

Bunchgrass Historian

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Colfax, Washington

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- **Lyons Ferry Bridge**
- **St. Gall's Parish at Colton**

Whitman County Historical Society

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AUTHORS

Robert Hadlow recently received the doctors degree in History from Washington State University.

Thomas Weber of Pullman is the author of a history of St. Gall's church in Colton from which the present article has been condensed.

COVER

Lyon Ferry Bridge, portal view. Courtesy Washington State Department of Transportation.

FROM YOUR EDITOR:

This issue of Bunchgrass Historian has been co-edited by Robert Hadlow. Mr. Hadlow is the author of one article and the editor who condensed the second. His article on the Lyons Ferry Bridge was drawn from a report prepared while an employee of the State Department of Transportation.

The last issue of Bunchgrass Historian featured the story of Speed Martin, Whitman County's only "representative" among major league baseball players. Since the time the article was written another Whitman native, Phil Hinrichs, also played in the big leagues, as some readers have pointed out.



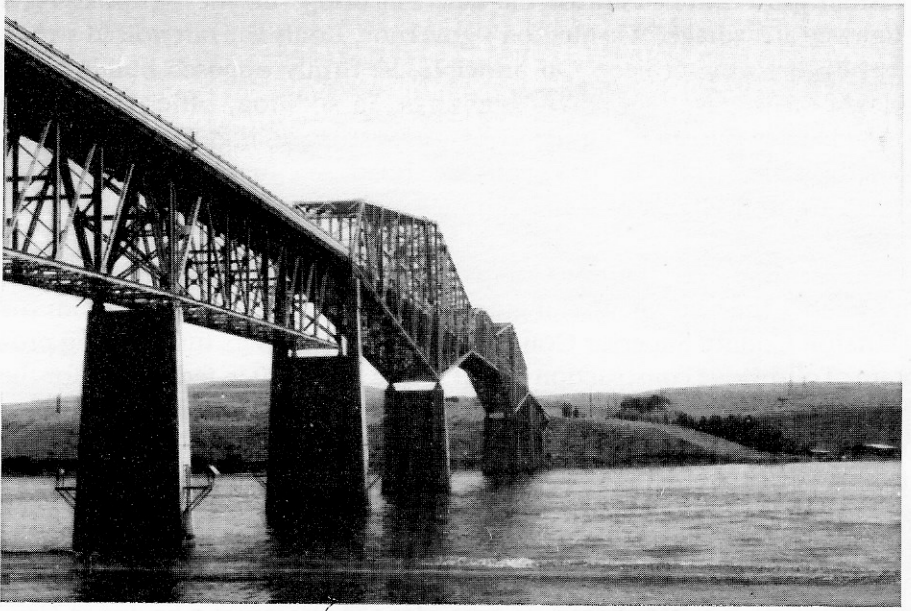
The Snake River Bridge At Lyons Ferry: The Washington Department of Highways' Recycling Solution

by Robert W. Hadlow, Ph.D.

When Washingtonians think about famous or landmark bridges in their state, those that come to mind may be the first Tacoma Narrows Bridge, "Galloping Gertie," and her successor; or the Deception Pass bridges, for their pristine setting, spanning the treacherous passage between Whidbey Island and Fidalgo Island; or the Longview Bridge, a masterpiece in steel cantilever construction of almost gigantic proportions. But, the Snake River Bridge at Lyons Ferry, where Franklin, Columbia, and Whitman counties meet, is one of the state's great early-twentieth-century highway structures.

The Snake River Bridge at Lyons Ferry was erected at its present location in 1968 following a long career as a major central Washington crossing of the Columbia River at Vantage. Dam building on the Columbia and Snake rivers was responsible for both the bridge's dismantling at Vantage and rebuilding at Lyons Ferry. It is a good example of early twentieth-century steel through cantilever design with sloped top chords and bottom chords. Its suspended Parker truss presents a definite break in structural form from the heavily-braced anchor and cantilever spans.

The cantilever bridge was a popular alternative to the more common simple steel truss span in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because its form enabled engineers to design bridges that spanned great distances while needing only a few costly piers. It normally consisted of steel cantilever arms, spanning from piers sunk in the streambed to the shore. They provided balance and by their connection to land provided anchorage for an often equal spans that projected out from the piers to mid-stream. There the cantilever spans either met to form a complete structure, or together suspended a simple truss span between them.



Bridge at Lyons Ferry, 1993. - R. Hadlow

As early as 1915, residents of Grant and Kittitas counties sought a bridge across their common boundary, the Columbia River. Both counties had built roads leading to the river in the Vantage Ferry vicinity where a scow powered by a gasoline launch ferried two cars at a time from one side to the other. Automobile traffic increased to the point that in 1917 the counties' governments purchased a four-car ferry, the *Kitty-Grant*, to operate toll free at the crossing. The state soon adopted the county roads leading to the river at Vantage as part of its route system, and they became part of the North Central Highway.¹

In 1923, the *Kitty-Grant* ferried 50,000 people across the Columbia at Vantage. It was evident to local officials that they needed to replace the vessel with a bridge. Early the next year, the Grant-Kittitas County Ferry Commission petitioned Congress and received a toll-bridge franchise for the crossing. It planned to build a 1,900-foot structure costing \$600,000. The commission had the option of seeking a joint bond issue to finance construction or look for private capital for the project. It chose the latter alternative and soon found local entrepreneur, Elbert M. Chandler, a retired director of the Washington Reclamation Service, interested in the venture. He formed the Vantage Ferry Bridge Company to build the span.²

Amid great enthusiasm for the new toll bridge on the North Central Highway at Vantage, Washington's governor, Louis F. Hart voiced strong opposition to the project. On principle, he firmly opposed building toll bridges on taxpayer-supported highways. In addition, officials with the United States Bureau of Public Roads, in Washington, D.C., advised him that the state would lose Federal-Aid Road Act funds to improve the North Central Highway if the counties went ahead with Chandler's toll bridge.³

The Vantage Ferry Bridge Company pressed on with its campaign, but in October the state of Washington received a restraining order from the Thurston County Superior Court in Olympia to stop its fund-raising program. Toll-bridge construction meant losing \$900,000 in federal aid for the North Central Highway — by then part of a major east-west route connecting Spokane with Seattle. The case tested the state's authority to direct its highway program over county opposition. Moreover, it tested the federal government's power over the states, through the Bureau of Public Roads, to withhold aid dollars to protest projects that it disliked.⁴

