

# Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society  
Colfax, Washington

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● **Pioneer Demography  
and Statistics**

# Whitman County Historical Society

The **Bunchgrass Historian** is published four times a year by the Whitman County Historical Society. Its purpose is to further interest in the rich past of Whitman County.

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### COVER

Mr. & Mrs. Paul Boehmier, Sr., 1890



## From your editor:

Bunchgrass Historian begins its twentieth annual volume with this issue. Later in the year, an anniversary issue will mark this milestone. It is a long run for a small periodical.

This issue is a one article issue. In the past Bunchgrass Historian has had other one-story issues — one was on Prohibition, another traced in great detail the history of one city block in Pullman. In this issue, the article is one that is perhaps the most analytical ever carried in the magazine. It does a great deal of counting and averaging and summation concerning the population of the county from about 1880 to 1900. The image that emerges may be a little different from that which sometime comes out of descriptive history.

We learn that a large portion of the pioneer population was the so-called young married crowd, young families seeking occupations in many cases. The added fact that a quite high percentage moved on after not too long should not be too surprising considering that young families have long done such and today very characteristically do so. Does it mean that the Whitman County frontier was a sort of rural version of the “starter” suburbs.

The basic numbers come from the census data in 1880, 1890 and 1900. A contrast with today is interesting. The most striking contrast is that census was done differently in 1880, focusing a great deal more on the identity of individuals and having less of the economic information of today.

To assist the reader in getting some perspective, your editor looked up a summary of the 1990s census. In 1990, the census counted 38,775 persons residing in Whitman County (there were 25,360 in 1900; the high point was in the 1960 and 1970 censuses, which were a few thousand higher than 1990). There were 7,549 families, averaging 2.93 per family, slightly below the national average. There were, however 13,546 households, and thus, by subtraction, we can deduce just about 6,000 single person households, or about 35%; nationally that number is something like 22%. The male population in 1990 was 20,049 and the female population, 18,726. The largest age group were people from 20 to 40 years old. The county had 14,598 housing units, a thousand of which were vacant. Slightly over half of these units were occupied by renters.

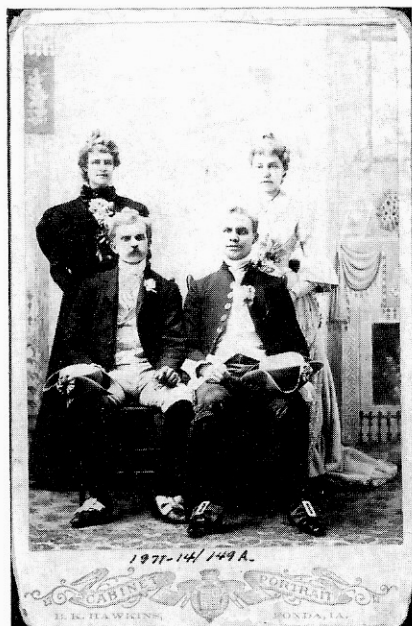
Most people will recognize the impact of Washington State University's students in these statistics — the young population and high percentage of single people and renters. One expects to find this in Pullman — 7,384 households of which only 3,194 are families, along with 5,031 occupied rental units and only 2,353 owner occupied. The per capita income is low, under \$9,000. In Colfax the contrast is obvious — 706 families and 691 owner-occupied homes, from a total of 1119 households and 428 renters.

The 40-60% division on owner-occupancy reflects the national average, as does the per capita income of a little over \$10,000 (that's an average that includes every man, woman and child, not just every earner!).

Out in the rural area adjacent to Colfax and Palouse, we find 528 households of 421 families and about 100 individuals. 326 homes are occupied by their owners and 152 are leased.

Other telling numbers appear in the 1990 census. Consider that the rental vacancy rate in Colfax is 9%, while that in Pullman is 2%. This suggests that the population in Colfax is probably stable, maybe dropping a bit, while also suggesting that people are moving into Pullman. The common impression is the same, of course, but just too look at per capita income and home ownership figures would tend to lead one the opposite way.

Interpretation of the 1990 census is probably easier than interpretation of the censuses of 100 years ago. Nonetheless, much is possible, as the following article demonstrates.



# Whitman Pioneer Demography, 1800-1910

by  
Nancy Zens

*Extracted from: Farming, Education and Mobility on the Agricultural Frontier; Whitman County, Washington 1880 - 1900. Ph.D. dissertation, Washington State University, 1988. Copyright, Nancy Zens, 1988.*

The 1880 Whitman County Population Census reported a total population of 7,014 individuals, of which 85 percent were native born and fifteen percent were foreign born. Racially, 92 percent were white, zero percent black, zero percent Indian, and eight percent Oriental. The low percentage of foreign born within this frontier population in 1880 was consistent with broad frontier distribution trends found in a demographic study of United States frontier agricultural communities in 1850 and 1860. It was also consistent with the findings of a study regarding American to foreign-born ratios in the "Corn Belt."

