

Bunchgrass Historian



**Whitman County Historical Society
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- ◆ **Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Palouse**
 - ◆ **Rock Lake City: Whitman County's Lost Town**
 - ◆ **Pullman's Webb Block**
-

Whitman County Historical Society

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

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Whitman County Historical Society
P.O. Box 67, Colfax, WA 99111
e-mail: epgjr@wsu.edu
www.wsu.edu/~sarek/wchs.html

COVER

*Holy Trinity Episcopal Church,
1990's.*

Photo Courtesy of Jean M. Burnett



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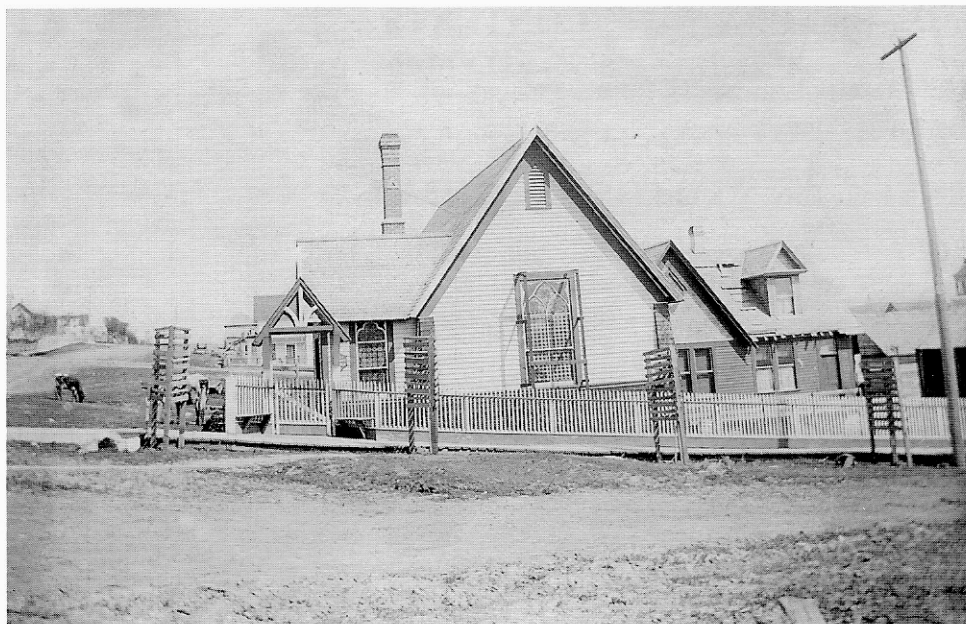
AUTHORS

Annie Pillers collaborated with many others, including **Michael Hauser, Jane Flansburg, and Pat Flansburg** to complete the complex application for the Historical Register. The church was added to the Washington State Register of Historic Places in 2004 and to the National Register in 2005. Annie Pillers has been an active community member since moving to Palouse in 1990. She has supported community efforts in many ways, including city clerk, city council member, chamber member, and small business owner. She is an ardent supporter of the Trinity Chapel project.

The photographs in this article come from a variety of sources including Jean Burnett, Jim Trivelpiece, Arvid Olson and members of the congregation. As with the on-going preservation project, the information and illustrations are the fruits of a truly collaborative effort of many individuals.

Theresa Mazzeo wrote this piece on Rock Lake for WSU History course taken with Dr. Kathy Meyer. Theresa, from Federal Way, Washington, is a junior majoring in Secondary History/Education. She plans to be a high school teacher. Her interests include dance, which she has studied for 14 years and taught for 4 years, currently with Pullman's Festival Dance Academy and "Elite," the WSU Theater Dance Company. Theresa's article continues our on-going series of "Towns of Promise -- Towns of Dreams."

The information on the **Webb Block** was gathered by the researchers collaborating on the Historic Downtown Pullman Project. This project will result in the placement of plaques on significant sites and buildings and in the publication of a "Pullman Historic Walk" brochure. The Historical Society will use this as a prototype to interpret historic buildings and sites in other Whitman County communities.



Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in 1898. The Parish House is to the right of the photograph. Note the four trees within the wooden trellises outside the picket fence, and the two cows on the left of the photograph.



The Parish House, 1898. Built in 1891 this served as the vicarage until 1919, after which it became the Parish Hall until destroyed by fire in 1926.

HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, PALOUSE

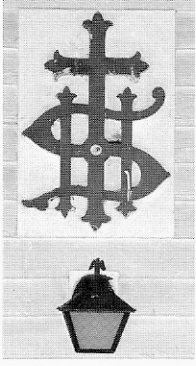
By Annie Pillers

The Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Palouse, Washington, is an historically significant structure that represents the spiritual needs and aspirations of a small community in rural Washington State. The church is also a significant example of rural ecclesiastical architecture. Constructed in 1896, in the waning years of the Gothic Revival style, the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church boasts numerous intact features typical of the Gothic style. Architecturally, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church is designed in the Late Gothic style, showing a transition between the fanciful Queen Anne styles of the 1890s and the up-and-coming Arts & Crafts period of the early 20th Century. The church has a high level of architectural detail, including tri-foil topped windows, buttressed exterior walls, an articulated brick chimney, and combination wood and shingle exterior sheathing. The church is the oldest religious structure in Palouse and retains its architectural integrity.

Palouse, Washington, originally called Palouse City, was incorporated in 1888 in anticipation of the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Later “City” was dropped from the name. According to J.B. West in Growing Up in the Palouse, no one is certain of the origin of the name “Palouse.” The first structure built in the community was a log cabin built near the current city pump house on Main Street. The structure was built in 1873 by James A. “Modoc” Smith, who claimed land between present day “F” Street and “H” Street (This area would later be called Smith’s Addition).

In the late 1870s the town’s first postmaster, R.P. Ragsdale, saw the need for another general store in town. He contacted carpenter W.P. Breeding who suggested a two-story building with the lower floor to be used for the store and the upper floor for a meeting hall. Known as Ragsdale Hall, this building became a gathering site for many newly formed congregations. Among the services held in the hall was the first Episcopal Church service in Palouse by a circuit rider, the Rev. R. D. Nevius, in the fall of 1879.