The Vantage Ferry Bridge Company appealed the court ruling, but in the meantime the state began its own plans to construct a bridge at Vantage. The State Highway Commissioner recommended that lawmakers approve a \$320,000 funding request for the structure. In May, the Washington Supreme Court upheld the Thurston County Superior Court's injunction against the Vantage Ferry Bridge Company's toll bridge project. The state proceeded with its plans and called for bids on 1 December for a 2,475-foot bridge with a 520-foot steel cantilever section — the longest main channel span in the state until the Longview Bridge exceeded it a few years later. Construction began in January 1926. The structure was part of Washington's largest-ever bridge-building program to that point, which included several structures near Everett and one over the Puyallup River in Tacoma.⁵

The Washington Department of Highways built the Columbia River Bridge at Vantage Ferry as a Federal-Aid Road Act project, in which federal dollars matched state funds in promoting construction of a nationwide highway network. It found three sites on the Vantage Ferry portion of the Columbia River for the new structure. The closest near Vantage, where the state highway met ferry landings after dropping down to the river elevation from the high surrounding plateau, gave the best approaches to the new span. Even though the river foundations were marginal, the department concluded that excavations for pier footings were less costly than bridge approaches. The river at this point was 2,500 feet wide at high water and 800 feet wide at low water, with a swift 55-foot deep channel. These conditions necessitated building a structure consisting of many short approach spans with several bends to disperse dead load, and a long cantile-



*Bridge in original location at Vantage, Wash.
Dept. of Transportation*

vered mid-section to avoid costly and impracticable falsework for arch spans.⁶

Construction began on 26 January 1926 for a 2,475-foot structure. The arrangement of spans was symmetrical and consisted of several reinforced-concrete deck girder spans on either side of a 960-foot central group of steel trusses: 220-foot cantilever anchor arms, 169-foot cantilever spans, and one 200-foot Parker truss. The steel anchor spans and cantilever spans have sloped top and bottom chords for structural balance. This arrangement, instead of a horizontal bottom chord, also permitted using shorter main piers, reducing the amount of expensive concrete needed but still achieving a 70-foot clearance at mid-channel for shipping traffic on the river. The suspended span is connected to the cantilevers through sliding joints, in part used during erection and later to provide for structural expansion and contraction due to temperature changes and live load. The toll-free, state-owned bridge opened to much fanfare on 8 September 1927.⁷

The Columbia River Bridge at Vantage served on the North Central Highway, later called U.S. 10, from 1927 until 1963 when the Department of Highways replaced it with a four-lane steel through-arch bridge. During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed several dams along the Columbia and Snake rivers for hydroelectric power

to tame their flow for flood control and barge traffic. The Corps built Wanapum Dam down river from the Vantage Ferry Bridge in the late 1950s and early 1960s as part of this project, flooding the riverside town and its bridge.

The Washington Department of Highways decided against extending the present structure's piers to accommodate the rising river. The bridge's narrow two-lane deck had become unsafe for high volume traffic, as had the highway's winding Vantage Hill grade to the river. The department decided to instead replace the bridge and built new roadway approaches as part of its plan to upgrade this portion of U.S. 10 to a four-lane divided highway, eventually part of Interstate 90.⁸

Once the new Vantage Ferry bridge was completed in 1963, the Washington Department of Highways dismantled the old structure and stored it for reuse at another site. Several years later, the Corps built Lower Monumental Dam on the Snake River down stream from Lyons Ferry, a popular and historic crossing used since 1859. The bridge with its narrow road deck was suitable for relocation on secondary highways such as the route passing through Lyons Ferry, and the Bureau of Public Roads would finance part of the reconstruction costs.⁹

Lyons Ferry, first known as Palouse Ferry because it is at the confluence of the Palouse and Snake rivers, became an important crossing in 1862 when the Mullan Road was opened between Fort Walla Walla, Washington Territory, and Fort Benton, on the Missouri River, in latter day Montana. For decades a private steam-powered toll ferry, pushed by strong currents, carried passengers for 1,200 feet across the Snake. Rising water behind the dam meant longer crossings and slower river flow.¹⁰

The Washington Department of Highways decided to re-erect the Vantage Ferry Bridge at Lyons Ferry and build county approach roads, and designate them as route 261, part of the state's secondary highway system. The department predicted in 1968 that by 1985 over 1,000 vehicles per day would travel across the new Lyons Ferry Bridge to connect with state primary highways and to gain access to Corps of Engineers- and state-owned parks along the river.¹¹

The Vantage Ferry Bridge was erected at Lyons Ferry in 1968 at a cost of \$976,261. The Department of Highways contracted with Peter Kiewit and Sons Company of Vancouver, Washington, to construct ten intermediate reinforced-concrete piers, and with Murphy Brothers of Spokane to reassemble the superstructure and build new concrete approaches. The bridge appears nearly the same as it did at Vantage Ferry. The piers are similar (battered, square dumbbell-shaped), but not identical to those poured at Vantage. The bridge's sloped bottom chords, combined with tall concrete piers founded on solid rock just below the river floor and rising

out of the Snake's deep waters behind Lower Monumental Dam, gave adequate clearances for river traffic. The contractor reassembled the shop-riveted members with nuts and bolts instead of field rivets. The concrete approach spans are fewer, but each is longer than on the original structure. Total concrete span length is reduced to fit the new location. Finally, new reinforced-concrete decks were poured on the reassembled structure, and modern safety barriers were used in place of the original angle steel and lattice railing.¹²

The Snake River Bridge at Lyons Ferry continues as a vital link in the state's highway system. It provides a means for recreationists, tourists to travel to a historically significant part of southeastern Washington.

ENDNOTES

¹Betty Cross, "Vantage Bridge History Told; Means Much to Grant County," *Wenatchee World*, 9 July 1927, 2.

²Kittitas-Grant County Ferry Commission Votes to Seek a Franchise for Vantage Bridge," *Wenatchee World*, 12 January 1924 ; "Franchise Granted for the Building of \$600,000 Bridge at Vantage; 1,900 Feet Long," *Wenatchee World*, 28 March 1924; "New Bridge to be 1,700 Feet Long—Chandler," *Wenatchee World*, 20 September 1924, 1.

³"Balk at New Toll Bridge: Governor Hart Talks Against Vantage Plans," *Wenatchee World*, 22 May 1924, 1.