Of the fifteen percent of Whitman County population claiming foreign birth places, 23 percent originated in nations that were members of the British Empire, while 49 percent claimed Chinese ancestry, and 28 percent from various other foreign countries. In the "Corn Belt" the greatest majority of foreign-born originated in the British Empire or Germany. For Whitman County immigrants, those areas within the British Empire that sent the greatest number of immigrants were Ireland with fourteen percent and British America (Canada) with eleven percent.

Mobility patterns, economic choices, community government, and regional spirit in a county are affected by the previous biases and lifestyles of its citizens. This author therefore reviewed the county aggregate population census information to determine the birth places for the 85 percent native born population residing in Whitman County and found that: five percent originated in the East, thirteen percent in the Old Northwest, fourteen percent in the Midwest, 35 percent born in the West, and zero percent born in the South, and eighteen percent not listing their birth place. The states or territories of greatest origin were: Washington Territory with twelve percent, Oregon with 20 percent, and Missouri with nine percent. These data support both popular history statements that Whitman County was settled by a majority of Midwesterners, and also the claim that the population came from the West. However, these aggregate data fail to indicate that there were residents in the county in 1880 who originated in the South.

A distinct majority of the male heads of household in both Farmington and Colfax originated in the East, Old Northwest, and Midwest regions of the country. For women, the regional section shifted westward, with the greatest numbers coming from the Old Northwest, Midwest, or West. The vast majority of both male and female adults did not originate in the West. Since the aggregate census listed such a high percentage of the Whitman County population as from the West, why was there such a discrepancy between this data and the case studies? The probable reason for the differences was in the birth places for the children.

In both test areas approximately 70 percent of the children were born in the West, with the greatest percentage of these births recorded in Oregon with 56 percent, Washington with 31 percent, and Nevada with nineteen percent. These data indicated that the majority of families that settled in the test areas of Whitman County had spent some time in the West regardless of their region of origin.

In families with children the changes in birth state or country recorded in the manuscript census showed frequent mobility among Whitman County families. This condition supported the historical assumption that the frontier families moved frequently.

<b>Number of Moves</b>	<b>Colfax</b>	<b>Farmington</b>
1	11%	15%
2	64%	61%
3	13%	15%
4	10%	9%
5	2%	—

This information does not reflect any movement of a family within a state or county, only those instances where birth states differ.

Among the test populations in the Colfax and the Farmington area, thirteen percent of the Farmington area residents reported foreign countries as area of birth. This is a smaller percentage of foreign-born than found in the Corn Belt. The representation by country of origin, however, was similar to that found in Iowa and Illinois. Farmington had settlers from: British Empire, 77 percent (Ireland, 35 percent, Canada, 18 percent, and 24 percent from various other British possessions); Germany, 18 percent; China, three percent, and other, two percent. There was a definite preponderance of Irish and Canadian individuals among the Farmington foreign born in 1880. In Colfax, the small foreign population showed: British Empire 27 percent (Ireland, five percent, Canada, seven percent, and fifteen percent various other British possessions); China, 27 percent; Scandinavian countries, ten percent; France, seven percent; and various areas of German, 30 percent. For this test center there were fewer individuals from Ireland and Canada, and greater foreign diversity than Farmington. The manuscript census reported that Colfax had eleven Chinese employed as laundry workers, cooks, or servants — a total of 27 percent of the foreign born population for that town — and that the Farmington Enumerative District reported two Chinese employed as servants, or three percent of its total foreign born population.

A basic demographic generalization about a frontier area has been that there was a disproportionate number of males to females. Historians have argued that frontier society contained more single men than single women due to: the physical hardships prevalent when opening a frontier; the predominance of married women among the few adult females present; or the lack of job opportunities for single women as opposed to various business, farming, or paid labor positions for men. Thus, one of the basic characteristics of a frontier is a reputedly skewed sex ratio. Other historians have argued that a frontier contained fewer married than single households. Among the married households on the frontier, the greatest percentage of these families would be young married couples with small children. To determine if either situation existed in Whitman County, this author examined the aggregate census.

In 1880 there were 7,014 individuals in Whitman County: 63 percent male and 37 percent female, a sex ratio of 170:100. There were 857 females and 2,612 males between the ages of 5 and 15 (a sex ratio of 300:100). Since the sex ratio at birth is 106:100, the differential for children up to age five should be much less than 300:100. In order for the county sex ratio to be 170:100, then, there must have been many fewer women than men in the 14 and over age groups. On a purely demographic basis, then, Whitman County in 1880 was a very new frontier society.