By the 1880s, Palouse businesses included a flour mill owned by William P. Breeding, a steam-powered saw mill, Power’s general merchandise store, a hotel owned by Daniel Preffer, a saloon, and a hotel owned by O.E. Clough (the brother of the Governor of Minnesota). The Preffer Hotel and the Farnsworth Livery were among the first businesses to settle across the river, off the steep hillside where the town originally began. In fact the Preffer Hotel building was moved across the river by a team of 80 oxen. When C. H. Farnsworth built his livery, he insisted that main street be wide enough to turn a team of four horses into the stable, hence the origin of the 100 foot wide main street of today.



The city's first newspaper, The Boomerang, was founded in 1882 by Edward H. Orcutt, the first publisher as well as early school teacher. It was a weekly with an annual subscription price of \$2.50. The name changed over the years from The Boomerang to The Palouse Republic, the Whitman Latah Record and then back to The Boomerang.

The first meeting of the Trustees for Palouse City was held on March 8, 1888, with J.G. Powers as Chairman, but soon succeeded by C. H. Farnsworth. The first Clerks were F.M. Martin and Frank Maupin. The trustees directed the affairs of Palouse City for over a year, until Mayor J.H. Wiley, Clerk E.E. Ellsworth, and five councilmen: C.H. Farnsworth, F.M. Smith, H.A. Skeels, C.W. Bassett, and J.A. Miller, were elected in 1889.

Like many towns in the west, a fire swept across Main Street in Palouse on May 17, 1888 destroying nearly all the businesses. However the downtown recovered with many new permanent brick structures being built. The growth was fueled by the agricultural and timber industry. By 1889 over 100 men were employed in three different sawmills. The railroad and the river both played a significant role in transportation of these products. However, in 1912 when the Potlatch Lumber Company built a new mill in the neighboring town of Potlatch, Idaho, the only remaining





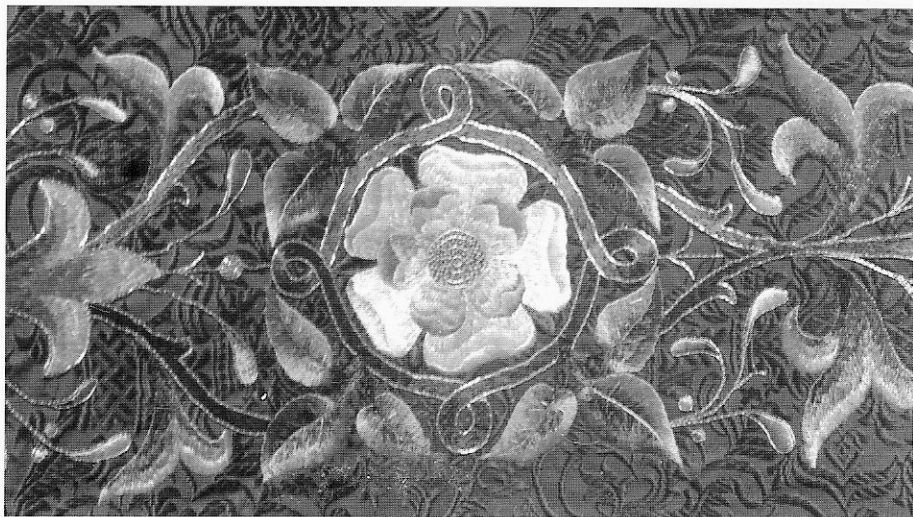
Easter Vigil, 1974, with Rev. Jack Dirks

saw mill in Palouse was dismantled and the economy took a severe downturn. As such little development occurred in the downtown, today much of the original turn-of-the-century fabric remains.

In the growing town of Palouse of 1879, Episcopal Church services were held in Ragsdale Hall in the original part of town. These were con-

ducted by a variety of itinerant ministers as they traveled through the community on their regular circuits on horseback. Ragsdale Hall also housed services for the first Roman Catholic services. On April 13, 1891, the Episcopal Mission was officially organized under the name Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, with regular services held by the Rev J.H.T. Goss two Sundays each month. Exactly a month after the church was organized, the first public confirmation was held.

Plans for the construction of a church actually began prior to the official formation of the congregation. Records show that land for the construction of a permanent home for the church was given to the Diocese of Spokane on May 26, 1890. A warranty deed records that the Rev. Lemuel H. Wells, the Episcopal Bishop of Spokane,



Embroidery Detail

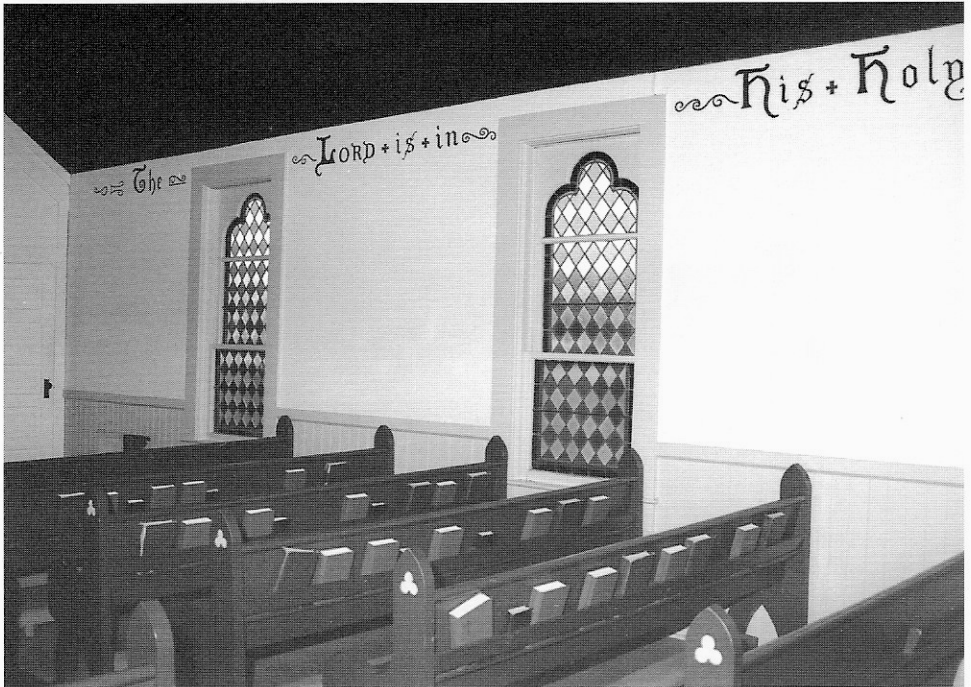
accepted two lots on the corner of Alder and Bridge Street from E. N. and Mary E. Beach. In 1891, a foundation was begun, and Bishop John Paddock from Spokane laid the cornerstone on October 28 of the same year. However, due to the panic of 1893 and the subsequent bank failures causing the loss of \$500 from the church building fund, construction on the church was halted until 1895.

