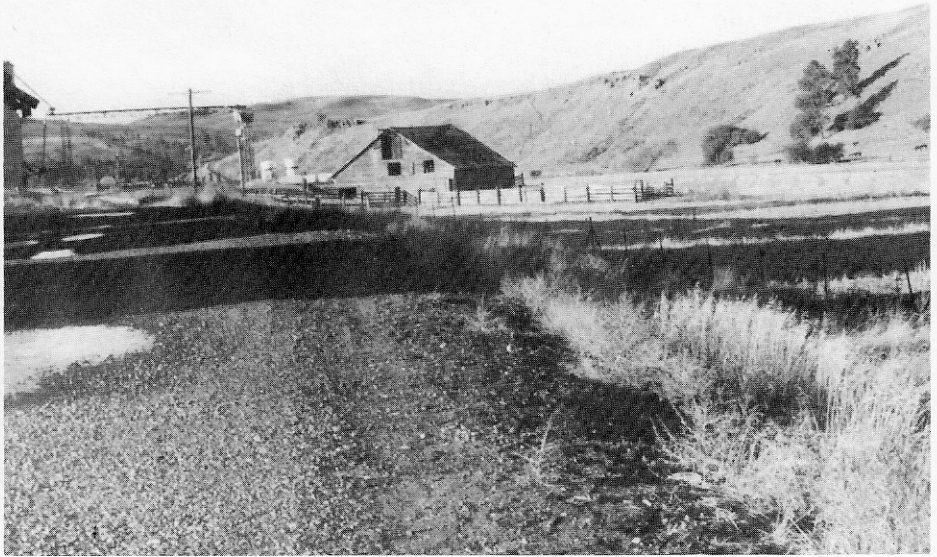


Stone church, with window detail

grain to market and obtain supplies with less difficulty.

John Henrich Bach was one of the early homesteaders to take advantage of this rail connection to the east. He came west before the lines were completed with George Barber and scouted out his homestead south west of Pine City. Then he returned to Illinois where in September of 1883 his younger son Harry Bach was born. In October, John Bach and his wife Mary and John F. Bach who was 2 and Harry Charles who was 6 weeks old came west on the newly completed railroad. Harry was the youngest baby to cross the Rocky Mountains on the new railroad line at that time. By the time John Bach reached the Pine City area in 1883 the area was growing quickly. Many of the choice homestead sites were claimed though much of the railroad land was available for purchase.

The United States Government passed several laws or acts to encourage development of the west. In 1854 there was the Oregon Donation Act where any citizen or intended citizen could obtain 160 acres of free land after paying a small filing fee, residing on the land for 5 years and making modest improvements. The Preemption Law was similar enabling a settler to acquire 160 acres of land after only 6 months residence by paying \$1.25 an acre, or \$2.50 an acre on land set aside for the railroads. The Timber Culture Act of 1873 and the Desert Land Act of 1877 were two other government land acts that encouraged settlement. The almost free land under the Donation Land was on even numbered sections and the land that the



government had granted the Northern Pacific Railroad and was available for purchase from NP was on odd numbered sections in the townships.

Government land was taken up quickly and often with a few problems. A person could file as many claims as he wanted but was allowed to make only one final proof. Sometimes the homesteader would sell his claim rights but in the case of Henry Jones, an early pioneer in the Pine City area, found he was traded land for necessary supplies. Jones acquired his claim in the Hole-in-the-Ground valley in such a manner. A long forgotten homesteader had laid claim to a choice spot of land on Rock Creek just above where it joins Pine Creek. This was close to the head of Rock Lake where different tribes of Indians would come to fish and the women would gather camus roots and other grasses and berries. This particular fellow had built his cabin and was beginning to develop his land but unfortunately had a run-in with the Indians. It is not known for sure whether he disturbed some of their burial sites in the valley or if he just didn't make a good neighbor to the original inhabitants of the area. When Henry Jones came through looking for a homestead he found the man much agitated and frightened for his life. He told Jones that he would trade him his claim for a fast horse and a six-gun. Jones, recognizing a good deal, made the trade and lived peaceably with the Indians as long as he owned his claim.