An analysis of the manuscript census provided data regarding the marital status in the two test areas in the county, and shed further light on the significance of the sexual imbalance observed in the entire county. In 1880, the Colfax population consisted of: married couples, 44 percent; widow or widowers, two percent; single males, 44 percent; male children living at home over the age of twenty-one, three percent; and unmarried females over the age of twenty-one, seven percent. The manuscript census for the Farmington Enumerative District listed the marital status as follows: married couples, 54 percent; widow or widower, eight percent, single males, 35 percent; and unmarried females twenty-one years of age or older, two percent. The existence of such a large number of married households in a frontier county suggests that either this particular location was in a later stage of frontier settlement or that the assumptions about frontier societies containing more single males than married couples do not apply in this case.

As the household figures indicate, this agricultural frontier area unexpectedly showed a majority of married households rather than a majority of single male households, a condition that supports historians who have argued that a frontier consists of mixed marital status populations. Since some historians have been the frontier as the realm of young, single men and young men with beginning families, while others have found a mixture of age-ranges and sizes in their southern and midwestern studies, it is important to see which condition existed for Whitman County families.

This author surveyed the age profile of families in Farmington and Colfax based on the age of the wife since the woman's age would affect the numbers of children in succeeding years:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Young Family Wife in 20s</b>	<b>Mid Range Wife in 30s</b>	<b>Older Family Wife 40 +</b>
Farmington			
Total: 294	131 45%	87 30%	76 25%
Colfax			
Total: 75	34 45%	26 35%	15 20%

The fact that the majority of women in the "young family" category were over the age of twenty-five is also significant. In the Farmington area, the percent for mid-range and older families would be higher if the criteria were the ages of the male heads of household. In the Colfax area, the family divisions remain almost the same, regardless of whether a male or female adult member is used as the determining factor, because there were fewer instances of ten year age discrepancies between spouses. Regardless of which sex is used to determine the median age of these pioneer house-



*Daniel W. Boone and bride*

holds, the percentages agree with findings regarding marital status and age of the “typical” pioneer in the Corn Belt.

Like the “Corn Belt,” the Whitman County test areas did not support the general frontier hypothesis that the population in a frontier community consisted of a majority of young bachelors with only a few newly married couples, or very young families. Instead the majority of families — 55 percent in both test areas — were “mid-range” or “older” families.

Statistical data can demonstrate the sexual, ethnic, and age characteristics of this agricultural frontier population, but it cannot address questions about why settlers chose the area. Reminiscent and booster literature provides some of these answers.

Interviewees in both the Whitman County Oral History Collection and the Yoder reminiscences provided specific information about household movement. These sources gave details of household movement for Whitman County: the reasons why a household moved to the county, or whether a household moved after it arrived in the county. Pioneers related the reasons why their families moved to the region: to acquire free land; to take advantage of better opportunities; or to join family or friends already in the area. Several from drought or insect plagued areas such as the Dakotas or Kansas came in hopes of finding a new start after years of discouragement. A very small number recalled that their families responded to articles or letters in magazines or hometown newspapers. The majority indicated that their families came to the area to join relatives, neighbors, or old friends.

The young pioneers recalled the reasons their family moved to the area: 21 percent joined relatives already living in the area, 18 percent rejoined old friends or neighbors, 39 percent were drawn by the availability of land, and 22 percent did not mention the reason. Regarding the land, low prices vied with the opportunity to obtain property for each member of the family as major reasons for resettlement. Only one individual recalled that the family moved from a poor farming area based on the claims made in booster literature. Three families moved due to repeated crop failures or weather conditions in their previous homesteads and 15 percent moved to take advantage of the area's opportunities whether on farms or in towns.

Reminiscences also provided some clues for the reasons that those who were adults between 1880 and 1900 settled in Whitman County. These included: to relocate near a relative (fourteen percent); to take advantage of cheap land (29 percent); to take advantage of unspecified "opportunities" (14 percent); to recover the family fortune following crop failures in other regions (29 percent); and in direct response to booster literature (fourteen percent). There was more mention by these adult pioneers of changing locations prior to arriving in the Palouse in order to take advantage of another region's new, inexpensive land. However, the decision to settle in Whitman County apparently satisfied the family's needs, since further movement, even within the Palouse, was not mentioned by these adults.

For those who were children during the period from 1880 to 1900 (nine-five), the major event of their family histories was moving from their previous homes to the Palouse. They recalled the moves as one-time, well-planned events. The family did not move again.

Very few indicated that their families came to the region and rented for a season before permanently settling on a piece of property, which would have been an indication that the family was unable to purchase immediately or had difficulty deciding where to locate. Only nine reported that their families moved two times prior to permanent settlement in Whitman County. Six recalled that their families moved three times, while only two interviewees remembered their families moving four or more times. Again, the majority of the young pioneers recalled their families being uprooted only when they moved to Whitman County. This was a very different portrait than that presented by the census material.