The construction of the church began anew under the direction of Reverend J. Nelson Berry. Its late nineteenth-century Gothic design is credited to John P. Duke, a member of the building committee. It is unknown at this time what, if any, architectural training Duke had. John,

his sister, and her husband (Mr. C. T. Cross) had come to Palouse sometime before 1893; the two men worked as clerks for the First National Bank. John eventually became manager of the Security State Bank. He married Leona Warren. Together, John and his wife paid \$300 for three lots in the west part of town, on the 600 block of W. Illinois Street, where they built an English-style home. John was very active



Chimney, with symbols of the cross and the Trinity





Lich Gate

in civic affairs and helped design the city park.

Constructed in 1895, the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church is a stick frame structure with an “L” shaped plan; it has a small entry vestibule on the northwest corner. Overall, the building measures 40 by 20 feet. The exterior, in the late nineteenth century Gothic Revival style, is clad with a combination of lap cedar siding and wood shingles. The lower one-third of the exterior walls is battered out and highlighted with staggered cedar shingles. There are five buttresses on each side of the structure. The gable roof of the church rises to 25 feet, 7 inches at its peak. Above the entry vestibule is a decorative corbelled brick chimney, which rises 14 feet.

Incised within the chimney are a cross and a trinity symbol in the form of a raised triangle. Holding the chimney to the roof is a wrought iron tie rod with decorative scrolled ends, which match the altar details inside the church.

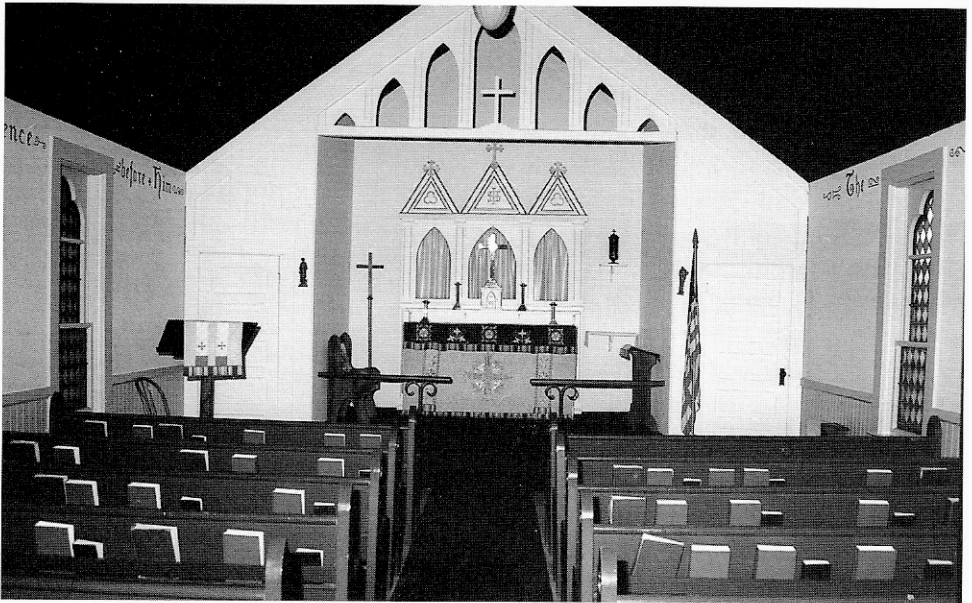
Entrance to the church is via a small 7-by-7 foot gabled entry on the northwest corner of the building. The sanctuary has eleven wood-framed windows, with leaded stained glass in a diamond pattern. The stained glass is referred to as Kokomo glass and is likely from the Kokomo Opalescent Glass Company of Kokomo, Indiana. Each window has a tri-foil transom window above a double-hung unit. The lettering on the walls of the church, “*The Lord is in His Holy Temple; let all the Earth keep silence before Him,*” was outlined by John Duke and painted by a church member, Mrs. John R. Payne, when originally built. In 1979, Arvid Olson painstakingly repainted and outlined the lettering when the interior of the church was repainted. The altar is 7 feet by 10 feet 10-1/2 inches with a wooden top that depicts a cross in the middle set in an arch with three smaller arches on either side. The altar hangings in the church were handmade in England and were sent to Palouse, coming by ship