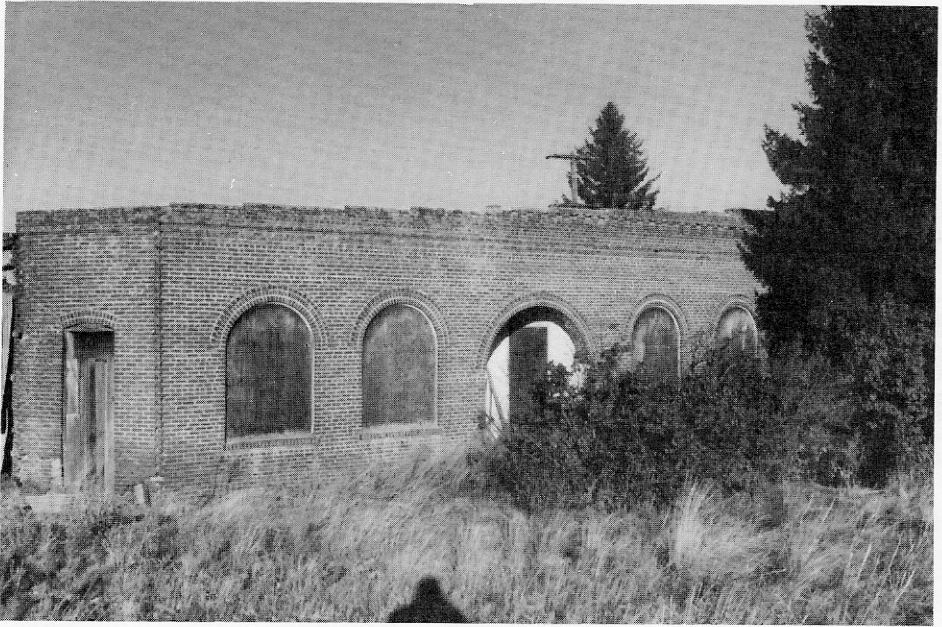
Another early settler in the Hole-in-the-Ground was Luke Rawls. Rawls was a man who was very law abiding and also ready to stand up for

his rights as when he manned the Pine City Stockade. He and Jones noticed a strange stock operation in the valley. Large bands of horses would appear in the Hole-in-the-Ground and disappear over night. Lights would signal on the big hill above the valley at night. Rawls decided to investigate and it wasn't long before he discovered that Bill Masterson, known to be the brother or cousin, of the famous Bat Masterson, was operating a horse rustling operation. Rawls had himself appointed as a deputy sheriff and joined the gang as a "rider" and before long he had rounded up Masterson and his foreman, Ed Harris. While Rawls was taking them in a gun fight ensued and Masterson was killed and Harris was wounded and turned over to the authorities. That ended the gang and brought Pine City a lot of publicity. In the 1950 or early 60's there was a TV series that glamorized several outlaws including Bat Masterson. Many Pine City old-timers, like, Harry Bach that knew Rawls and Jones were outraged over the series and with good reason.

Much of the economy of the Pine City area was dependent on farming and stock raising. In the 1870's and 1880's many of the crops were small for the land was hard to break. Many of the residents had orchards and grew garden produce which they traded locally or sold in Spokane as well as growing wheat. The John Allen's first crop was spuds and rutabagas and Anderson Edwards tramped his grain out with horses for there were very few threshers in the area. Many of the farmers hauled their crops to Walla Walla and as the area grew to Spokane, Cheney and Colfax.

By 1885 there were many pioneer families that have descendants living there today. In 1878 the Alexander Siegel family was living north of Pine City. 1880 found Warren Woodward and Harriet Adams near Thorn Creek and in 1881 Adam and Miranda Kile, Ole and Thea Melhaus had arrived. Soon after in 1882 John Thomas and Nancy Kile filed a homestead near Pine City and on the other side of Pine City was the homestead of Samuel and Rachel Crutcher. In 1883 John Henrich Bach settled west of Pine City on Fern Springs and in 1885 George L. Seward arrived to settle near him. North of Pine City the same year James and Josephine Angus filed their claim. These farms have remained in their families since the original pioneers arrived.

The growth of the rail roads improved the farmers' markets. Rosalia and St. John had rail lines first and then finally the line came to Kenova where the warehouses were developed for storing grain. Wheat was an extremely important part of the prosperity of the Pine City region and all was well until 1893 when the nation suffered from a depression and the Pine City country suffered from long spells of cool rainy weather which ruined the harvest. This deepened the depression in the Pine City area.



Pine City bank, from side

In 1890 the Milwaukee Railroad was surveying down Pine Creek for a new rail line. This railroad ran right along the creek and through Smith's store and mill. After much litigation Smith sold the land to the railroad and was allowed to operate the mill until the railroad was built. In 1895 he started to build a new mill near the old mill site and it started to operate in 1897.

By 1890 Pine City continued to grow and it had three merchandise stores, a hotel and livery stable, a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop, a millinery shop and ladies clothing shop along with a feed mill, flour mill, a church, a new schoolhouse and a saloon. The ladies of the town didn't hold with having a saloon in their midst and Mrs. Andrew J. Smith, Mrs. Frank Mason, Mrs. Dodson and other ladies formed a branch of the Women Christian Temperance Union and soon drove the salon keeper out of town. Dr. Swain was the new doctor in town and chaired a meeting on how to develop the area after the Milwaukee Railroad came down Pine Creek.