Among the young pioneers there were twenty-three specific notations concerning the pre-marital lives of their father or mothers. Seven recalled that the father moved once between establishing a family, two recalled that he moved twice, one recalled that he moved three times, and only two recalled that he moved four or more times. Only twelve of the interviewees mentioned the mother's experiences separately from those of the rest of

the family. In these instances, the comments regarded the mother's family's movements, rather than the mother as an individual separate from her family. Ten said the mother's family moved once prior to marriage, and only two recalled that the maternal family moved two times. This data demonstrated that the pioneer children remembered the father as more mobile than the mother, moving several times prior to marriage for a variety of reasons. Most of these moves were directly related to business opportunities or to a desire for travel or adventure. The mother, by contrast, was viewed as a deeply rooted person, whose life centered around her paternal family until the time of her marriage.

These oral reminiscences from the children's point of view portrayed the families that participated in Whitman County settlement as quite stable. According to children's memories there was very little movement of the family prior to arriving in Whitman County, and, regardless of the reasons for moving to the Palouse, the family knew exactly what it was looking for and settled down permanently upon finding it. There was little recollection of subsequent movement to improved farm land, or of changing sites to move closer to old friends, better schools, town. Nor was there any mention of family movement from an area, such as Colfax, to get away from high prices, business failure, or problems inherent in living in or near town.

A pattern of pioneer family stability rather than mobility emerged from these oral history accounts. Not only had most of these families established long term residences in their former areas, but less than ten interviewees indicated that their families moved after they reached the Whitman County area. Using these recollections one could reasonably argue that the Turner description of constant movement among those living in a frontier settlement did not apply to Whitman County in 1880.

The reminiscences, however, of those who were adults, or nearly adults, between 1880 and 1900 (twenty-seven individuals), indicated that movement was more frequent for families than the younger pioneers remembered, but still not as frequent or as common to families as indicated by the manuscript census. Many families moved to the Palouse in stages: they stopped first in California, proceeded to Oregon, and family arrived in the Palouse. Of the twenty-seven adult pioneers who reported on family movement: 54 percent moved once, from their previous homestead or farm to the Palouse region; 20 percent moved twice before settling permanently in the area; 15 percent moved three times, whether prior to entering the Whitman County region or while in the region; and eleven percent moved four or more times. Only one interviewee recalled that his family moved after settling in Whitman County. An analysis of mobility among interviewed men as individuals, apart from their paternal families and prior to their own marriage showed: 15 percent moved once; four percent



*Samuel and Margaret McCroskey, 1886*

moved twice; and two percent moved three times. The remaining 79 percent made no comment regarding such movement.

Although the movement of men was often noted, few mentioned the movement of females separate from a family situation. Of all the adult pioneers interviewed, 26 percent specifically made reference to their mother's families regarding settlement in Whitman County. The breakdown for mobility in the maternal group was: 83 percent moved once to reach the county and 17 percent moved twice. There were no reports of movement of the maternal family within the county.

Reminiscences of individuals who were adults at the time they entered Whitman County indicated greater mobility within the settlement group than that which pioneer children recalled. Adult pioneers reported greater mobility prior to marriage, and greater mobility after marriage than the children. However, the absence of reports of movement by pioneering adults once they located a viable agricultural area supported the children's view that the Whitman County agricultural frontier was stable. Families only moved from the area due to economic necessity. Both children and adults recalled significant out-migration of other families due to economic problems between 1893 through 1896.

Although separate movement among the single adult male population

prior to marriage was more frequent, the overall trend among the settlers of Whitman County, whether male or female, whether children or adult, demonstrated that the stability of their families and their neighbors was an important aspect of frontier life in Whitman County. It is important to remember that the reminiscent group were among those who remained in the county, and therefore that the mobility experiences and the percentage distribution for their reasons for moving to the area would not accurately reflect the decisions of the entire Whitman County pioneer population.

The reminiscent accounts of both children and adult pioneers portrayed the region as settled by American, only few foreigners, and no blacks. The 1880 census information about ethnicity and race supported this. The numbers claiming British or German heritage (a minority of the foreign-born population, and eleven percent of the county population) were consistent with reminiscences regarding the origins of foreign settlers. The unusually high percentage of Orientals among Whitman County's foreign population was not recalled by pioneers. There was some recollection of a few Chinese laundry workers and cooks. Although Chinese immigrants made up a large portion of the foreign population, the small number of all foreign immigrants may explain why so many pioneers recalled Orientals in the county only during the period of heavy railroad construction in the late 1880s.

Booster literature also presented Whitman County as an agricultural region settled by Americans noted for their ingenuity and hard work. According to the promotional material, the rate of personal success among county residents was high, and the persistence among the population assured the creation of stable communities. In painting a verbal picture to encourage immigration to the region, promotional materials first assumed that people would be attracted to the region for economic reasons: to farm the rich land, improve their lifestyle, and increase the returns on their investments. A few examples will demonstrate the kinds of promotional literature that encouraged movement to Whitman County.