⁴"State Charges Franchise for a Bridge Void," *Wenatchee World*, 16 October 1924, 1; "Block Toll Bridge! Court Issues Injunction, \$900,000 Federal Aid Would Be Lost if Private Parties Constructed Vantage Bridge," *Wenatchee World*, 29 November 1924, 1.

⁵Presumably \$320,000 was not the entire projected cost for the state-built bridge. A matching grant from the Federal-Aid Road Act fund most likely was part of the financial package; "Vantage Ferry Bridge Scheme Starts Fight," *Wenatchee World*, 31 January 1925, 2; "Vantage Ferry Bridge Job on 1925 Program," *Wenatchee World*, 3 March 1925, 3; "Uphold Action Barring Vantage Bridge, High Court Gives Okeh in Dispute!," *Wenatchee World*, 22 May 1925, 1; Call for Bids Vantage Ferry Bridge Dec. 1," *Wenatchee World*, 27 October 1925, 5; "Will Start Work on \$628,000 Vantage Bridge This Week, New Bridge Span to be 2,475 Feet," *Wenatchee World*, 13 January 1926, 1; Charles E. Andrew, "Recent Bridge Work of the Washington State Highway Department," *Western Construction News*, 2 (10 March 1927): 30-32.

⁶Andrew, 30-31.

⁷The contractor, Kuckenber-Wittman Company of Portland, bid \$628,496.25 to erect the carbon steel main spans and approaches. See Washington, Department of Highways, *Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Highway Engineer, 1924-1926*, 59-60; Andrew, 30-31; "Vantage

Bridge, No. 7/201," Kardex Cards in "Snake River Bridge at Lyons Ferry, No. 261/125," Correspondence File, Bridge Condition Unit, Washington State Department of Transportation, Olympia, WA [WSDOT]. Work continued on the bridge throughout 1926 and early 1927. Steel members except for sway bracing were either shop-riveted rolled channel steel with lattice or angle steel with lattice. Safety barriers continued this design with top and bottom rails and lacing. "Open Vantage Bridge with Big Program," *Wenatchee World*, 2 September 1927, 10; "New Bridge Built at Cost of \$628,000 is Vital Link in North Central Highway," *Wenatchee World*, 8 September 1927, 1.

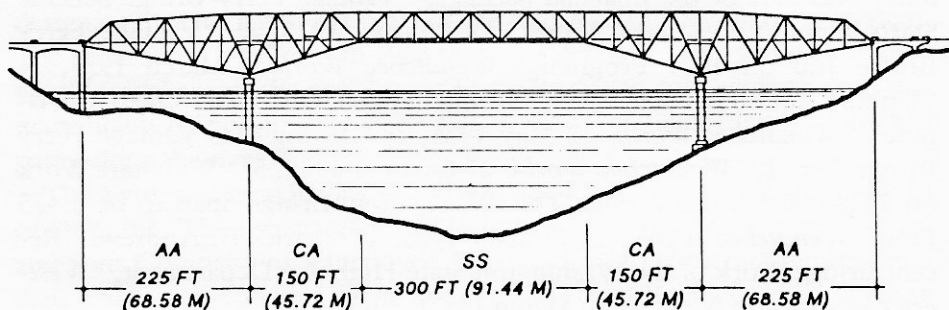
⁸"New Four-Lane Highway to Replace Vantage Road," *Wenatchee World*, 6 October 1960, 2; "Work to Start This Year on New Bridge at Vantage," *Wenatchee World*, 17 January 1961, 8.

⁹"Old Vantage Bridge Trucked to Snake River Site for a New Career," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 4 August 1968, 21; "Old Vantage Bridge Going Into Storage," *Seattle Times*, 6 November 1962, 18.

¹⁰"Old Vantage Bridge Trucked to Snake River Site for a New Career," 21.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²David P. Swanson to C. G. Prah, Director of Highways, 18 August 1967; L. M. Robertson to George Stevens, 25 September 1967; and G. S. Lloyd to Paul Schuett, 20 May 1983, in "Snake River Bridge at Lyons Ferry, No. 261/125," Correspondence Files; and, "Snake River Bridge at Lyons Ferry, No. 261/125," Kardex Card File, WSDOT.



*Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, 1993.
Karl W. Stumpf, delineator.*

St. Gall's Parish History — The Early Years to 1919

by Thomas L. Weber

CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST CHURCH

It was sometime in the year 1887 that the Catholic families who had settled in and around the little town of Colton and further west, and who had been attending divine services at the Uniontown church, conceived the idea of establishing a parish in Colton. A letter written by John K. Becker was met with encouragement from the Rt. Rev. Aegidius Junger, Bishop of the Nisqually Diocese. His reply on April 9, 1888, read: "...it pleases me to learn that Colton has before it such a favorable future and certainly I will permit the Catholics of Colton and surroundings to build a church there, and will do my utmost that a school will be held there..." During his subsequent visit to Colton in May, accompanied by his friend Rev. Fr. Anton L. Joehren, pastor of Uniontown, he warned that at the present time there was no chance of furnishing a priest. For this reason and because of the small number of Catholics in the area, the building of a church was temporarily postponed. The initial families making the request included the Beckers, Kirchners, Bellinghams, Fitzgeralds, Drains, Reisenauers, Schaafs, Semlers, and a few others.

During 1889 an influx of more Catholic families from Minnesota, Iowa and elsewhere gave new impetus to forming their own parish. On May 12, the Colton people again petitioned the Bishop. Again, the Bishop wrote favorably about their intentions. In a letter dated May 20, 1889, to Jos. G. Kirchner and Committee, he writes "... In regard to yur petition I cannot but acquiesce in granting it according to the conditions you mention. One thing I would call your attention to, is the desire expressed to furnish a priest who can speak both English and German. Nothing is harder and more difficult to promise... I state this, not to discourage you in your project. No, not at all. It is only to convey that I see now no possibility of granting you a priest... Continue therefore to work hard and with confidence to erect a church and after this a school in Colton and let nothing discourage you..."

On June 1, a meeting of the Colton parishioners was held and Ernest Becker, Fred Reisenauer, Michael Fitzgerald, Joseph G. Kirchner and John Phillips were elected members of the Building Committee. Their first task was to find a suitable location for the new church. On June 5, Bishop Junger wrote approving of their suggested site on the hill south of the Colton Flour Mill (the present site of the home of Mrs. Geneva Bauer). On August 16, the land located on Block One (1), in the town of Colton, was deeded to Bishop Junger by John K. Becker and Ernest & Margaet Becker

for the purpose of building a church. The transfer price was "one gold coin."