Earliest view of altar



Early 20th Century view of altar



Modern view of altar

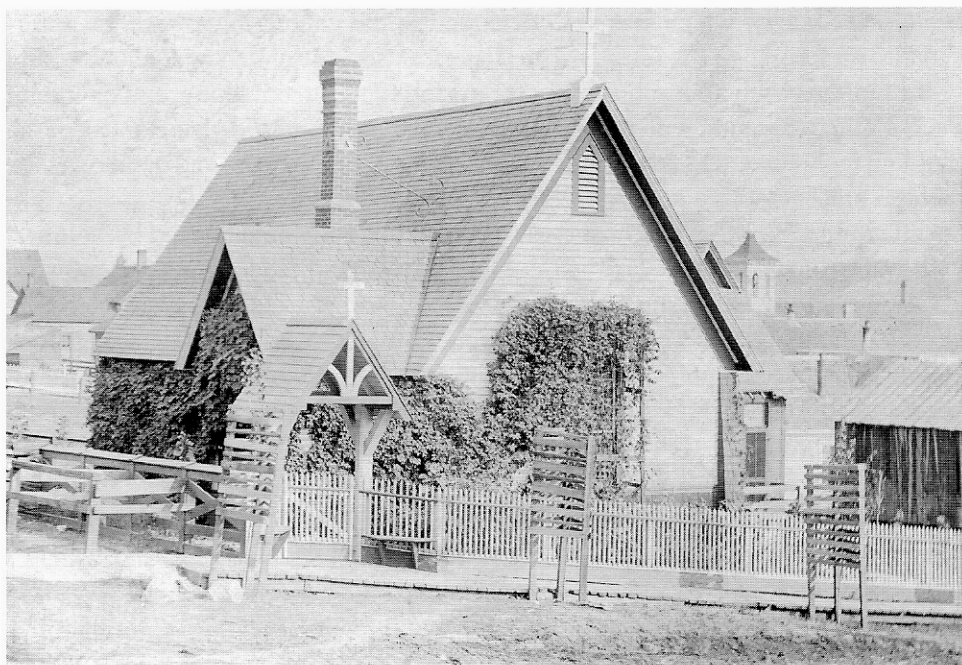
around Cape Horn. Some are still in very good condition. In fact, the altar vestment currently displayed on the altar is shown in a circa 1905 photo of the church. The sanctuary features hardwood floors.

Standing at the entrance of the church property next to the sidewalk is a lich gate. This unique feature is ten feet tall and five feet wide. Mainly found on European churches, this lich gate is believed to be one of only seven lich gates in existence in the entire United States. The covered entry-gate served as an important part of a burial service. Traditionally the coffin was placed underneath its roof to await the arrival of the clergyman. The burial service then began at the gate before proceeding inside. It also served to shelter the pallbearers while the bier was brought from the church. In some lich gates, there stood large flat stones called lich stones upon which the corpse, usually uncoffined, was laid.

The first service in the new church was held on December 25, 1895, with a short dedicatory speech by Rev. Barry. The building was consecrated by Bishop Wells on Wednesday, February 12, 1896. That evening Bishop Wells and Rev. Dean Babbitt of Spokane spoke at length to the congregation on the peculiarities and history of the church. On Thursday, February 13, 1896, Rev. Barry was ordained priest at Holy Trinity by Bishop Wells, assisted by Rev. Babbitt of Spokane and Rev. Wright of Colfax. That first year was very active for the new congregation. The first officers elected to serve the new church building were John R. Payne, warden; Mary Beach, treasurer; and Fred Ellis, secretary. On March 18, 1896, three children of Frank and Emma (Burnett) Flint were baptized. By April 1896, a class of nine was confirmed by Bishop Lemuel H. Wells. Also during the first year, the first burial service at the church was held on December 17, 1896, for Mrs. Emma Flint, a member of the confirmation class of 1896.

Dr. E.T. Hein was organist and musical director in the early days of the church. Others “pumping” the organ over the years were Rosemond Joslin, Emogene Belvail, Mildred Skovlin, and Dr. R.O. Barton, who came to Palouse in 1926 and moved to Spokane in 1942





Early 20th Century view

to practice dentistry. An electronic organ was purchased in the 1960s and Dorothy Fox, the minister's wife from Colfax, became the organist for several years.

In 1891, before the church was built, a parish house was constructed. It was located just south of the church, but fire destroyed it in 1926. According to records, in 1919 the C.E. Frederick home diagonal from the church was purchased as a vicarage for the Reverend Burleson and his family, who lived there for ten years. Rev. Burleson, who presided as minister of the church until 1929, was the last resident minister of the Holy Trinity. For the next 70 years thereafter, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Palouse shared a minister from Moscow, Pullman, or Colfax. By the 1990s, services at Holy Trinity were held only once a month until they were discontinued altogether in 1999.

The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane took ownership of the church in 1965. In October of 2003, the Diocese decided that it was time to sell the building, since no services had been held at the church over the past three years. When several people in town heard that the building was going to go on the market, a meeting was held to determine if there was enough interest to purchase it. Fortunately, there was a dedicated core group of people who were willing to invest time and money, and a proposal was made to purchase the building. The Diocese accepted the offer, and the building was purchased for \$28,000 with a five-year payment plan.

During this same time, this core group partnered with the Whitman County

Historical Society, which was able to extend to the church its tax-exempt status and certain insurance advantages. The Historical Society agreed to take ownership of the building with all responsibility for raising funds, maintaining, and operating the building remaining with the local community group. Future plans for use of the building include renting it for small weddings, funerals, recitals, and gatherings for cultural presentations – such as poetry readings and lectures.

Through the boom and bust cycle of small town life experienced by Palouse, Trinity Episcopal Church has had continuous pastoral leadership and ministry. Today the Trinity Episcopal Church, dating back to the 19th Century, is the oldest church building still standing in Palouse. In 2004, Holy Trinity Chapel was placed on the Washington State Register of Historic Places, and in 2005 it was placed on the National Register Of Historic Places. The building has been, and will continue to be, an integral part of the community.

Over the years a variety of pastors have served the small congregation. Several had two or more parishes and came to Palouse on a rotating basis from their home church in the larger communities of Pullman, Moscow, or Colfax.

Rev. J.H.T. Goss – 1890s

Rev. J. Nelson Barry –1895-1899

Rev. H. Norwood Bowne – 1899-1901

Rev. Willard Roots

Rev. Henry Purdue

Rev. John Lockwood

Rev. Herbert Hames

Rev. Burlison 1919-1929

(after 1929 Holy Trinity was served by non-resident Ministers)

Rev. Richard F. Ayers 1929 – early 1931

Rev. Phillip Nelson (from Pullman) 1931-1940

Rev. John R. Bills (from Moscow) 1940s;

Rev. Warren Fowler;

Rev Norman Stockwell, 1945 - 1954;

Rev. William Blewett from Moscow late 1950s ;

Rev. Flaherty (from Moscow) 1950s;