The statement "the elements of wealth are here" could have been applicable to agriculture, business, banking, manufacturing, or shipping. In reality there was little opportunity for manufacturing in this area, and shipping was limited to local distribution. Promotional literature included such assurances as: "among the many prosperous towns of the Palouse Country it is difficult to select the most desirable for homes, for business, profit, and pleasant surroundings." Boosters asserted, for example, that "the farmer sows to the limit of his seed time without thought of failure in harvest, and is yet to be disappointed." A potential pioneer might still have wondered whether these statements applied only to those who arrived with stock, equipment, and capital, but booster literature was reassuring:

Most of the people come in poor. They are fast paying off their debts, improving their farms, building good houses and barns and getting good stock. They or their children will ride in carriages and live in handsome houses in the midst of orchards.

According to other promotional literature, those who moved into the area clearly intended to remain permanently:

The people themselves have an unbounded faith in the future of the city, and it would seem to be impossible that such faith could be misplaced, especially when it is upheld by energy that would carve fortunes out of the desert.... They have taken for granted that the young city is endowed with a glorious future, and they act accordingly.... They build their homes with an air of permanency.... They have built themselves good churches and laid out a townsite on an ample scale.

Good health was presented as an additional incentive for immigration to the Whitman County:

The complaints incidental to childhood prevail seldom as severe epidemics. Typhus fever never occurs. Cholera, which has been the scourge in the East, has never reached this part of the Pacific coast. The inhabitants of towns situated on the banks of the rivers suffer more or less from malaria, as is the case elsewhere in places so situated.

This same publication reported the medicinal qualities of the mineral springs and waters found in Eastern Oregon and Washington, and noted that "many individuals with respiratory diseases recovered their health by residence in this region."

Another desirable quality that purportedly recommended the county as a good location was the composition of the population. Various promotional pieces claimed that the region was settled by a majority of white, literate Americans who were sober, hardworking citizens rather than gamblers or speculators. The few foreigners who settled in the region were portrayed as rapidly becoming solid American citizens. This claim appeared to address concerns that the region would become a series of ethnic enclaves.

Businessmen in towns such as Farmington and Tekoa gained significant prosperity due to federal annuities given to nearby tribal members on the Coeur d'Alene reservation in northern Idaho, yet the subject of Indians was not discussed in booster literature. Promotional literature left the impression that there were no Indians in Whitman County. Considering the persistence of fears regarding Indian activity and the fact that the county was on the geographical edge of one of the last Indian wars, it is not surprising that the topic of Indians was ignored.

The census data for 1880 provided a demographic profile of Whitman County. It was a frontier, primarily inhabited by Americans from other regions of the United States. Despite the preponderance of males over fe-

males in the region, households were almost equally divided between bachelors and families of varying sizes and ages. The census did not reveal much other than area of origin for bachelors. For families, because of the information on birth places of children, the census demonstrated that the majority of families had moved one or more times prior to arriving in Whitman County. Reminiscent and booster literature described the county between 1880 and 1900 as a stable environment, with little movement out of the county except during the depression period between 1893 and 1896. Does the census information for 1890 and 1900 contradict or confirm the image of relative stability?

By 1890 there were a total of 19,109 individuals recorded in the composite census for Whitman County. This represents a 172 percent increase over the population recorded in 1880. Of these persons, 89 percent presented themselves as "native born" and eleven percent presented themselves as "foreign born." According to color there were: 89 percent white, one percent black, one percent Chinese, and zero percent Indian. This left nine percent unaccounted for, a discrepancy which was not addressed in the census. Based on existing information, it would appear that little actual ethnic change occurred except the decrease in the Chinese population.

The male to female ratio in 1890 significantly altered, showing 56 percent males and 44 percent females, revising the sex ratio downward from 170:100 in 1880 to 127:100 in 1890. For those children falling within the new education-age range beginning at age seven, 51 percent were male and 49 percent were female, a sex ratio of 104:100. There is a universal tendency among children for the ratio of males to females to slowly increase rather than decrease because more females than males die during this stage of the life cycle. The fact that the Whitman County sex ratio is under the sex ratio at birth (106:100) indicates there was a migration of families with children to the region. The amount of change that occurred during this ten year period in the over twenty year old male and female sex ratios is not clear because the census does not provide information on the birth to five year old children. Since the birth rate on a frontier is normally high, the alteration in sex ratio recorded in a comparison of the census sex information, may actually mean there had been little change in the over-twenty male/female group.

By 1900, the total county population was 25,360, an increase of 276 percent over 1880, and 75 percent over 1890. In 1900 within the male/female ratios, 54 percent of the total population were male, while 46 percent were female, a sex ratio of 117:100. Within the school age populations, 51 percent male to 49 percent female, a sex ratio of 104:100 remained consistent with the 1890 figures.