On April 6, 1890, the Committee met and adopted the plans for a simple frame church, as submitted by committee member John Phillips. At the following meeting the committee accepted the resignation of Michael Fitzgerald and elected A. J. Kautz to fill the vacancy. They then staked out the church and made arrangements to begin construction. John Phillips and Ernest Becker were instructed to travel to Palouse City to order the lumber; Ernest Becker was to provide "giant powder" to blast rocks at the site; John Phillips was to haul the rocks away; and Fred Reisenauer was instructed to level the site. On May 2, at the Convent in Uniontown, the plans for the new church were accepted as presented to the Bishop. Before the end of the month a call for bids for the construction of the church had been published. The bids were opened on June 14, and the contract let for \$550 to Heinrich Joseph Schaaf. By October 27, the building was under roof and the cross erected on the church spire. On November 10, Bishop Junger visited the church. Because of the approaching winter and the unavailability of a priest, the decision was made to postpone the plastering of the interior until the following spring. On June 6, 1891, work resumed when a contract to plaster the inside of the church was awarded to Fred Rustermeier of Uniontown. On November 25, the Committee petitioned Father Joehren to call a meeting of the Colton parishioners to elect a patron saint for the new church and to obtain advice about the building of a parsonage. The church structure was completed; however, there were still no altars or pews. Father Joehren assured them that "common boards would do temporarily and an altar he would put up himself in a few hours."

STORMY WEATHER

Up until now, the building of the church met with little opposition. The Committee had been told by the Bishop that there was little chance of obtaining a priest for several years; however, three years had already passed since that statement had been made. On October 14, the committee had written to the Bishop and had asked him what to do in regard to having Mass said in their new church. The Bishop didn't reply until December 4, when he advised them to go to Rev. Joehren and ask him to give them services occasionally. Sometime between the Committee's letter to the Bishop in October and the Bishop's reply in December, Father Joehren announced at a meeting in Uniontown that from the first Sunday in January 1892, there would be Mass once each month in Colton and added that if Uniontown did not close the saloon on Sunday, the Uniontown congregation could go to Colton for Mass.

Unfortunately, by December 14 Father Joehren had changed his mind and had proclaimed to members of the Colton Committee that "the

church was built against his wishes and that Colton would never have Mass.” The Colton parishioners were naturally upset and disappointed, and wrote to the Bishop asking him for help in dealing with Fr. Joehren. The plight of the Colton Catholics was subsequently reported in the local newspaper, a copy of which Fr. Joehren had sent to the Bishop. The article stated that the Bishop would order Father Joehren to say Mass in Colton if he refused to do so freely. The Bishop was extremely displeased with the accusations made and printed about him and reprimanded the Committee in a letter dated February 27, 1892. The article most certainly alienated Father Joehren and Bishop Junger against the Colton congregation and caused them both to become unresponsive to Colton’s pleas during the coming months. In that same letter the Bishop remarked, “In regards to the other priest who promises to say Sunday Mass once a month in your church, I do not know who he is and I cannot give any priest jurisdiction unless I know who he is. Still, I do not say that I will abandon you and that you shall not have Mass in your church. On the contrary I will do all I can, so that you can have Mass now and then, but at present I cannot promise it.”

The Bishop was referring to Rev. Fr. James L. Frei,¹ who had arrived in Uniontown on October 16, 1891. He had come to visit his niece, Sister M. Benedicta Frei, a member of the Benedictine Community residing in Uniontown. He was subsequently persuaded to stay and serve as the Sisters’ Chaplain and an assistant to Fr. Joehren. Mother Johanna’s description of Father Frei notes that, “...the people were much pleased with the preaching of Fr. Frei and especially the children took well to his catechetical instructions. Father Frei stayed strictly at home and was careful not to meddle with any affairs of the parish...”

On June 12, 1892, Fr. Joehren and the Uniontown parishioners voted to build a new church. Work was to commence at once. It was stated that those parishioners desiring to belong to the Colton parish must have permission from the bishop before January 1, 1893. Without his permission they would be required to help with the construction of the new Uniontown church. Naturally, since Colton had just completed construction of a church, they sought permission to be excluded from the Uniontown parish. On November 2, the Bishop and Father Joehren met with the Colton Committee in Colton and drew up a petition to be signed by those who wanted to belong to the Colton parish. The petition also included a subscription towards the construction of the new Uniontown church - even though Fr. Joehren insisted that he really didn’t want any money, just the names of those who wanted to belong to the new parish. On November 9, the petition was signed by 24 Colton parishioners and delivered to Fr. Joehren. The subscription amounted to only \$224.50.

In a December 26 letter to the Bishop, the Colton Committee reported

that, "...In one of their meetings the Uniontown church committee openly declared that they did not want anything from Colton and that they could go. After further asking Rev. Joehren's advice he told us that he would not decide either way and referred us to the Rt. Rev. Bishop saying whatever he does is well with me. The signers of our subscription have determined not to pay anything towards the Uniontown church, and ask and beg the Rt. Rev. Bishop to furnish us a priest so that we can have Sunday Mass each and every month, for which we will pay and stand all expenses connected with our church and be a separate congregation from Uniontown. We visited Rev. Father J. Frei last week and he said he would gladly come down and celebrate Mass in our church every Sunday with the permission of the Rt. Rev. Bishop..."