Rev. Charles Fox came (from Colfax) 1958 - early 1960s

Rev. Woodrow Epp late 1960s

Rev. Jack Dirks 1970s

Rev. Armand Larive (from Pullman) 1990s



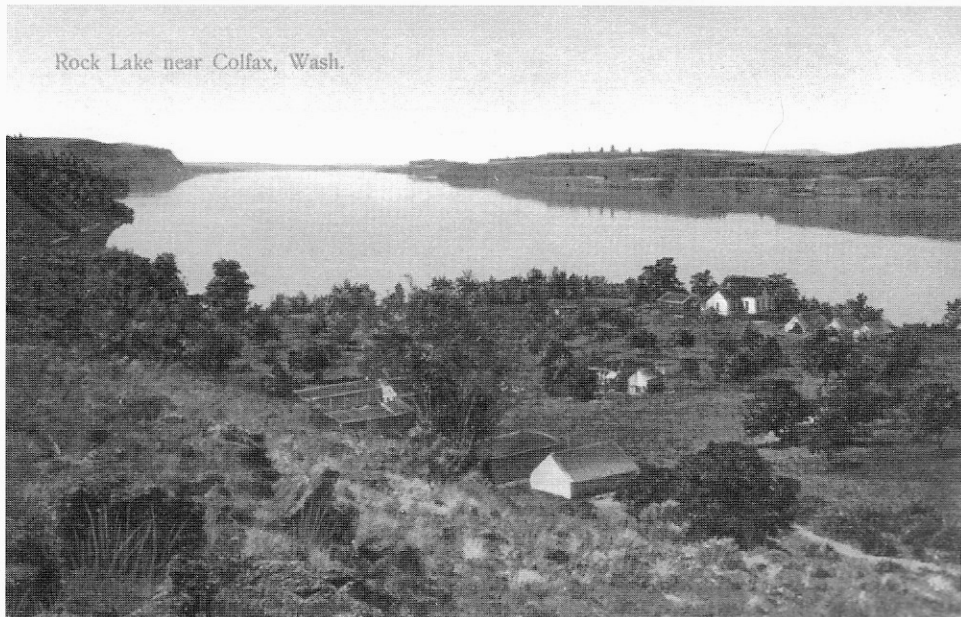
Towns of Promise --- Towns of Dreams Series

**ROCK LAKE CITY:
Whitman County's Lost Town
By Theresa Mazzeo**

Turn-of-the-century America was filled with tales of people exploring and moving westward in hopes of quick commerce and wealth. Whitman County was no different, yet few people know about the early frontiersmen in this county and the new cities and towns they created, some of which no longer exist. One of these lost towns was Rock Lake City. Situated on the shores of the cliff-walled Rock Lake, Rock Lake City is often confused with the city of Ewan just a few miles away; and it is commonly believed that Ewan simply replaced Rock Lake City. This perception, however, is completely wrong. Rock Lake City's failure was not due to replacement, but due to its failure to secure a railroad station, its need for new schools, the new post office in Ewan, and the lack of tourists, on which the hotel and boat excursions depended. In addition, the mysterious, eerie and peculiar nature of the lake with its "urban legends," could have added to the town's decline.

The history of the region around Rock Lake can be dated back hundreds of years ago. The earliest tales of Rock Lake originated with Indian oral legends about the monster of Rock Lake. Natives of the Columbia Plateau often camped by the quiet

Rock Lake near Colfax, Wash.



shores of the lake while they gathered camas roots to eat and save for the winter. Back at the campsites around a warm flickering fire, people would share stories of the unexplained swells in the lake and speculate that a grotesque serpent in the lake had caused these waves. It was said that the Great Spirit had killed the giant serpent and had dug a large trench to bury the monster, but the tail of the creature had stayed a live, thrashing about and causing the mysterious waves.¹

Rock Lake is not only the subject of Indian folklore but also of fairly recent Indian history, as the body of Chief Kamiakin was buried at the foot of the lake and spent many years by its shores. Born around 1800, to the daughter of a great Yakima chief, Kamiakin was the primary spokesman and negotiator for Indians in eastern Washington after Washington was designated a U.S. territory by Congress in 1853. The first Territorial governor, Isaac Stevens, negotiated with Kamiakin over land to build a new railroad. Kamiakin suggested that a council be held in Walla Walla with other tribal leaders to help settle terms of the agreement. Stevens followed Kamiakin's advice.

At the meeting, leaders of the Nez Perce, Walla Walla and other surrounding tribes were present. None of the chieftains, however, would sign a contract with Stevens. When Kamiakin began to leave the council, Stevens threatened him with war if he did not sign the treaty. Knowing full well that the natives would not be able to defeat the superior military forces of the U.S., Kamiakin put an "X" on the document, believing that the treaty protected the natives from neighboring whites and forbade trespassing on the designated reservations. Just days after Stevens returned



"Dad" Evans seated on bluff before Cliff House, overlooking the road at the outlet of Rock Lake.

to Olympia, nearby mine workers encroached on native lands and attacked a native family. In the ensuing fighting there were casualties on both sides. The governor demanded that any Indian who had participated in the fighting be turned in because it was in direct violation of the previously signed treaty. For the next three years, until 1855, war would be fought between native people and U.S. military forces.²

Kamiakin was badly hurt during one of the many battles and found refuge by the shores of Rock Lake, which he had previously visited many times with his father and grandfather. Here the chief and his family found peace, herding cattle and horses, living off of wild vegetation, and harvesting small gardens of potatoes, beans, and corn. Kamiakin stayed near the shores of Rock Lake until his death in April of 1877.