The reduction in the percentage of growth between 1890 and 1900 could indicate many internal and external pressures on the Whitman County population, or it could represent the maturation of the frontier area following the normal development cycle that occurred over a generation described by Malin or by Fite (see Chapter 2). Considering the economic recession in Whitman County beginning in 1893, the slowed growth pattern could also represent an unusually high outmigration of unsuccessful farmers.

The 1890 and 1900 census compendiums do not break down U.S. citizens by state or area, so a more detailed comparison of mobility trends within the United States that drew the population to the Whitman County area is not possible. Within the foreign community, however, there was a significant change. In 1890, of the eleven percent foreign-born population in the county, 41 percent came from areas of the British Empire (Canada, 19 percent, England, ten percent, Ireland, ten percent, and other, two percent). An important increase occurred in those of German heritage (32 percent). Chinese presence in the area dropped from 49 percent to eight percent of the foreign-born population, still a healthy representation. The number from Norway and Sweden rose from two to eight percent. The census provides no reason for the dramatic shift in immigrant areas of birth, but the completion of the railroads, the availability of jobs requiring large numbers of contract laborers, and the national paranoia regarding Orientals may account for the shift.

By 1900, one of the foreign-born population claimed Brith America as their place of nativity. Those from Germany had increased to 36 percent of the total foreign-born population, while those from Russia had increased to thirteen percent. The increase in immigrants from both regions may be explained by the existence of enumerator bias in reporting origins of Russian-German families, or an actual statement of origins based on birth place of children. Reminiscences indicated that these immigrants from Russia considered themselves Germans because their families originated in Germany.

The county population figures clearly show that during the twenty year evaluation period there was a rapid population increase. The majority of the population was white and native born. There was a simultaneous decrease in the foreign born population. Meanwhile, the ratio of males to females moved toward a balance among the sexes. This adjustment probably occurred within the under twenty group, but exactly where within the age ranges such changes occurred, what factors contributed to this condition, and whether there were demographic increases or decreases in age categories that would clarify migration patterns during the 1890 to 1900 period is unclear.

Besides reminiscences and the censuses, another source of information regarding the mobility of Whitman County residents was the biography



Mrs. Welton's family

section of *An Illustrated History*. The information on 340 households provided data on moves that the individuals considered significant, often noting movement within the county as well prior to arriving in Whitman County.

The biographies found in the *Illustrated History* were a skewed sample because they present those who were successful enough in 1900 to pay the subscription fee or felt it necessary for business purposes to be included in such a book. The biographical sketches contained only information that the subscriber considered important to include. Probably many short term moves by a household were not considered significant enough. Nevertheless, the movement pattern that emerged from this information demonstrated greater mobility among county households than indicated in either the reminiscent material or the 1880 census case studies.

People moved both before and after arriving in Whitman County. Prior to entering the county, 14 percent moved once, 42 percent moved two to four times, and 44 percent moved five or more times according to the information in the biographical sketches. Upon settling in the county, a majority of households (65 percent) indicated that the household made no additional moves by 1900. A minority of households (35 percent) did move within the county to better their positions: 25 percent moved twice, seven percent moved three times, and three percent moved four or five times. Altogether county pioneers mentioned moving as follows: .003 percent moved once, 45 percent moved two to four times, 54 percent moved five or more times. Probably this is still not an accurate picture of individual or household movement. However, the information demonstrates an increase in the amount of mobility over pioneer reminiscences and also the manuscript census data. The following chart further delineates the movement reported in *An Illustrated History*:

<b>Number of Lifetime Moves</b>	<b>Individuals</b>
1	1
2	28
3	55
4	73
5	59
6	45
7+	79
<b>Total:</b>	<b>340</b>

The total number of lifetime moves, with the move into Whitman County indicated as one move within Whitman County, was reported as follows:

<b>Moves Prior to Entering County</b>	<b>Moves Within County</b>
48	220
71	85
72	23
57	9
34	2
19	—
31	—
<b>Total: 340</b>	<b>340</b>

These biographies indicate that frequent movement was an acceptable social pattern for Whitman County residents. Successful men not only diversified their investments, they also moved often to take advantage of existing conditions. They purchased land or businesses, and remained for several years. If the area they originally chose in the county did not provide them with the lifestyle they desired, they moved on to areas with more promise.

There are six basic arguments regarding population mobility: only the economically unsuccessful move; the cost of moving is so high, only the middle class or wealthy move; both poor and rich move; people only move during a depression; people only move during periods of economic improvement; and finally both rich and poor move during both times of boom and bust. The information from *An Illustrated History* showed a high stability ratio among successful families (65 percent). This could support the argument that those who were unsuccessful moved, while those who were successful remained. However, successful men also moved within the county (35 percent) to improve their position. There were probably other successful pioneer families that moved out of the county to better their economic conditions. This data supports the historical argument that not all those who moved on the frontier should be considered failures.