FURTHER CONFLICTS

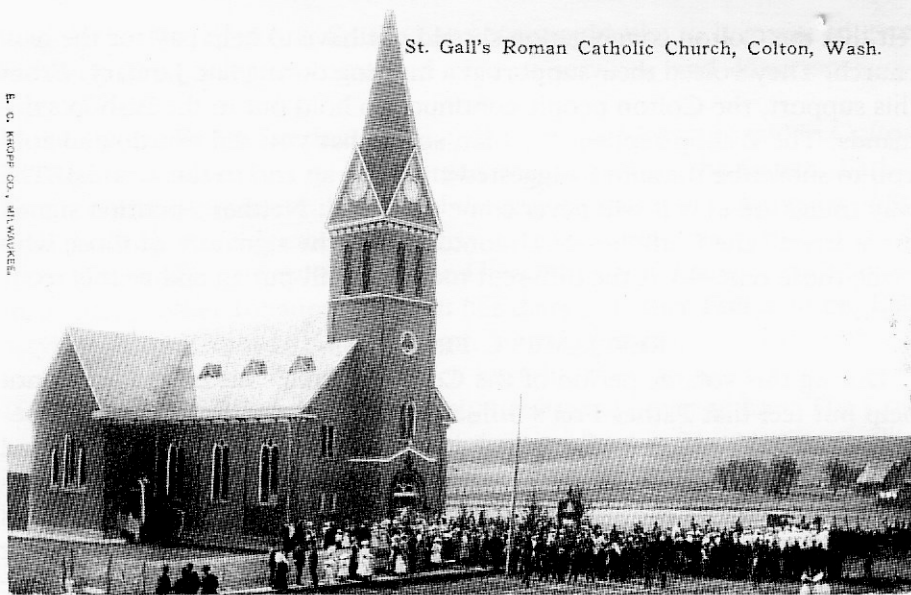
Relations between Father Joehren and the Benedictine Sisters residing in Uniontown had deteriorated throughout the summer of 1892. That summer Fr. Joehren, who was also responsible for the mission church at Palouse City, had demanded that the Sisters' build, at their own expense, a new school in Palouse. He also felt that the novitiate and Motherhouse should be moved to a more secluded place, away from the Academy and Day School, and had tried, unsuccessfully, to find a suitable place for them. When Fr. Frei arrived and took over the responsibilities of serving as their Chaplain, Fr. Joehren passed the task of finding a new location for the Motherhouse onto him. During the summer, for some unknown reason, whenever Father Joehren spoke of the sisters he soon began using language unbecoming a priest, and began spreading slanderous reports against them. When Fr. Frei confronted him about the problem and made efforts to make things right, he was told that the sisters "do nothing for the Church, they are lazy and idle, and the whole congregation is against them... Let them go wherever they please, the sooner the better." Fr. Frei advised the sisters that under the present circumstances the best thing for them to do was to look for another location. During December, he purchased the 400-acre Leitch Farm (Sister's Place), located for miles from Colton. On December 27, Father Frei wrote to Ernest Becker about the possibility of the Sisters moving their Convent from Uniontown to Colton. Father Frei indicated that he needed the Colton community's answer before January 12, 1893.

The very next day, the Colton parishioners met with Rev. Mother Johanna to find out exactly what the Community required to move to Colton. By December 30, \$4,800 in subscriptions and 3 acres of land in Colton were promised to Mother Johanna on the condition that the Sisters sign a contract to spend at least \$10,000 for buildings. The Sisters' immediately accepted the offer.

On January 15, 1893, a petition was circulated and signed by 34 parish-

St. Gall's Roman Catholic Church, Colton, Wash.

H. G. KNOPF CO., MILWAUKEE



ioners, requesting that the Colton Catholics be allowed to form their own parish. Ernest Becker, Joseph Hof and Father Frei personally delivered the petition to Bishop Junger in Vancouver. They returned to Colton with the following decree: "To all those who belong to the Colton congregation to be established under the following condition: The undersigned wants to end the difficulty which exists between the Uniontown congregation and the Colton Catholics who ask to be separated from Uniontown congregation to which they belong; and therefore he desires that the Coltoners who want to establish a congregation separate from the Uniontown congregation that they pay to the Uniontown congregation one thousand (\$1,000.00) dollars and he desires also that the Uniontown congregation ought to accept this amount." The decree did not set well with the Colton Catholics. Many of the parishioners wrote to the Bishop stating how unfair his decision had been.

"If you cannot do what has been arranged to establish a congregation in Colton," the Bishop replied, "I cannot proceed any further... You say that I promised a priest. Yes, I did so but I did not think that things would turn out the way they did. I really cannot give you a priest until these difficulties are settled... therefore as soon as this difficulty is settled I will try, as I said before, to send you a priest..."

Accusations abounded between the two communities. The Colton people were accused of fabricating communications and promises made to them by the Bishop. The people from Uniontown were viewed as holding the Colton parishioners for ransom and forcing them to help pay for their church. There were, however, sympathizers. Many Uniontown people

felt that the Colton congregation should not have to help pay for the new church. They voiced their support at a meeting during late January. From this support, the Colton people continued to hold out to the Bishop's demands. The Bishop replied, "...I am sorry that you did not do as I told you to subscribe the sum I suggested and have an end to this scandal. The way things are now it will never come to an end. Neither a petition signed by nearly all the Catholics of Uniontown nor the signature of those who made those remarks at the different meetings will put an end to this trouble..."

REV. JAMES L. FREI, 1893-1919

During this volatile period of the Colton church's history, one can not help but feel that Father Frei's influence helped smooth the relations between the Colton Catholics and their conflict with Father Joehren and Bishop Junger. On February 13, Father Frei told Ernest Becker and Joseph Semler Sr. that if they would finish the church, he would come and say Mass. That statement along with the arrival of the Bishop's letter must have provided the encouragement. On February 17, the Committee met and signed the following note:

"We the undersigned promise and agree in the name of the future Catholic congregation of Colton to pay to the Catholic congregation of Uniontown the sum of \$1,000.00 without interest in 9 months after this date, on the following condition: First, that we be a separate and distinct congregation from Uniontown; Second, that Rev. Father Frei of Uniontown receive permanent permission of the Rev. Bishop Junger to be our priest.

"Today I received yours of 17 last," the Bishop replied to Father Frei, "it pleased me very much to hear and at the same time to see that the people of Colton obliged themselves to pay the one thousand dollars to Uniontown. This settles the quarrel and everything else. I received the note today. It is exactly as I wished, with the exception that the second condition be left off..." On February 28, the Committee received notice that Father Frei would be their priest.

The church interior plaster had begun to fail in the summer of 1891. During the month of February 1893, the decision was made to seal the entire interior with No. 2, 4-inch wide, ceiling material. Thirty pews, 10 feet in length, were also constructed. Work continued on the church throughout March. Fred and Mike Reisenauer built the altar, confessionals and pews; John K. Becker installed glass in the windows; Joseph G. Kirchner built a parsonage on the back of the church; Margaret Becker sewed the altar linens and confessional veils; George Bauer installed the carpeting; the church interior was painted; a sidewalk built; and a picket and barbed wire fence completed by the Moser Brothers, Charley Semler and John Meshishnek. On March 16, John K. Becker wrote to Bishop

Junger, "...The church is finished and we would like to beg you to give Father J. Frei order to come and give us services, and Mass on Sundays..."