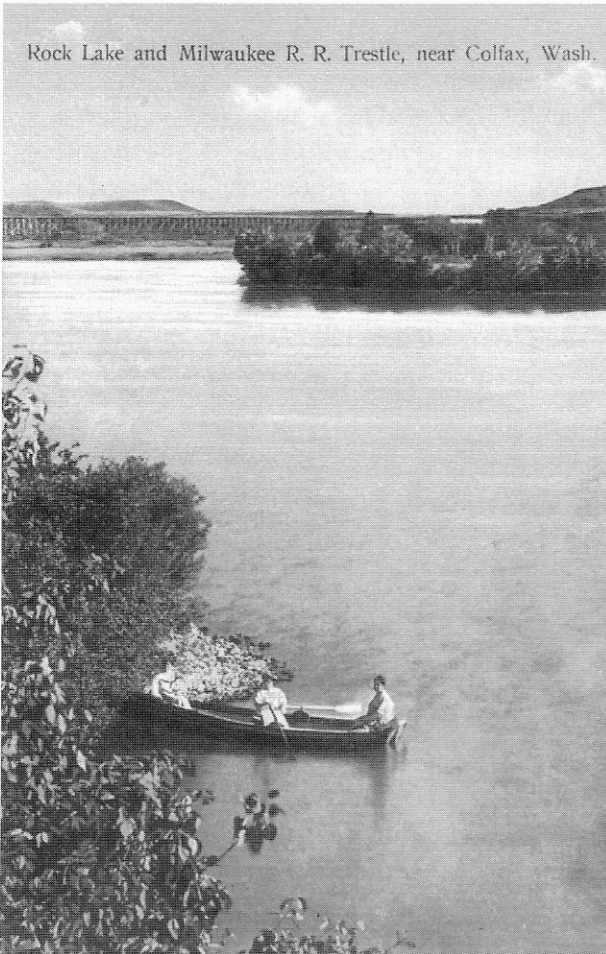
One of Kamiakin's close white friends was frontiersman John Eaton. Eaton was the first white settler to call the Rock Lake region home. Originally from New York, Eaton's pioneer zeal brought him west in 1853 via the Oregon Trail, which ended in Oregon City. In 1868, Eaton began operating the Kentuck Ferry on the lower Snake River; and by 1870, he settled on the Texas Trail, about one mile west of Rock Lake. There, Eaton raised livestock and farmed. Soon this pioneer had acquired 1500 acres of land and was elected county commissioner. Even though Eaton had fought in Indian wars in Oregon, he now settled down as a peaceful, respectful neighbor and good friend of Chief Kamiakin.³

Although John Eaton was the first white settler in the Rock Lake area, Willis "Dad" Evans became the most influential frontiersman there. Evans was one of the first to realize that the fertile land of the rolling Palouse hills was not the only



Evans Store: "Mom" Evans is the second woman from the right in the back row.

Rock Lake and Milwaukee R. R. Trestle, near Colfax, Wash.



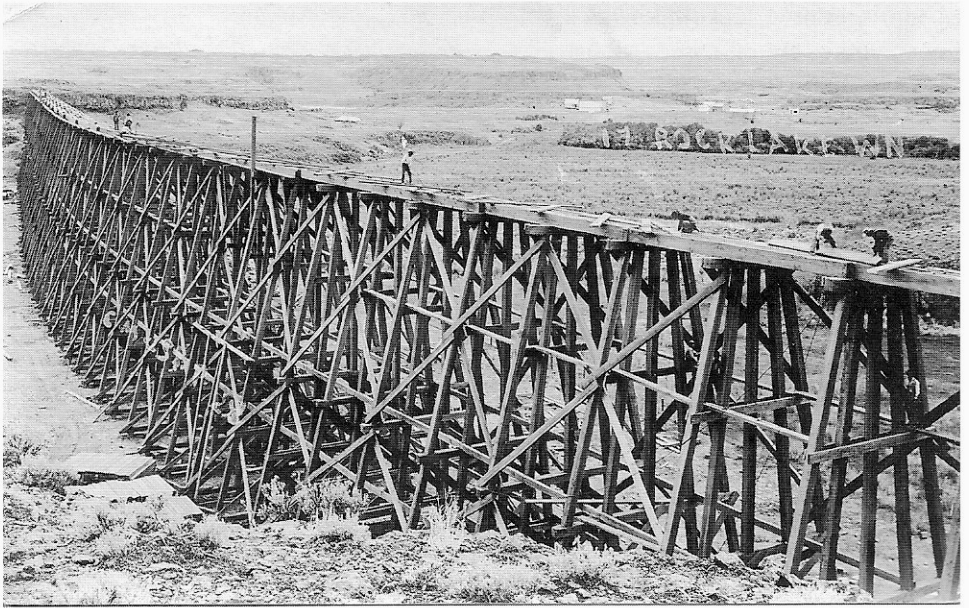
attraction in the region; he believed that the lake could be developed into a tourist attraction. A craftsman from Le Seur, Minnesota, he had built boats to sell and rent out to men and women for use in the numerous lakes in his native state. With his business ventures in Minnesota, Evans had heard about and was attracted by stories of the great, long harvests of Whitman County, so he traveled to the Palouse to work as a steam engineer for Ed Leikin. While employed by Leikin, Evans and the crew did threshing for George Seward near Rock Lake. Seward and Evans quickly became close friends, and Seward took Evans to Rock Lake. He immediately decided to purchase some land at the south end of the lake.⁴

In 1904, Evans and his family moved to Rock Lake.

The first thing he did was to build a general store. He sold a number of knickknacks, candies, and cigars. In the back of the store he built living quarters. Soon the general store became home not only to the Evans family, but also to Rock Lake City's post office and telephone exchange.

One year earlier, in 1903, Evans had bought a gasoline-powered passenger boat and brought it to Rock Lake. This boat became another good source of income for the Evans family, because "Dad Evans" began using it to hold boat excursions for \$1.50 roundtrip. He hoped that Rock Lake City would grow into a tourist town and that the travelers' money would flood Rock Lake's economy.⁵ Evans thought that Rock Lake was one of Washington's loveliest and nicest secrets and that it was bound to draw tourists.⁶

By 1905, business was doing so well that it seemed crucial to expand and



broaden the Evans family businesses. Evans built a hotel on top of a cliff overlooking the lake and called it the Cliff House. The Cliff House was supplied with iron beds and straw-filled mattresses. All of the wooden furniture was hand-built by Evans himself. Vacationers could stay there for only 75 cents a night. They could go out on the excursion boat, or rent small rowboats for a fair price.

Evans was not only a storeowner, boat excursion director, postmaster, and hotel owner, but also a real estate and insurance dealer. He was the definition of the overachieving and city-cultivating frontiersmen of the late 1800s and early 1900s in America. Like so many others of his kind, he had set his sights on bringing a railroad into Rock Lake City.