Although *An Illustrated History* would lead one to conclude that there were successful individuals who moved out of the county, the degree of mobility is so high that it is also reasonable to assume that not all those who moved were successful. Reasonably, the Whitman County experience also supported the historiographic argument that the unrecorded number who failed to find economic success also moved elsewhere in search of improved opportunity.

Despite its size, the biographical sketches in *An Illustrated History* were not a representative sample of even the successful individuals who pioneered Whitman County. One statistical theorem states that the degree of repetition in observed patterns that occur in unrepresentative samples will increase in a representative sample. Therefore, historian Richard Jensen has argued that investigators can use even vaguely definable patterns that emerge from an unrepresentative sample with confidence. Thus probably the patterns for both mobility among successful families prior to entering the county and mobility within the county would increase if a truly representative sample were available.

This author looked to later federal census material as a means of analyzing further the differences that exist between the frequency of movement found in the 1880 census and the frequency of movement found in reminiscent and booster accounts, *An Illustrated History* biographies. As noted previously the 1890 manuscript census has been destroyed. A detailed study of the 1900 census similar to that done by this author of the 1880 census could answer some of the questions regarding the permanence of those families that remained in the same district. It would not account for individuals who moved within Whitman County. Detailed 1900 census analysis was impracticable because it would have been so time consuming. Nevertheless, a less detailed analysis can answer questions about the amount of persistency within the county.

Therefore, this author searched the Soundex of the 1900 Washington census for 1880 households that has resided in either Farmington or Colfax to gauge the rate of persistence of 1880 settlers in Whitman County. This search revealed that only ninety-four households from both test areas, or fifteen percent of the total households, remained anywhere within Whitman County. Of those who resided in Colfax, fifteen percent remained in the Whitman County area, and fifteen percent remained in Farmington. The similarity between the household retention rate in the country and in the town was not expected due to standard assumptions regarding higher mobility among town-dwellers.

The reminiscent accounts indicated that many Whitman County residents moved once or twice before reaching the county. Once in Whitman County, the region afforded so much opportunity that only economic disaster drove people away. These accounts support the argument that the

frontier stabilized with the influx of middle-class and wealthy farmers. It also supports the argument that the poor are driven away during periods of episodic depression. The census demonstrated greater mobility among families than indicated by the reminiscent accounts, thereby lending some support to the theory that there were frontier "types" who often moved. *An Illustrated History* showed even greater mobility than other sources among those who were successful. The accumulation of evidence regarding household mobility suggests to this author that it was acceptable among middle class families and wealthy families to migrate to improve family opportunities. Finally, the Soundex with a fifteen percent persistency rate showed that permanence, not mobility, was the unusual condition on the Whitman County frontier.

Further research is needed to determine whether the percentages using the Soundex for the 1900 Census presented a fair description of those families that remained in Whitman County. This author's research involved heads of households. Additional research might locate those male children in the 1880 Census who no longer lived at home but remained in the county as independent heads of households. Problems also arise regarding the permanency of female children or remarried widows and their children because of changes in surname. These conditions mean that the actual mobility in Whitman County, or any county, would be difficult to determine based on census materials alone. Since existing demographic studies remain imprecise due to the same problems, comparisons will continue to be approximate until a uniform procedure (or accepted formula that realistically accounts for such hidden factors) is developed.

One historian has argued that farmers entering a developing agricultural frontier during the second decade of settlement tend to persist in greater ratios (18 to 20 percent) than those who enter a region at the beginning of the settlement period (15 to 17 percent). However, it is important that the variation in persistence between both groups is only three percent. If it is assumed that Whitman County repeated this pattern, there could be a sense of stability among persisting county pioneers because the encountered an apparently stable pioneer population, and a slightly greater proportion of those who entered the county after 1890 remained than the earlier settlers.

There may have been greater persistency in Whitman County than the current research demonstrates. The 15 percent persistency factor for the county does not take into account the natural death curve. As far as this author can determine, similar demographic studies of frontier areas also do not consider this factor. According to social demographer Annabel Cook, the inclusion of this significant factor into considerations of stability vs. mobility would increase persistency factors between 15 and 20 percent when applied to all age ranges over a twenty year period. Although this

would still mean that a minority (30 to 35 percent) remained in Whitman County, this increase might enhance the sense of community stability for Whitman County residents.

In relation to other frontier studies, Whitman County persistency figures are similar to those found in Kansas. This indicates that high mobility, though unexpected because of the Whitman County pioneer accounts, was not unique to this region. The persistency data are also similar to those found in the community of Grand Junction, Colorado.