Finally, on Easter Sunday, April 2, 1893, Holy Mass was said in Colton by Rev. Fr. James L. Frei. The organ was played by the Sisters. Father Frei, a native of Switzerland, placed the church under the patronage of St. Gall (Gallus), an Irish monk who early in the seventh century founded the Benedictine Abbey in Switzerland and became one of that country's favorite saints. Mother Johanna writes in her diary, "Father Frei held the first services in the Colton Church, which he continued hence forth with the exception of the first Sunday of each month, when he had to minister in Palouse, which mission had previously been turned over to him. The Colton congregation felt happy over their zealous Pastor. The Messrs. Becker took him to and fro by team for the Sunday services."

Following Mass, Father Frei took immediate control of the parish. He reappointed the five members of the Building Committee, renaming it the Church and Finance Committee and ordered that the collection be turned over to the Treasurer to be disbursed for necessary church articles. Mr. J.T. Klein donated five horses to be used towards the purchase of a bell.² The finished church measured 36 x 60 feet and was erected on a stone foundation. The high wall rose 16 feet, with the roof rising another 16 feet. The height to the top of the steeple ball and cross was 75 feet. The total cost - \$2,188.93.

On April 30, changes were made to the Church Committee. The new members were George Bauer (Clerk); Joseph Semler Jr., Melchior Thee (Treasurer), Carl Seng, Ernest Becker, Michael Reisenauer, and Father Frei (President). One of their first duties was the signing of the returned Note from Bishop Junger.

HARD TIMES AND MORE TROUBLE

The sisters broke ground for their new Convent during June. From Mother Johanna's diary, "Much free labor was donated by our Colton friends, this included the hauling of the rock for the foundation wall. The stone was a fine granite, uncovered in the grain field of Mr. Michael Schultheis Sr., east of town. He, our never failing friend, had allowed us to open a quarry in his field to supply the required rock. After our needs were provided for, the quarry was closed up again and the field is yielding grain as ever before. The building was to be 50 x 80 feet, with basement, two stories, and mansard roof. Architect J. Zittel of Pullman drafted the plans and directed the work. The contract called for the building to be under roof before winter would set in. This provided to be a difficult task, but it was finally done. After this we waited for spring."

During the summer months the new parish purchased two acres of land located along Wolford Road, from John K. Becker to be used as the

parish cemetery. The congregation met on August 20 to decide on how the cemetery was to be laid out, and the price per lot. The first burial was the child of Simon Triesch (Section A, Block 23, Lot 1) during the summer of 1893.³ The summer of 1893 also brought hard times to many. Shortly after harvest had begun, the weather changed from hot and sunny to wet and rainy. The summer would go on record as the only total crop failure ever to hit the Palouse Country. Nearly every family history talks of the devastation caused by the rain. Most crops were never harvested. Those that were, rotted in the sacks lying in the fields. It was too wet for even a team and wagon. In the end there wasn't enough wheat salvaged to plant next year's crop.

"This was a time of an uneasy truce between the two communities. It was generally understood that peace would fall with the departure of the sisters from Uniontown. Then, suddenly, without warning or expectation, Father Joehren closed the sister's school in Uniontown. He simply stalked into the classrooms and ordered the children to leave. Not even the Superior had been informed. The sisters, nearly paralyzed with fright, took refuge in their convent. The following Sunday, Father Joehren announced during Mass at St. Boniface that hereafter Catholics were forbidden to send children to the sisters' school 'under the penalty of being refused the sacraments.' The sisters continued to run their boarding school but kept a low profile within the community. The lines were now clearly drawn: Uniontown versus Colton. Members from either community were not on speaking terms and occasionally when buggies passed one another the drivers would use their whips to beat their adversary's horses. None of this was conducive to the union of hearts and wills appropriate in the lives of Christians.⁴

Times were tough for everyone. Father Joehren had started construction on his new church and, after the foundation had been laid, had run out of money. The Colton parish also owed the Uniontown parish \$1,000, payable in full on January 2, 1894. The parish truly didn't have the money, but it is also doubtful that they ever intended to pay off the debt to Uniontown. They considered the obligation unjust. Besides, they now had their priest and parish. During February 1894, the Bishop warned them about their obligation. On March 25, Father Frei called a meeting of the congregation to make a decision with regard to the Uniontown note. Their decision as recorded in the minutes, "Decided to wait. Uniontown wants to collect or close the church. G. Bauer, Clerk." The following day the Trustees met with Father Frei and discussed his proposal of exchanging two notes with Uniontown. Mother Johanna held a promissory note signed by Father Joehren for five hundred dollars, with the Palouse Church as collateral. She had turned the note over to Father Frei. Father Frei also held a \$300 note against Bishop Junger.

Both notes were drawing interest and overdue. Their combined value totaled \$1100. The exchanging of the two notes for the Uniontown Note seemed like a logical solution to the tight money supply. Father Joehren and the Uniontown Building committee, however, refused the proposal and demanded cash. On April 24, 1894, in the Superior Court of the State of Washington in and for Whitman County, "... suit was commenced on the Uniontown Note by Henry Michels Sr., Treasurer." of the Uniontown parish.

IT GETS EVEN WORSE...

Two months later, on June 24, Father Frei sued Father Joehren in civil court for the non-payment of the sister's note.⁵ Father Joehren, a close friend of Bishop Junger, wrote to him complaining that "if he did not send Father Frei from Uniontown, the new church (Uniontown) cannot be built."

On July 16, Father Frei received a letter from Bishop Junger "announcing that Father Frei was hereby removed from his office as Pastor (of Colton) and chaplain; and was not allowed to perform any priestly functions in his diocese..." No reasons were given. "The Catholics of Colton," Mother Johanna reported, "were in great distress when they heard the sad news. For two consecutive Sundays no services were held in the Colton church. Soon after, the Bishop appointed Rev. Father Barnabas Held of Spokane to attend the place. Being already in charge of Sacred Heart Hospital, as chaplain, the Rev. Father found it nigh impossible to assume additional duties. The bishop then allowed Rev. Father J. Burri of Genesee to attend Colton, while Father Frei ministered in his place in Genesee, in the diocese of Boise. The people were greatly impressed by Father Frei's capable administration. The Right Reverend Bishop Glorieux of Boise offered him to join his diocese. But Father Frei declined, saying, 'I will not abandon the sisters. Besides, I have done nothing wrong and will not, by departing, convey the idea that I had to go. God will in his own time restore what belongs to me.' He frequently made his trip to and from Genesee on foot. The congregation of Colton did not forget their good pastor, however. On his namesday, July 25, they presented him a buggy. We sisters bought him a nice bay horse, 'Fannie' from Mr. H. Streibich."