By 1905, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad was planning to extend rail service to the Pacific Northwest. Survey crews had been working in the mountains of Montana and Idaho, and hope spread that the new railroad would come through Rock Lake.

Surveying was difficult along the towering cliffs of Rock Lake, and it took much time to finish the surveying job. Construction began on the east and west sides of the lake in 1907, bringing the hope of increased prosperity and population growth to the people of Rock Lake City. Building and laying the tracks was a very complex task because of the thick, jagged, basalt rock around the lake. Many tunnels had to be built because carving out the side of the cliffs was too complicated. Once construction had begun, Rock Lake City was flooded with railroad workers needing places to stay and food to eat. Engineers stayed at the Cliff House hotel, which kept Evans'

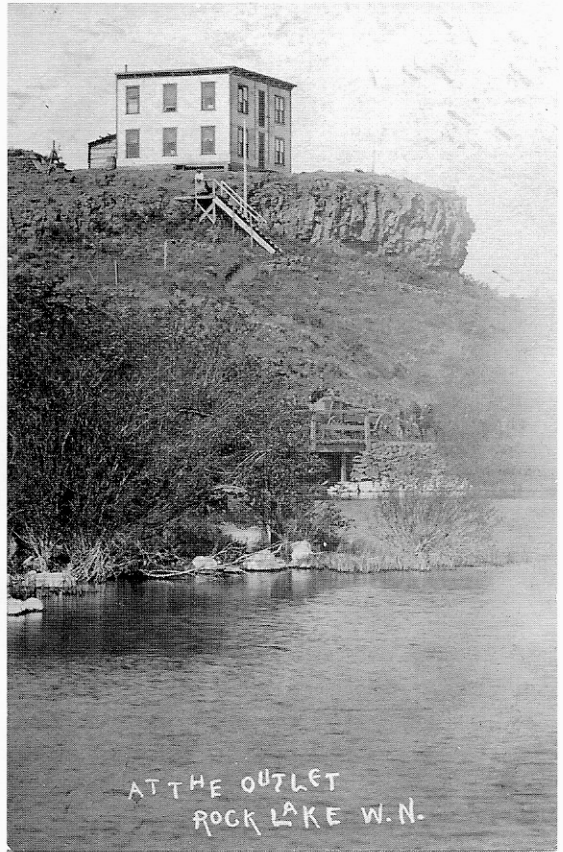
business running, and other workers stayed in tented camps along the shores of Rock Lake.⁷

Before the construction of the railroad along Rock Lake, there really was no Rock Lake City, only the hotel and the store. The influx of workers led directly to the creation of the town. Evans' single store and hotel could no longer keep up with demand. As a result, new businesses sprang into being: a new hotel owned by Mrs. Bryant, a new hardware store, a lumber yard, "Fuzzy" Ferris' livery stable, and a dance hall. Rock Lake City was suddenly the most successful town between Sprague and St. John. Things soon began to change, however, and Rock Lake began a rapid decline.

While business was still going well for "Dad" Evans, he sold his boat to a Mr. Slate of Lavista, apparently in order to pay more attention to more lucrative businesses like his store and real

estate. The fate of the boat after Evans sold it to Slate is not known, and it was the end of boating excursions on Rock Lake. Slate also bought another general store in Rock Lake from Les Godfrey. Just a few years later the store Slate had purchased burned down, in what had been called a "convenient fire."⁸

When the railroad was completed on July 4, 1909, a celebration was held to commemorate the first train to travel through Rock Lake. No one could foresee that this would be the beginning of the end of Rock Lake City. The problem was that it was difficult to build a station in Rock Lake City, because the tracks were laid along the cliff walls. The Milwaukee Railroad attorney, Marshall Snell, was very attracted to and fascinated by the growing popularity of this Whitman County region and convinced the Milwaukee Railroad Company to purchase a large plot of land from a man named Charles Ewan. On this land, two miles south of Rock Lake City, the train station was built. The town of Ewan soon grew up around the station.



Evans' Cliff House Hotel

Meanwhile, the trains passed right through Rock Lake City without stopping. On May 28, 1911, two separate Milwaukee passenger trains began to run eastward and westward, making stops in Ewan.⁹

Ewan's train depot was the chief reason Rock Lake City failed.¹⁰ The City of Rock Lake depended on tourists, but the train – the cheapest and most efficient way of getting them to Rock Lake – did not stop there. Rock Lake City needed a train depot, but it never got one.

On top of this, in 1910, a catastrophic flood tore through many homes and business near the lake. In the aftermath of the devastation, many moved away. Many, however, moved only two miles south to Ewan. This movement can easily be mistaken for the city's replacement, because many people quite literally moved their homes, putting them on skids and hooking them to teams of horses. This was much more cost efficient than having to buy new lumber, which was scarce in the Palouse region.

Many other theories have been offered to explain the rise of Ewan. According to Faye Patterson of the Rock Lake area, when the wheat warehouses were moved to Ewan, farmers were forced either to travel every day with their harvest to Ewan or to settle in Ewan. Patterson, along with Mrs. Aaron Smith, believes that Marshall Snell, the founder of Ewan, threatened the people of Rock Lake. If they did not move to Ewan, he said, the "railroad rights-of-way for roads" would be withheld. As Mrs. Patterson put it,

"The farmers didn't trust Snell one bit. They were mad because they had so far to haul the wheat to the railroad. Snell made money, he was a lawyer and knew just what he was doing."¹¹

The lack of quality schools was also a major influence in Rock Lake's decline. The first school in the area, located near Rock Creek, was held upstairs in Joseph Carrol's home. Every winter, Carrol would hire a teacher so the children did not have to walk four and a half miles to the closest school.¹² The next known school in the Rock Lake region was held on the second level of McNall's Hardware and Implement Store. The school started in 1908 and had benches with wooden boxes for desks. A schoolhouse was finally built a few years later. It was never fully adequate, even though many families and citizens of Rock Lake donated money to its construction, and it provided classes for students from grades one to eleven.¹³ The school operated until 1913, when a superior new school in Ewan took all of Rock Lake's students."