The greatly anticipated Milwaukee Railroad didn't arrive in the area until about 1905. During the years before its arrival the A.J. Smith built a new and more modern mill and then in 1902 the Smith Brothers built a new stone store building near the north end of the Pine Creek bridge and moved into it in 1903. The old Smith mill was torn down when the Milwaukee Railroad came through Pine City in 1907. The Smith home and



Pine City bank, main door

new mill were so close to the tracks that they were shaken off their foundations by fast moving passenger trains. Horses couldn't be hitched to the hitching post by the new Smith Brothers store because it was too close to the tracks. In 1914 the Smiths closed their store and moved to a new store on the south side of town. The store on the north side of the bridge was converted into a church, which is still standing there today. During the conversion and remodeling of the church, a hard of hearing A.J. Smith was hit and killed by a passenger train. Pine City lost one of its energetic and aggressive citizens.

In 1908 oil scum and gas bubbles were noticed on Pine Creek and the great Pine City oil boom was on. A.J. Smith and his sons bought a drilling rig and drilled for several years and found a type of oil that wouldn't burn when put in a pan with a wick. During this time the Spokane Natural Gas-Oil Company was also drilling unsuccessfully for oil in the Hole-in-the-Ground. The Pine City oil boom soon turned out to be a bust.

In 1910 the first grain warehouse was built in Pine City by the Smiths. About that time Wilmer, Dwyer and Stone who operated a bank in Rosalia decided to open a bank in Pine City with W. O. Palmer as cashier. Henry Smith was hired as an office boy and later operated the bank until 1934 when Pine City no longer needed a bank. Ennis Smith built a garage next to the store and bank thus moving the center of town to a new location. The only store left in the original center of town was the C. R. Higgs



Post office and garage

store. Young Joe Starkey took over the garage and soon built a store next to the garage. In 1940 the store and garage burned and all that was left was the empty bank building. This was later rebuilt and the town had a store and a garage owned by Joe Starkey operated by Paul Starkey and the Post Office with Martha Smith as Post Master. The Post Office was discontinued on July 23, 1969. The store closed at the same time.

As the population of Pine City declined the Pine City School was a key element holding the community together. Pine City school district was established in 1892 and grew as small county schools consolidated with it. It was housed in a stately brick building with beautifully landscaped grounds. Pine City was known for having championship athletic teams and a large trophy case was an over-flowing testimony to the talent and ability of the Pine City athletes. Even after the consolidation of the high school with St. John in 1954 the Pine City students were the main-stay of many championship St. John teams. In 1967 Pine City Grade School consolidated with St. John and Pine City had a school no longer. The beautiful brick building stood vacant for some time and Henry Smith, owner of the land, didn't want to be held legally responsible for accidents or upkeep of the building and it was torn down.

The other key element of the community was the Kenova Grange. The Kenova Grange which was re-chartered in 1928 met in Lone Pine School located on Stephens Road at what is now Leifer's mail box, until 1933

when they moved to Pine City. In 1937 the Rodna Dance Hall was purchased and moved to the present location and used as the Grange Hall. The Hall was rebuilt in 1983 and is now the cement that holds Pine City together. We still have charter members as members of our grange and many current members are descendants of the charter members.

Pine City is a small community with a rich history. It is the hub of a farming community whose first residents arrived before 1870 and dedicated their lives to making a good life for themselves and for their children. From Billy Lawrence and Dr. Dodson to the people living in the area today, Pine City is a special place. There are many unmentioned pioneers, city dwellers, and farmers, along with their descendants that have worked hard, cooperated, shared and cared to create and nurture this little village on the banks of old Pine Creek. The people residing in the area today fan the flame to keep the community alive and to carry the torch of Pine City history into the 21st century.

Bibliographical References

Bach, Harry Charles. Interview with Harry Bach, St. John, December 1967.

Barber, Elmer F. Pine City, "A Pioneer Town Which Came, Developed, Served and then Receded," *Pacific Northwesterner* Vol. 26 No. 4, 1982.

DAR, *Daughters of the American Revolution Family Records of Washington Pioneers*. Book 5, Spokane, 1935.

Prevost, Nancy M. *Paradise in the Palouse*. Fairfield. Ye Galleon Press, 1985.

Smith, Roy. "The history of Andrew Jackson Smith and his family and of Pine City," Washington Whitman County Library, 1962.