Despite numerous letters written on Father's behalf, the Bishop was of the opinion that, "he was not obliged to account to the congregation for why he removed or dismissed a priest..." George Bauer also wrote, on Father Frei's behalf, to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Francesco Satolli. The Archbishop replied that Father Frei did not belong to the Diocese and "the only course to be followed by you is to abide completely by the Bishop's order, accept any priest sent to you, and to attend chiefly to the fulfillment of your duties; which I trust you will do..."

Father P. Barnabas Held's sympathies were without doubt with Father Frei. On the Feast of the Rosary, October 3, he held his first service in Colton and encouraged the Church Committee to again write to the Apostolic Delegate, requesting an investigation. The letter which was drafted by George Bauer and signed by 89 parishioners from both Colton and Uniontown stated: "We again and again ask our Rev. Bishop to grant us such an investigation but never were invited to take part in such a proceeding and never were heard on our grievances. The two former flourishing parishes are now in such a condition, and so much scandal is given inside and outside of the church, that church and religion are suffering and unless we find some relief through an impartial investigation, our church will lose many members and will be made the laughing stock of our enemies."

"The facilities had not yet been restored to Father Frei. On December 11 the bishop sent a young priest as Pastor of Colton, the Rev. Fr. H. Frencken. Everybody was glad to get a priest, but they felt sad to see him take the place of Father Frei. Colton had no parsonage, and we had to find headquarters for the priest in our house. Father Frei retired into a small room of an outbuilding with the chickens as his nearest neighbors. He was greatly comforted in his severe trials by the dedicated kindness of the Rev. Fathers J. Burri of Genesee and F. Hartleib of Moscow, who often visited him and tried their best to lighten his burden. Rev. Fr. Frencken's lively dispositions were ill-suited to the quiet Colton. With the bishop's permission he left, on January 3, 1865, and was replaced a week later by Rev. Fr. Leon Haupts, an elderly priest, related to the bishop."

Throughout this period, Mother Johanna continues, "... we had entertained hopes that with our removal from Uniontown, the existing animosity would subside and peace be reestablished. But on the contrary, our very translocation proved to be oil to kindle the flame of discord to new vigor. Father Frei, the congregation of Colton, and the Sisters began now to be accused of having done spite work and acted in all their proceedings without the bishop's permission... The Catholics of Colton were attacked on all occasions..."

On January 12, 1865, Archbishop Satolli ordered an investigation of Father Frei's petition. On Thursday, January 17, the Very Rev. Louis G. Schram, Vicar General of Vancouver, and Rev. Louis Kusters of Ellensburg arrived in Colton to conduct the investigation. Sister Johanna writes, "... the two appointees arrived and held session in Colton on the two following days. All who were concerned in the matter, were placed under oath and their statements were recorded. On January 21, (Monday) the investigation continued in Uniontown in the same manner and form, but the results of the proceedings were not made known. The in-

investigators left on January 24 ...”They sent their report to Archbishop Satolli who, on February 27, submitted his report to Rome.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL...

On May 19, after receiving a letter the evening before from the Bishop, Father Frei celebrated High Mass in the church in Colton. The Bishop's letter proclaimed that "... he shall be priest in Colton and Palouse City as long as he (Junger) is Bishop..." Father Frei's petition had apparently been settled by a higher authority. According to an article written by Fr. Joseph Stang, the matter had been brought to Rome through Father Frei's friend, Bishop Messmer of Greenbay, Wisconsin. Bishop Junger was compelled by the Vatican to withdraw the suspension. In his letter to Father Frei, the bishop acknowledged that "he had been imposed upon regarding the case and he protested that from now on he would be a life-long friend. The bishop did not live much longer. Suffering from Bright's disease, he died abruptly on December 26, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Vancouver. Father Joehren was severely reprimanded and according to Sister Johanna, "acknowledged his mistake in word and writing. All parties concerned were glad to extend their hand as a token of hearty reconciliation." With Father Frei once again directing the congregation, parish life returned to a more pleasant agenda.

On October 22, the trustees met with Father Frei to elect Michael Schultheis Jr. to replace George Bauer as Clerk of the Church and Finance Committee. George Bauer was the first adult to be buried in the Catholic Cemetery, having died on October 17, 1865, from injuries suffered when he fell from the barn hayloft onto a pitchfork.

ORGAN AND CHURCH BELL⁶

The church of Colton could only boast of the strictly essentials for Divine Service. An organ was sadly missed by the congregation of mostly German members, who are noted lovers of music and song. A collection was taken up (\$46.50 on December 18, 1865) and a suitable instrument was purchased from the Cornish company, Chicago. The sisters were now kindly requested to play the organ and to conduct the choir. This was agreed to with the understanding that this would be for a time only and without any further obligation on their part. However the service was rendered for about 20 years and without remuneration. Only in the last years did the Sister organist receive a small yearly offering, inadequate considering the increased demands made of her time and labor.

The church also needed a bell to call the faithful to prayer and divine worship. Two members of the congregation, Messrs. Michael Schultheis, Sr. and Michael Fitzgerald, jointly agreed to donate one. The bell was ordered from Hy. Stuckstede Bell Foundry Co., St. Louis, Missouri, its weight being 1226 pounds. The cost amounted to \$236.44. It arrived at the end of March and the church trustees called the Sisters to ring the bell

whenever time and occasion would require. The Sisters agreed providing the bell was installed near the convent. A belfry was accordingly erected east of the convent building. The Administrator of the diocese, the Very Reverend L. Schram, delegated Father Frei to perform the ceremony of the blessing of the bell.

THE REBUILDING YEARS

Anxious to have their children continue their education in the Sister's school, several families who had helped establish the Uniontown parish severed their allegiance and joined the Colton parish. At the same time Catholic families from Rosalia and elsewhere began moving into the Colton district to secure the benefits of a Catholic education for their children.

With the congregation growing steadily year after year, the need for a larger church became more and more urgent. On Sunday, February 23, 1902, a meeting of the congregation was held to decide on plans for enlarging the church. It was decided to add two wings, each 15 x 24 feet, to the rear of the present building, with galleries in each wing. The altar was to be moved back the width of the wings, thus increasing the seating capacity by a factor of three. Michael Schultheis Sr., Joseph Semler Jr., H. S. Gransch and Lambert F. Gibbs were chosen as the Building Committee. A subscription was collected on March 2, but only netted \$1725 from the 70 parishioners subscribing. After reviewing the proposed lumber expenses for the addition as submitted by Fr. Faust and Joseph Anderhalden of Uniontown, it was concluded that the proposed addition was too expensive.