One last contributing factor to Rock Lake City's disappearance was the loss of its post office. The opening on November 7, 1907, of the Rock Lake post office marked the official beginning of Rock Lake as a city. Its move to Ewan, on May 18, 1912, marked the formal end of Rock Lake City.¹⁴

Clearly Rock Lake City did not simply move two miles south and rename itself Ewan as local legends maintain. The two towns existed side by side for more than

three years. Rock Lake's failure was closely related to Ewan's creation; however, beginning with the Milwaukee Railroad's decision not to build a depot at Rock Lake, the city's fate was sealed. Without a station it was more difficult for travelers to visit Rock Lake. This halted the boating excursions and the need for hotels in the city. Stories about the serpent in the lake and the mysteries surrounding its eerie, cliff-lined waters may also have kept people away. Finally, the flood of 1910 that wiped out much of the city, combined with the loss of the post office and school district, made Rock Lake City's death inevitable.

¹ Class of 2002 St. John Public Schools, *Legendary Shores: A History of Rock Lake* (St. John: St. John Public Schools, 1996), p. 5.

² St. John Public Schools, p. 13.

³ St. John Public Schools, pp. 14-16.

⁴ Elmer F. Barber, "Palouse Country Resort Pioneer," *The Pacific Northwesterner*, 1978, 22(3), p. 40.

⁵ Barber, pp. 42-43.

⁶ St. John Public Schools, p. 21.

⁷ Barber, p. 43.

⁸ Barber, p. 45.

⁹ Barber, pp. 45-46.

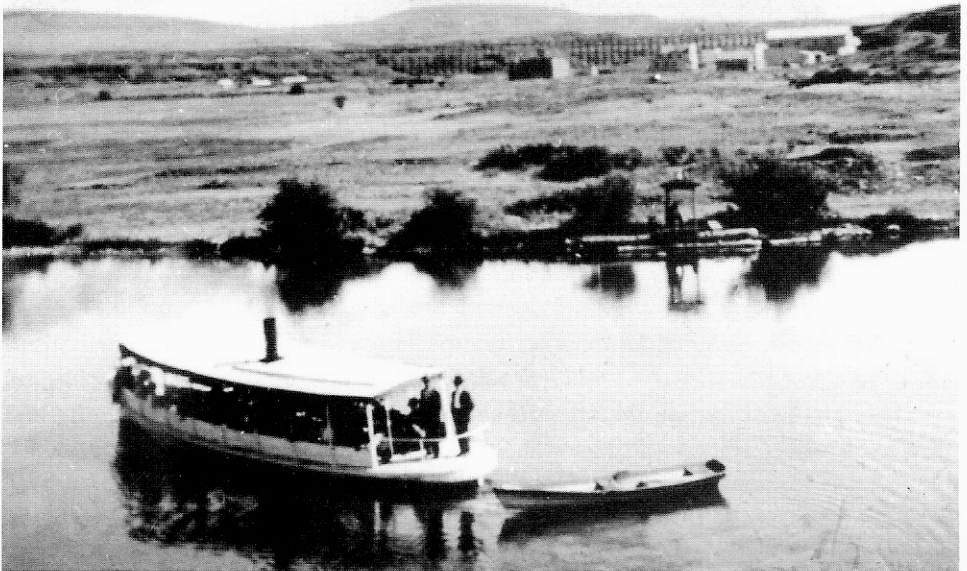
¹⁰ St. John Public Schools, p. 29.

¹¹ Emily Adams, "Rock Lake: Lake of Mystery and Legend," *Colfax Gazette* (December 14, 1978), pp. 10-11.

¹² Whitman County Retired Teachers Association, *Education in the Rough: With Memoirs of Early Teachers and Schools* (1976), Districts 157 and 169 entries.

¹³ St. John Public Schools, p. 24.

¹⁴ Bert Webber, *Post Marked Washington* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press), Vol 1, p. 257.






PULLMAN'S WEBB BLOCK

The Combine Mall Building was originally known as the Webb Block having been built in 1891 for Dr. Henry Jacob Webb. The building was first used for a jewelry shop, a barber shop, a realty office and the Pullman Herald office. The photograph here shows the building in 1896 with a barber shop, on the ground floor at the far left, next the HUB “Gents Furnishings” clothing store, and the Herald at the right. The three men in the doorway are Wilford Allen, Ira Allen and Thomas Neill of the Pullman Herald newspaper. On the upper floor, the second window from the left has a sign for ‘Doctor White’ and the fourth window reads “Thos. Neill Attorney at Law.” The building later housed the Post Office and the Gem Clothing Store;

and from 1916 to 1967 was best known as the City Club building, a billiard hall owned and operated by Gammon Bros. and then by Arnold Bros. Since then there have been many different owners and uses for the building, with the Combine Mall being there from 1981 to 1997. The building has been purchased by Mike and Debbie Yates who have completed an extensive remodeling which has returned the building to a more original appearance.



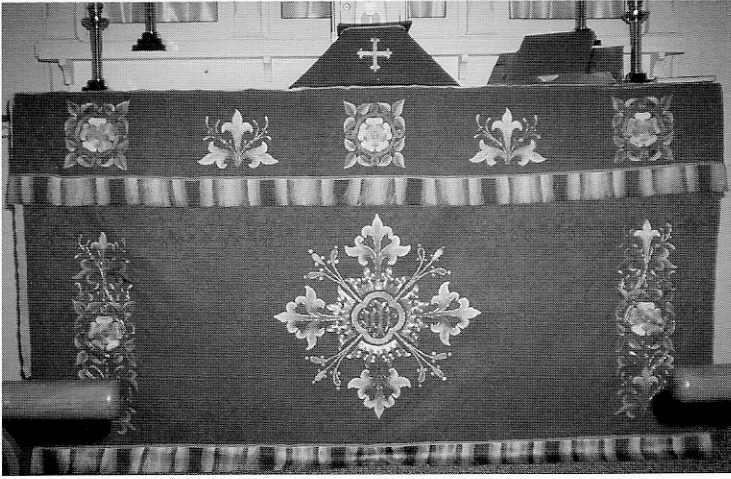
Bunchgrass Historian



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