From: History of Grazing*
1941

by
Historical Records Survey
Works Progress Administration

Silas Smith, Lacrosse

Mr. Silas Smith came to the Penewawa area in the fall of 1872 from Portland, Oregon, going from Portland to The Dalles by boat and from there on by covered wagon. His father, an uncle, their wives, and John Burns and a younger brother and sister of Mr. Smith, were in the caravan. They went by way of Brown's Ferry, some 10 miles above Texas Ferry on the Snake River, climbed the hill at present Hay and crossed over to Moscow. Here they were told that the snow was too deep in the winter, so the caravan went to the Snake River and Penewawa. That first winter of 1872-73 they lived in a dugout, built against the side of the hill, on what is now known as the George Lee Ranch, about 1½ miles below the present Smith home. The next spring the family moved to the Warm Springs ranch, nearby, and began gathering drift logs, which drifted out of the mountains by stream, and often lodged along the banks of the Snake. Using cross-cut saws, timbers of the same size were squared for the walls of a cabin. Cracks were filled in with mud, which dried to make a fair protection from the winds and snows of winter. The family drove through Walla Walla and found it a mere village.

On the present farm is a small barn, which was the home of the Smiths and was built in 1874. Lumber was hauled from Colfax to construct it. Many of the homes around in that early year were made from lumber out from logs by a rip saw. The present Smith home was built in 1881, by Phil Cox, another early pioneer.

During the next few years after their arrival at Penewawa, which was non-existent then, the Smiths traded and bartered for land in and around the territory of the Snake River. The father set out peach trees in 1874 and 1875 (on the present ranch site) and soon had a growing orchard. The

*Copy Courtesy Washington State University Libraries

Smith's moved 17 times, but always came back to the approximate area of the present home, and often swapped pieces of land "even up".

For a period of time the father had over 1000 head of sheep, and they lived on the Palouse River, north of present Endicott. Sheep then were priced at from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per head and wool brought 25 cents per pound. The wool was hauled to Penewawa to the boat docks, and shipped by boat to Portland. Later the Smith's became more concerned with the raising of fruit along the banks of the Snake River.

The father built the first fence of the farm around an area of 80 acres of grazing land, about 1876. The barbed wire was bought at Colfax for \$20 a spool, which weighed around 100 pounds. The father also brought watermelon seeds from Oregon, which proved to be a fruitful enterprise, as the plants grew abundantly and the market in the area was excellent. On the present ranch today are two trees, a pear tree and a locust tree, that were planted by the Smith's in 1875.

Mr. Smith can remember the problems of the early sheepmen and cattlemen as chiefly that of rustlers and 'cow killers'. Some of the first settlers became discouraged and left their cattle to roam the range. These multiplied fast, and rustlers, lured by the unbranded 'slick ears', became a menace. Their slaughter of stolen cattle for beef market made their title of 'cow killers' most appropriate. Bad winters were another form of 'cow killers'. The winter of 1874-75 was unusually cold, the temperature going to 24 and 28 below zero. Cattle starved in the deep snow and bawled for something to eat. As many as possible were slaughtered for eating, before starving. The Indians, caught with a short crop of salmon and berries, lived on the dead cattle also. Another bad winter and 'cow killer' occurred in 1885-86. Ice froze over the Snake River and a huge ice gorge was formed when ice backed up from an island in the midst of the rapids near Penewawa. Thousands of cattle died during the winter. One party near Penewawa, in traveling to Central Ferry, skinned over 500 head of the cattle for their hides.

The Smith's were in the sheep business from 1876 to 1882, and from there on they were more concerned with the raising of fruit. Their sheep grazed on the Snake River hills and on the open range in the Palouse Country, where grass was abundant and wild. The sheep were branded with a single dot of black paint; at times, the paint was red. Often Mr. Smith's father took soot out of the family chimney to use in a crude home-made black paint for marking the sheep.

Rustlers used the Snake River hills for hide-outs, but their main quarters were located in the Big Cove and Little Cove, near present Endicott and Winona. Sometimes they could be found camped near the Palouse Falls and Rock Lake.

The settlement, known as Penewawa, was originally laid out by Emsley Fincher, who lived about one mile west of the present store near Mr. Smith's present home. In 1882 Penewawa had a store, a blacksmith shop and a small hotel. A post office was located in the station. In 1906 the old O. W. R. R. & N., locally known as the Camas Prairie Railroad, and built from Riparia to Lewiston, was built through Mr. Smith's tract of land along the Snake River, and a stop station was established. In 1909 Mr. Smith laid out some land into lots and named it Smith's Addition. This included the stop station and a warehouse. Railroad officials had hoped that the railroad would bring in settlers along the Snake by many hundreds, but such optimism was never fulfilled and settlements were always scattered and few. With the advent of the automobile, transportation problems to markets were solved, and rather than use the railroad farmers and settlers used trucks. Chief development along the river were cherry and fruit orchards, requiring seasonal labor and it was much easier to obtain labor at Colfax and in the Palouse Country.