Grand Junction, as a commercial center with a population of 859 in 1885, 2,030 in 1890, and 3,503 in 1900, served a large hinterland with a mixed economy of agriculture, ranching, and mining. It thus appeared to be very different from the fertile farms and small towns so typical of Whitman County. Yet, the populations of Grand Junction, Colfax, and the Farmington area showed considerable similarities. The populations of Farmington and Grand Junction had a similar percentage of heads of family between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, while Colfax showed the presence of 16 percent fewer individuals in this age range, possibly due to the limited job potential with service related industries. The majority of Colfax heads of families were in the thirty to thirty-nine age range, while Farmington and Grand Junction had more than one third of their respective heads of household in this age bracket. In none of the three locations were young couples without children or very young families the majority of married population. Both Colfax and Farmington had more individuals in the forty to forty-nine age range than Grand Junction, demonstrating a larger number of established, older families on the Whitman County agricultural frontier than were present in Grand Junction.

The marital status of the persisting population also showed interesting comparisons between the Whitman County test studies and Grand Junction. In Grand Junction, Colorado, 51 percent of the total population was single and 49 percent of the population was married. The town of Colfax had four percent fewer married couples and one percent more single adults, possibly because this was the county seat and offered specialized employment for judges, attorneys, court clerks, and county politicians. Farmington had fifteen percent fewer single adults and twelve percent more married couples than Grand Junction, possibly because farming as an occupation had proven more successful among married couples that could depend on the contributions of both spouses.

In all three areas, approximately one-third of the marriagable-age males were single and two thirds were married. Colfax showed a higher percentage of single households than did Farmington, and was closer to the statistical portrait of Grand Junction. Colfax showed a very low rate of married households without children, while Farmington's higher percentages are closer to the Grand Junction experience. Despite the similarities between

these frontier areas, the majority of the Whitman County households had children, while less than 40 percent of those in Grand Junction reported the initial presence of children. This data supports claims that the farming frontier was family oriented. Most importantly, this comparison of Grand Junction and the two Whitman County test studies contributes to a new understanding of frontier populations. All three of these case studies had population statistics that did not match the older historical generalizations about the frontier. Although there were percentage variations, each of these studies was comparable to other local studies of frontier populations that demonstrated a range of ages, marital status, family size, and family age.

The Colfax and Farmington data also differed significantly from that reported by William A. Bowen in *The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier*, which described the demographic distribution of the sexes for the Willamette region in 1850. He reported a population of 11,873 persons, 7,202 men and 4,761 women, resulting in a sex ratio of 154:100. The majority of the male population was 20 years of age or older, hence the ratio in that age range was between 202 to 264:100 females in the marriageable age groups. In a further breakdown between a town center and a rural area, the Willamette Valley demonstrated a population difference of 69 percent males in the town of Columbia, and 57.9 percent males in the country. Bowen concluded that young, single men tended to predominate in thriving town centers which demonstrated strong growth potential due to the availability of paying jobs, while fewer young, single males inhabited the small, rural towns.

In Whitman County, the majority of young, single males in 1880 was found in the rural test area of Farmington rather than in the town of Colfax. Based on these two examples, it is apparent that in Whitman County the greatest economic opportunities for single men lay in agriculture rather than in wage jobs in manufacturing or service industries.

Both the county census and the case studies demonstrated that the Whitman county area experienced high mobility, rapid population turnover, and a high degree of population increase. The racial and ethnic composition of this region remained predominantly white and native born. Census information supported the assertions by pioneers that Whitman County was a high growth area. The census data, however, did not reflect the results of the demographic shift caused by the agricultural recession of 1893 to 1896.

Within Whitman County, reminiscent memory attributed dramatic movement among the population only for the period 1893 and 1896 due to economic problems. The apparently exaggerated statements that "half" or "most" of the neighbors moved away because they lost a farm or business, may indeed represent an actual result of the depression. Yet such a conclu-

sion seems inadequate considering the mobility records of other frontier communities.

In isolation, the Whitman County experience of 15 percent permanency seemed unique, a direct consequence of economic disaster. The rich soil, temperate weather conditions, and railroad network created economic opportunities that induced settlers to remain in the area. Pioneers and booster literature asserted that only a disaster would drive people from such an area.

Yet what has become clear in this particular study is that area statistics did not validate booster statements that Whitman County was a region of greater stability due to its economic pursuits (farming rather than mining or other highly speculative ventures), or its ethnic composition. Furthermore, the reminiscent accounts portraying area families as solid citizens with few tendencies to move do not hold up against the statistical evidence.

Many additional studies will be needed before historians can make solid generalizations concerning agricultural, frontier, or national mobility at the turn of the century. Twentieth century demographic studies show similar permanency rates for small towns and a strong trend for agricultural districts to lose citizens to larger cities and industrial regions. This comparative information raises questions concerning the very nature of stability for the frontier and national society.

In Whitman County the existence of a persistent core among frontier families was the exception rather than the rule. The Whitman County pattern of high mobility was roughly comparable to the mobility trends that emerged from similar frontier or semi-frontier areas throughout the country. There is a definite need for additional, in-depth demographic studies to develop comparable data on which to base a more accurate general definition of the frontier.