On April 20, 1902, Fr. Frei announced that a new subscription list would be circulated on May 11 for the purpose of building a new brick church. The new subscription was met with much greater enthusiasm. Ninety-eight parishioners pledged \$9,360, one-third of which was due in the Fall of each succeeding year. However, on January 11, 1903, Father Frei questioned the advisability of continuing with the project as the parish had been reduced to only 40 parishioners. A vote was taken and by a 21 to 11 margin, the project was continued. It was further decided to obtain plans for the new church and let out the contract during 1903, with construction delayed until the following year. On December 26, 1903, the plans for the new church were accepted as submitted by Mr. Klutho of St. Louis. ⁷ A site for the new church was investigated and ultimately purchased from Ernest Becker through a land trade. During early 1906, the parish purchased land owned by Joseph Martz and offered it in exchange for the present church property. Additional members were also appointed to the Building Committee. They included Florent Meyer, Michael E. Fitzgerald, Peter Busch, Fred Bohle, Fred Reisenauer, Franz Druffel and Alois Moser. An estimated one hundred and fifty loads of

rock were required for the foundation.⁸ Sand for the foundation was examined in the creek located on the Becker Farm but ultimately was hauled from the Snake River.

The present church was erected during 1905 and 1906 at a cost of \$14,000. The stained-glass windows, altars, sanctuary lamp, pews, vestments, the 1000-pound bell, the statues, as well as the wiring were special donations by individual parishioners. Moreover, the hauling of all material, including sand from the Snake River, was donated labor. The cost of the heating plant alone amounted to over \$2,200. On August 13, 1905, Father Frei officiated at the blessing of the cornerstone. The last Mass said in the original church was on May 27, 1906, and the first Mass in the new brick church on Saturday, June 2. Bishop Edward J. O'Dea officiated at the opening Mass and confirmed 50 young people during the ceremony. The first marriage in the new church was that of Frank Trapp and Mary Frances Wolf on June 12.

The old church was then moved from its position on the hill to a location just north of the new church. After the steeple was removed, the interior was remodeled. During August, three carpenters were employed to build classrooms using cedar lumber obtained from Seattle. The old church then served as the parochial school from September 1906 until May 1917. The steel cross from the first church is now located in the Colton Catholic cemetery and forms a memorial to the heroic efforts and sacrifices made by Ernest Becker, John Konrad Becker, Fred Reisenauer, Mike Reisenauer and Joseph G. Kirchner who in 1888 founded the parish.

The new church had several distinctive features which are helpful in dating pictures taken during the period. Originally, three dormers were located on each side of the main portion of the roof. Also, above the belfry, facing in all four directions, were clock faces. The clock did not contain any working movements but had hands set to the hour of Sunday Mass. Surrounding each clock face were three, small, louvered vents in an equilateral arrangement. The front steps were also an open pedestal arrangement, without handrails. An indication of the love the parishioners had for Fr. Frei and the Sisters may be observed when looking at the beautiful stained glass windows in the church. The two main windows located in the North wing are those of Saints Benedict and Scholastica, clearly to honor the Benedictine Sisters and St. Scholastica Academy. The main windows located in the South wing are those of St. Gall, the patron saint of the parish, and St. James, the patron saint of Father Frei and the Diocese. St. Gall, Fr. Frei and Benedictine Sisters were all from Switzerland.

THE PARISH RECTORY

As the work of the parish had become more and more burdensome to the aging founder of the parish, in 1917 the Most Rev. Bishop Augustine Schinner, Bishop of Spokane, sent an assistant in the person of the Rev. Joseph Stang to Father Frei. To house him and the future pastors prop-

erly the parish erected a spacious, brick-veneer rectory during 1918, at the cost of \$7,000 (not including furnishings).

Father Frei never lived in the new rectory. He eventually nearly lost his sight and was cared for by his assistant Father Stang and the Sisters' he had served for over 30 years. He died on November 6, 1922, rich in merits before God and men. As Father William B. Bender wrote 50 years ago, "... of him may be said in perfect truth that he had given the parish its present strong Catholic character and material form." Father Frei was buried in the Colton Catholic cemetery, with a large crypt and crucifix erected in his honor by the parish.

ENDNOTES

¹Fr. Frei was referred to by both James and Jacob (Latin for James). Fr. Frei was born on May 6, 1845, in the parish of Widnau, Diocese of St. Gall, Switzerland. He was ordained on August 16, 1868, and served the Diocese until 1891 when he was granted a release and left for the United States. His intended destination was the Benedictine Abbey at Mount Angel, Oregon.

²One horse and colt were raffled on July 4, 1893, and raised \$39.50 at the parish picnic held in the Becker timber grove.

³The body was moved to Block 12 on April 22, 1907 by J. K. Becker and Fr. Frei. The oldest date in the cemerery is that of Peter Ruel (Section A, Block 14, Lot 4) who died in 1890. He was the uncle of John and Ernest Becker and was responsible for bringing them to America. He had originally been buried un Uniontown but was moved to Colton by John K. Becker on December 14, 1906.

⁴Father Wilfred P. Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest, 1743-1983*

⁵E. S. Barnett (attorney) Plaintiff vs. Rev. A. Joehren, Case No. 4840, July 27, 1894, in Whitman County, Colfax. John Luthrum, Sheriff of Whitman County, announced a public auction for the sale of the Palouse church in payment of the promissory note. On September 29, 1894, at two in the afternoon, on the steps of the county courthouse in Colfax, he sold the church for \$150 to Michael Schultheis Sr. and William Codd (Colfax), acting for Fathers Nicholas Frei and Barnabas Held of Spokane. They, in turn, presented St. Anthony church to the Palouse congregation... Fr. Wilfred Schoenberg, S.J.

⁶Taken from "*Idaho Benedictine - St. Gertrude's Convent, Cottonwood, Idaho*" by Sister M. Ildephouse Nuxoll, O.S.B. (page 21)

⁷Mr. Klutho had asked for 3% but eventually agreed to accept 2% of the building cost as his fee for drawing up the plans.

⁸Foundation material was offered from a quarry owned by John N. Semler but is believed to have come from the same pit opened by Michael Schultheis Sr. in 1893 for the construction of St. Scholastica Academy.